“Ill Schooled in Bolted Language”: Shakespeare’s Tragic Flaw

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Textbooks of rhetoric emphasize the significance of taking into account the values and interests of the particular audience when designing and delivering a speech. And the breach of this requirement is grouped among the greatest "vices" of the art of rhetoric. This dissertation investigates Shakespeare's experimentations with this rhetorical "vice" (taken to its extreme) in his tragedies. I argue that Shakespeare presents tragic protagonists who are in one way or another spectacular human beings, but who are also in one way or another irresponsible and inconsiderate of others. And the downfall of the hero is initiated by his unrhetorical dealings with the people around him—even with those who sincerely admire and celebrate him. This hubristic *hamartia* of the hero is indiscriminate—the hero treats friend and foe alike. I hope to show how each tragedy is a unique display of the devastating consequences of being or becoming *hubristically* unrhetorical. Despite all of his outstanding features, due to his rhetorical shortcomings, the hero is easily manipulated. As I will demonstrate, cautiously considering the other in social interactions shields one against being exploited by the other. The unrhetorical, that is to say, become easy prey for the rhetorically manipulative.

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Introduction

In his *Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke observes that rhetoric is essentially "*addressed*, since persuasion implies an audience" (38). It is common knowledge that in oratory, the speaker or writer must take into consideration the values and interests of their audience when designing and delivering their speech. This is perhaps one of the most fundamental imperatives emphasized by textbooks of rhetoric.[1] And breaking or disregarding this fundamental rule is viewed as one of the greatest "vices" of rhetoric. Furthermore, as stressed by some treatises on the art of rhetoric—most notably, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*—proper rhetorical education builds good character. One who masters this art, in other words, becomes a good person.

[1] For instance, to foreground the significance of the role of the audience, Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric* classifies the genres of public speech—deliberative, judicial, and demonstrative—based on their type of audience: "The species [*eide*] of rhetoric are three in number; for such is the number [of classes] to which the hearers of speeches belong" (47). The audience of a deliberative speech must judge whether a future happening will turn out to be advantageous or harmful. In a judicial speech, the audience must judge whether a past happening was just or unjust. And the audience of a demonstrative speech must observe whether the topic under consideration is honourable or shameful. The hearer of happenings future or past is a critical "judge" (*krites*); the hearer of present praise or blame is an "observer" (*theoros*) (48). It is worth adding that the Greek word *theoros* gives rise to the Latin *theatrum*, and subsequently to the English *theatre*. It is also the word Aristotle uses to define the general function of rhetoric: "to see the available means of persuasion in each case" (36).

According to many rhetoricians, rhetoric is not only a handy tool for the lawyer or the politician. Rather, being rhetorically thoughtful is, first and foremost, a necessary means for being socially good. Thus, it is not only the responsibility of the persuasive orator to be attentive to his or her particular audience. It is the responsibility of the social being to be attentive to those with whom he or she communicates (verbally or non-verbally). If it is among the "offices" of the art of rhetoric to cement social interaction, then it is easy to see why the breach of this code of conduct is basically anti-social. In short, the most intolerable and impermissible "vice" of rhetoric is such irresponsibility: being inconsiderate of others.

In the following chapters, I will argue that, in his tragedies, William Shakespeare experiments with this rhetorical "vice" taken to its extreme. Tom McAlindon observes in "What Is a Shakespearean Tragedy?" that

> Shakespearean tragedy is centrally concerned with the destruction of human greatness embodied in individuals endowed with "sovereignty of nature": men who are instinctively referred to as "noble" (in the moral or characterological sense) by those who know them, even their enemies. However, what constitutes true nobility in action invariably proves problematic for the hero, especially when he becomes entangled in the ethical contradictions associated with the notion of "honour." (8–9)

In this dissertation, I will look at the problem of the tragic hero from a rhetorical standpoint. Shakespeare's tragedies present protagonists who are in one way or another spectacular human beings, but who are also in one way or another inconsiderate of others. The downfall of the tragic hero is initiated by his unrhetorical dealings with the people around him—even with those who sincerely admire and celebrate him.

To be clear, I am not arguing that Shakespeare's tragic protagonist is ineloquent or that his language is without rhetorical style. As Russ McDonald observes in "The Language of Tragedy," "Hamlet, Othello, and their theatrical kin are among the most charismatic speakers in all of world drama," and the "distinctive poetic intensity" of their style is the result of their use of "lofty diction, repetition of words and syntactical patterns, classical allusions, rhetorical questions, sophisticated metrical schemes and effects, poetic and thematic recapitulation, overstatement" (24). In this dissertation, however, I do not focus on the nuances of style in the language of the tragic protagonist. Rather, the term *unrhetorical* in the context of this dissertation refers to the failure to properly and mindfully consider and address an audience. A case in point is Coriolanus being "ill schooled / In bolted language" (3.1.319–20). To appease the tribunes, Menenius justifies the unrefined soldier's incivility by explaining that his unfamiliarity with "bolted language" makes him incapable of distinguishing between the "meal and bran" in his manner of speaking. That is to say, Coriolanus cannot distinguish between what his audience can and cannot digest. Furthermore, in characters such as Othello and Julius Caesar, it is in fact the loftiness of their style, being unrhetorical, that proves to be fatally problematic. For example, as Janette Dillon points out, Othello's language (which is infused "with a bombast circumstance / Horribly stuffed with epithets of war" [1.1.13–14]) is "the first thing that Iago singles out for opprobrium" (*Shakespeare's Tragedies* 87). A rhetorically embellished language, in other words, can still be unrhetorically inconsiderate. Conversely, undecorated language can considerately address its audience.

There are two observations regarding Shakespeare's dramatization of this rhetorical "vice" that I would like to highlight at the start. First, there is no single cause for this tendency in the tragic hero. The plays do not offer one clear, definitive reason for their protagonists'

rhetorical shortcomings. The cause could be that the hero is not trained in the art of oratory (the poetic language of the outsider Othello comes close to this assessment). Or, it could be that it is a helpless incompetence (the rude Coriolanus comes close to this assessment). The hero's incautious and impolitic behaviour could also be a stubborn and offensive refusal to engage with others rhetorically (the haughty Julius Caesar comes close to this assessment). The careless King Lear is more complicated. It is uncertain whether he has always been an irresponsible ruler or he has become irresponsible at the brink of retirement. But what is clear is that this *hubristic hamartia* of the tragic hero, with whatever motive, is indiscriminate—the hero treats friend and foe alike. Shakespeare seems to be experimenting with the origins of being inconsiderately unrhetorical as much as with its tragic conclusions. As is the case with the origin of Othello himself, Shakespeare is not interested in a specific cause. Perhaps the playwright aims to emphasize that, no matter what the cause, being unrhetorical has devastating consequences, which brings us to the second observation. Despite all of his outstanding features, due to his rhetorical shortcomings, the hero is easily manipulated. Cautiously considering the other in social interactions shields one against being persuaded by the other. The unrhetorical become easy prey for the rhetorically manipulative—such as Lady Macbeth and Claudius, not to mention Iago.

The tragic characters that I will examine in this dissertation demonstrate different forms of rhetorical imprudence. For instance, Othello (discussed in the first chapter) and Julius Caesar (discussed in the third, fourth, and fifth chapters) are in the habit of making commands and demanding obedience. And their pompous manner of speaking is irritating to others. George Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie*, disapproves of pompous speech in the section allotted to the "vices" of rhetoric (345). But one conspicuous difference between the black general in

modern Venice and the unwanted dictator in ancient Rome is that Othello's manner of speaking appears to be natural. It is as though Othello is not familiar with any other manner of speech. Thus, it is not only the colour of his skin that marks him as a stranger among the Venetians. A Roman among Romans, Julius Caesar, on the other hand, appears to be performing every time he speaks pompously. Consider his imperious attitude when he turns his back on his concern regarding the threat that Cassius poses (1.2), when he dismisses his wife's worries regarding the omens that instruct him to not leave his house on the Ides of March (2.2), or when he rejects the senators' pleas moments before his assassination (3.1).[2] In these and similar instances, Julius Caesar employs grandiose language to present authority and fearlessness. More importantly, he employs grandiose language to distinguish himself from his peers, something that Othello's ethnicity accomplishes on its own. Othello is already different, but Julius Caesar strives to create difference artificially—that is, by means of language, in the words of Puttenham, "farced full of wind" (345).

And here lies a crucial difference between Julius Caesar and Coriolanus (discussed in the third chapter). The Republic applauds both of these impressive men for their illustrious military feats. But while Julius Caesar demands more from Rome, Coriolanus demands to remain a

[2] Robert Watson's observation, in "Tragedies of Revenge and Ambition," regarding Macbeth's "innate craving for dominion and progeny" also applies to Julius Caesar: Macbeth, in pursuing his ambition "in a selfishly mechanical rather than co-operatively humane way, destroys his own chances for a place in the human future" (162). I will examine closely the implications of Julius Caesar's ambition in the fourth chapter. And in the final chapter, I will compare it with the ambition of Macbeth.

formidable and forbidding soldier for Rome. Coriolanus does resort to pompous speech, particularly at the end of the play, which leads to his violent murder at the hands of the Volscians. Like Julius Caesar, the proud Coriolanus is killed immediately after a boastful speech. What is especially impolitic about Coriolanus, however, is his inability (or refusal) to be a political being outside the battlefield. The plebeians, led by their tribunes, will not accept his impoliteness.

The striking feature that qualifies Mark Antony (discussed in the third chapter) as a tragic hero is his unquenchable desire. The names of his followers—Philo and Eros—underscore that he is driven by lust. Like King Lear (discussed in the fifth chapter), Mark Antony suffers the tragic consequences of neglect of duty. Octavius urges Mark Antony to, for the sake of Rome, abandon his "present pleasure" (1.4.32) with Cleopatra and marry his sister, Octavia, as political exigency. But the "ne'er-lust-wearied" (2.1.39) Mark Antony "reneges all temper" (1.1.8) because the "sober" and "dull" Octavia (5.2.53–54) is no match for the "rare Egyptian" (2.2.230). King Lear's careless decision to abdicate his sovereign (and personal) responsibilities, however, is not because of lust. The old king wishes to unburden himself of the autonomy required for carrying out his responsibilities, which also includes the caring for himself. From the beginning of the play, we observe King Lear making one irresponsible decision after another. And Goneril and Regan, with their "glib and oily art" (1.1.222), take advantage of their father's "hideous rashness" (149).

Timon of Athens (discussed in the fourth chapter) demonstrates a different form of carelessness. He is incautious and impolitic in his monetary dealings with others. Athenians are friendly with Timon when he is generous but unfriendly when he is demanding. Timon's indiscriminate non-reciprocal generosity is thoughtlessly inattentive to the enclosure imposed by

society's law of reciprocity. As I will show, Timon's non-reciprocal generosity is impossibly taxing because it demands (ironically) *absolute* reciprocity in the friendships that it forms, to which Athenians harshly oppose. Such generosity is non-reciprocal in the sense that reciprocity must be an absolute, unconditional, limitless given in social relations rather than being dictated by contractual agreements bound to reasonable time frames. Furthermore, in the fourth chapter, I will juxtapose Timon with Julius Caesar to argue that the demanding nature of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar must be read in light of his inclination to be unconditionally generous and forgiving. In both tragedies, it is the social contract that is at odds with the hero's burdensome expectation, hence the collective murder of Julius Caesar and the collective refusal to lend money to Timon.

Similarly (and ironically), it is carelessness that causes the death of the meticulously careful Hamlet (discussed in the second chapter). At the end of the play, Hamlet makes light of his trepidation regarding the duel with Laertes—orchestrated by the treacherous Claudius. Hamlet even dismisses the warnings of his friend Horatio. Like Julius Caesar, Hamlet boldly and incautiously steps into danger. More importantly, Hamlet becomes unrhetorical at the start of the play, when he decides "to put an antic disposition on" (1.5.172).[3] At times, Hamlet is rude; at other times, he is incoherent and vague. It is Hamlet's reckless and incomprehensible madness

[3] In "Tragedy and Political Authority," Michael Hattaway points out that in early modern English, in addition to "clownage," the word *antic* connoted "grotesquerie" and "monstrosity" (107). Thus, Hamlet's "antic disposition," Hattaway writes, "not only provided in feigned madness a fool's cover for the truth-telling of a malcontent but created out of a sweet prince something of a monster, careless of the lives of those about him" (107).

that compels the astute and cunning Claudius to constantly keep a wary eye on him and twice plot his murder.

In this dissertation, I will examine such manifestations of irresponsibility—subtle or evident—by Shakespeare's major tragic heroes. To put this in another way, I will explore the different dramatizations of the polarity between incaution and calculation, between inconsideration and reasonableness, in Shakespeare's major tragedies. My intention is to demonstrate that one of the functions of Shakespeare's tragedies—in the context of the rhetorical tradition that the early modern period revived, preserved, and challenged—is to experiment with the fundamental question: To be or not to be rhetorical? Each tragedy, I hope to show, is a unique display of an extreme example of the process and outcome of a noble character being or becoming *hubristically* unrhetorical.

Another aspect of rhetoric that I will examine in detail is the practice of *argumentum in utramque partem* (arguing both sides of a debating question), which was an important exercise in rhetorical education during the early modern period. Perhaps the most well-known dramatic rendition of *argumentum in utramque partem* occurs after the assassination of Julius Caesar (analyzed in depth in the section "Outstanding Debts" in the fourth chapter), when Brutus and Mark Antony argue for different impressions of the same Julius Caesar, who is now dead and therefore unable to confirm or deny either of these impressions. As Coppélia Kahn observes, *Julius Caesar* is "an enigmatic play, representing the assassination of Caesar from shifting perspectives that frustrate any certain judgement of either the victim or his assassins" ("Shakespeare's Classical Tragedies" 212). Brutus confidently gives grounds for the assassination by dispraising ambition, Mark Antony artfully denounces the assassination by praising generosity, which amounts to dispraising ingratitude. In other words, the moment of

peripety in this play moves from the reproach of ambition to the reproach of ingratitude. Ingratitude, like ambition, is the failure to reciprocate. Both orators aim to settle debts. Ironically, that is to say, both orators protest against the same transgression: indebtedness. But Brutus and Mark Antony present interpretations of this transgression to the mob from different points of view.

In addition to considering his or her particular (judging or observing) audience, the skilled orator must be able to re-present his or her topic from different points of view. These two aspects of rhetoric are not unrelated. To be able to demonstrate the topic under consideration from a different perspective, the orator must be equipped with the strategies necessary for praise and dispraise. The two rhetorical figures that epitomize praise and dispraise are *paradiastole* and *meiosis*.[4] The flattering amplification in *paradiastole* and the belittling diminution in *meiosis* put forward an acceptable or unacceptable translation of a characteristic. In the fifth chapter, I will concentrate on the reversal of values that these strategies bring about. And in the second chapter, I will compare the *meiotic* languages of Hamlet and Iago. But more importantly, in the first chapter, I will argue that, from the standpoint of rhetoric as artful social interaction, the most intolerable and impermissible form of *meiosis* is being inconsiderate of one's audience. The

[4] It is debatable among textbooks of rhetoric whether these strategies are rhetorical figures. Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric*, for instance, explores these strategies in detail among the different types of amplification, not among the rhetorical figures. Puttenham, on the other hand, examines *paradiastole* and *meiosis* among his "sensable" figures. *Meiosis* is once more examined among the "sententious" figures.

technical term for this version of *meiosis* is *tapinosis*.[5] Following Quintilian, Puttenham disapproves of this figure among the "vicious" manners of speech. In fact, Puttenham explains *tapinosis* immediately before pompous speech. *Tapinosis*, according to Puttenham, which is "no small fault in a maker," occurs when language "impair[s] the dignity, height, vigor, or majesty" of an honourable cause or "greatly blemish[es]" the value of an impressive accomplishment (344–45). The "Abaser," Puttenham continues, "almost speak[s] untruly and injuriously by way of abasement" (345). Moreover, Puttenham explains that *tapinosis* is a "vicious" manner of speech because it is out of "ignorance or error in the choice of your word" (269). *Tapinosis*, put simply, is the "vice" of speaking slightingly as a result of being blind to the worth of the content of the speech or its interlocutor. To summarize, being inconsiderately unrhetorical, being unapologetically indifferent toward the values and interests of one's audience, is one manifestation of *meiosis*.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

The first chapter of the dissertation, "The Different Othello," will explore how Othello stands out in Venice. In the first section of the chapter, "The Price of Patience," I will argue that Othello is a man of action at the service of a calculating society. This confident warrior is surrounded by sedentary officials, a "counter-caster" (1.1.29) lieutenant, a scheming ensign, a passionately curious wife, and a father-in-law demanding to exact justice. The modernization

[5] The Greek word *meiosis* means "making smaller," and *tapinosis* means "lowering" or "demeaning." Puttenham translates the former into the "Disabler" and the latter into the "Abaser."

that Venice has undergone has, on one hand, suppressed warrior ethics, and on the other, left the city without a competent warrior to defend it. Thus, the city simultaneously repels and requires an outsider like the "all-in-all sufficient" (4.1.252) Othello. Venice, in other words, looks at Othello from a utilitarian point of view. With this observation as point of departure, I will compare how Desdemona and Iago react to the unfamiliar presence of Othello in their personal and professional lives.

And in the second section of this chapter, "The Isolated Abaser," I will examine this comparison with reference to Puttenham's account of *meiosis*. Iago's belittling manner of speech is, like Puttenham's "sensable" *meiosis*, out of "spite" and "malice" (269). The ensign's provocative and shocking *meiosis* aims to disgrace the reputation of those around him. Desdemona's language, like the soothing words of the Duke, employs "sententious" *meiosis*, which is diminution for the purposes of extenuation.[6] Such rhetorical diminution is reconciliatory and infused with goodwill. With peace as her objective, Desdemona strives to de-escalate tension—the strained relationship between her father and her husband at the beginning of the story, between Cassio and her husband in the middle of the story, and between herself and her husband at the end of the story. But, as I will show, the diminishment in Othello's style is an effect of "vicious" *meiosis*—that is, *tapinosis*. Others appear less appealing in the awesome presence of Othello due to his constant self-aggrandizement. Othello's poetic style is always out of place, which intensely exasperates the sensitive Iago. Like himself, Othello's manner of speech is, in the words of his obscure and surreptitious nemesis, an "erring barbarian" (1.3.342–43).

[6] Puttenham calls "sententious" *meiosis* the "Figure of Extenuation" (304).

My intention in the second chapter, "A Reading of *Hamlet*: Early Modern Praise and Dispraise," is to demonstrate that the *meiotic* language employed by Hamlet has different applications. The first section of the chapter, "Pride and Reputation," with close readings of the examples for amplification in Thomas Wilsons's *Art of Rhetoric*, will investigate in more detail the operation of praise and dispraise. Iago will serve as a fitting example of an orator equipped with the skills necessary for *argumentum in utramque partem*, for praising and dispraising the same topic. In the second section, "Meticulous Virtue," I will argue that to complain about the nature of life in general and the corruption in Denmark in particular, the grieving Hamlet gives in to a mode of thinking that is permeated by dispraise. In this chapter, I will identify two functions for Hamlet's *meiotic* and meticulous broodings—what he himself calls *being* "particular" (1.2.75).[7] First, Hamlet's constant employment of *meiosis* is a symptom of his noble, virtuous character. Extremely sensitive to vice and corruption, Hamlet painstakingly wishes to correct the world and the people around him: "The time is out of joint: oh, cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right" (1.5.189–90). And second, Hamlet's patient and offensive *meiotic* language is a ploy to postpone his hidden urge for revenge. An impatient desire for vengeance disgusts the noble, virtuous prince. Disregarding the ramifications of his unexplainable disrespectful behaviour (especially toward the vigilant Claudius), Hamlet, throughout the play, is more concerned about his compelling drive to exact revenge on his uncle, which is exacerbated by the

[7] In response to Gertrude's question, "Why seems it so particular with thee?" (1.2.75), Hamlet explains that he is as powerless to stop being "particular" as he is to seem "particular." Hamlet *is* "particular": "Nay, it is. I know not 'seems'" (76).

promptings of the ghost and the memory of his father. And it is thanks to his habitual *meiotic* broodings that he is able to suppress this drive.

Next, in the third and fourth chapters, "The Craft of Virtue in Shakespeare's Rome" and "The Burden of Friendship: Demanding Generosity in *Julius Caesar* and *Timon of Athens*," I will examine the reaction to the tragic hero's unrhetorical behaviour. The tragic hero's rhetorical shortcomings depreciate the people around him. Cassius, Octavius, Iago, and Claudius are among the many spiteful characters in Shakespeare's tragedies who are offended because they are disregarded. In terms of rhetoric, the tragic hero becomes an unpardonable enemy of his community because of the *meiotic* effect of his unrhetorical behaviour toward others. Perhaps a testimony to human pride, being overlooked is deeply unsettling, excruciatingly unbearable. The rancorous envy of Cassius toward the "careless" Julius Caesar is a moving example: "This man / Is now become a god, and Cassius is / A wretched creature, and must bend his body / If Caesar carelessly but nod on him" (1.2.15–18).

In the third and fourth chapters, focusing on the Roman tragedies and *Timon of Athens*, I will demonstrate that Shakespeare's tragedies present characters in positions of power and influence who endorse certain virtues that seek to tame or counter the tragic hero's *hubristic* tendencies. Volumnia, for example, to control Coriolanus's insolent anger toward the plebeians, instructs him to be humble and polite ("Invective and Civility in *Coriolanus*" in the third chapter). Brutus and the conspirators free themselves from the loyalty that Julius Caesar demands ("Faith and Reason in *Julius Caesar*" in the third chapter). Just as Julius Caesar expects to be given loyalty freely, Timon expects to be given money freely ("The Bountiful Timon" in the fourth chapter). The Romans and the Athenians are unforgivingly unfriendly to any man who turns a blind eye to the law of reciprocity. And Mark Antony's scandalous "voluptuousness"

(1.4.26) is finally defeated by Octavius's relentless ascetic willpower ("Gratification and Mastery in *Antony and Cleopatra*" in the third chapter). Furthermore, these virtues are sometimes genuine, sometimes not. Volumnia, for example, instructs her son to act out humility; Calphurnia, on the other hand, sincerely implores Julius Caesar to be prudent. Each play, however, portrays its hero's obstinate resistance to the patient virtue, which ultimately leads to his tragic downfall.

As I mentioned earlier, being unrhetorical in social relations leaves one susceptible to persuasion. Finally, in the fifth chapter, "Shakespeare's Tragic Rhetoric of Temptation," focusing on *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, I will explore the rhetoric of temptation to which such vulnerability falls prey. While in the previous two chapters I will concentrate on open and public remedies for the tragic hero's inconsideration and irresponsibility that benefit society, in this chapter I will concentrate on secret and cunning manipulations that lead to chaos and destruction. The manipulator is quite close to and familiar with the tragic protagonist. Such manipulators are, in the words of Timon's faithful servant, "friends / Who can bring noblest minds to basest ends" (4.3.465–65). This is why Goneril and Regan, Cassius, Lady Macbeth, and Iago serve as excellent examples.[8] In the second chapter, I will uncover the operation of rhetorical praise in the deceptive language of Claudius (contrasting it with the dispraise in Hamlet's deceptive language). In the first section of this chapter, "The Game of *Paradiastole*," with reference to ancient and early modern accounts of *paradiastole*, I will

[8] McAlindon claims that "the figure of the manipulator in Shakespeare's tragedies is descended by way of the morality Vice from the devil of Christian mythos, the tempter who deploys the arts of the orator and the actor in making evil seem good to his deluded victim" (11).

examine how this rhetorical figure functions. And in the following four sections of this chapter, each dealing with one of the above-mentioned tragedies, I will argue that in order for temptation to successfully reel in its prey, the tempter must make use of the dignifying translation of *paradiastole*. As Iago phrases it: "When devils will the blackest sins put on / They do suggest at first with heavenly shows" (2.3.346–47).

More specifically, in the final chapter of the dissertation, I will demonstrate that the dangerously perceptive tempter—a "friend" like "honest" Iago—slyly develops a partnership with his or her victim by identifying and identifying with a latent drive in the victim. Goneril and Regan, for instance, are not the cause of their father's "unruly waywardness" and "unconstant starts" (1.1.294–96). They recognize and encourage irresponsibility in their father. At the same time, they also present themselves as irresponsible. Lady Macbeth inspires the unhindered expression of the ambition that is already boiling up in Macbeth. Macbeth's "dearest partner of greatness" (1.5.9–10) wishes to remove "all that impedes" (26) the hesitant Macbeth from becoming king. Temptation, in short, requires the identification of and with a dormant inclination in its prey.

Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the *paradiastolic* dignification in temptation contains within itself the operation of *meiosis* (Puttenham's "sensable" *meiosis*). And here occurs a reversal of values. After her sisters' game of *paradiastole*, Cordelia's "price" (1.1.195) falls in the eyes of her unwary father. By identifying with the victim, the tempter assures the victim that they pursue the same objective. And such a partnership necessarily entails antagonism. In uniting with the victim by wheedling him into believing in a common goal, the tempter creates a common enemy out of the one who is opposed to this goal. The tempter *meiotically* casts shame upon the opposition. "So will I," Iago schemes, "turn her virtue into pitch / And out of her own

goodness make the net / That shall enmesh them all" (2.3.355–57). Desdemona, therefore, does not simply become the innocent target of Othello's jealousy. Rather, her trusting character stands opposed to the doubt that Iago inspires in Othello. And thus develops the motive for murder in these tragedies.

Chapter One

The Different Othello

Introduction

The city of Venice and its tragic hero represent two opposing forms of honour. Othello's is in line with the morality of the warrior, which is founded on love and respect for the self. Venice has availed itself of a different kind of morality, one centering on respect for law, order, and rationality. In *Othello*, there is a collision between an active warrior and a calculating society. Paul Cantor, in "The Shores of Hybridity," describes this juxtaposition of antithetical value systems as "the clash of civilizations" (902). This man of action is besieged by calculation: his sedentary superiors, who realize their desperate need of his service as they calculate the "just account" (1.3.5) of the Turkish fleet; his "counter-caster" (1.1.29) lieutenant; and, of course, his deviously calculating ensign. Even his wife warns him of the time when she will "touch" his love with a task "full of poise and difficult weight" (3.3.78–81). The opposition between these moralities is clearly demonstrated in the manner in which each responds to the desire for revenge. Warrior ethics passionately demands rightful vengeance, whereas the modernization that Venice has undergone has compelled this city to frustrate this desire and become a tolerant community. What I will show in the first section of this chapter is that Venice, in order to establish a safe and peaceful community, has transformed self-love into love for society, and at once repels and requires the antiquated epic grandeur of Othello: its army encourages Othello-like ambition only if it benefits society, not the individual. Thus, the great general is idolized as the hero many wish to emulate. And Desdemona is the epitome of this social movement; she is the optimistic voice of the equality and inclusiveness that Venice is striving to establish. Not

everyone, however, can conform to this morality. Iago has no respect for the social order and embodies the desire to dismantle the system by exposing its flaws. The target of Iago is not any person but the values of his society. And in the second section, with reference to George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*, I will demonstrate that these differences in the plot of *Othello* embody the different types of the rhetorical figure *meiosis*. With close readings of passages by Othello, the Duke, Desdemona, and Iago, I will show that there are different types of diminishment in their rhetoric.

It is necessary to add at the start that the city of Venice, as I consider it in this chapter, is the rational pursuit of an idealized conception of a peaceful community by means of certain moral values, the most important of which is the acquisition of certainty through calculated thinking. And the characters in this play—ranging from the sensible Duke to the conniving Iago—stand for the different reactions toward the pursuit of these moral values. For instance, what the Duke and Iago have in common is their tendency to carefully evaluate a situation and consider the different approaches to the situation. They make decisions based on their evaluations. As I will show, this tendency requires two rhetorical strategies: *bringing before the eyes* (*energeia*) and arguing *in utramque partem*. But the difference between the Duke and Iago is a matter of intention. Employing different forms of rhetorical diminishment, the Duke seeks to mitigate disturbance, Iago causes disturbance.

THE PRICE OF PATIENCE

As the play opens, the audience is introduced to two conflicts: one is the internal conflict between Brabantio and Othello, the other the external conflict between Venice and the Ottoman Empire. The fact that the highest members of authority have been awakened and stirred at the

"odd even and dull watch o'th' night" (1.1.119) attests to the socio-political weight of the two incidents, behind both of which reverberates cacophonously the formidable and alarming name *barbarian*. To understand the nature of this city, a closer examination of the two disturbances and how they are dealt with is necessary.

There are two discrepancies in the dispute between Brabantio and Othello. First, there is a striking incompatibility between the accusation and the confrontation of the accuser, between Brabantio's crude allegation that Othello has charmed Desdemona's feelings by means of witchcraft and his refined solution:

> Othello: Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
>
> Without a prompter. Where will you that I go
>
> To answer this your charge?
>
> Brabantio: To prison, till fit time
>
> Of law and course of direct session
>
> Call thee to answer. (1.2.83–87)

We can appreciate the import of this dialogue only if we take into consideration the emotional condition of Brabantio. The prominent figure of the state has suffered a great loss. He has gathered his servants and kinsmen, and marched the streets of Venice in search of the culprit in order to exact revenge. But instead of resorting to violence after being publicly dishonoured, the proud and powerful senator resists the urge for what Francis Bacon calls "Wilde Iustice" ("Of Revenge" 11) and turns to the law at the peak of his anger on his own volition. The citizens of this society show genuine reverence for its judicial system. This civilized city is marked by

peace, and this peaceful state is achieved through upholding the law.[9] When Iago and Roderigo, in the opening scene, cause an uproar as if the city is on fire and shout that there has been robbery, Brabantio replies, "What, tell'st thou me of robbing? / This is Venice: my house is not a grange" (1.1.102–03). The idea of someone breaking the law in Venice is strange to these urbane citizens. With such respect for the law also comes high esteem for rank and hierarchy. It is no wonder, then, that promotion is prized and sought after by ambitious young soldiers such as Iago and Cassio.

We observe in the first act all those who are the protectors of the security that this city enjoys, yet among them we find no outstanding combatant. Venice, which has effectively established law and order so that its citizens refrain from the act of vengeance, lacks great warriors. Merciless and unbending heroes such as Macbeth and Coriolanus have no place in this civilized community. The best soldier that these modern Italians can produce is Cassio, hence his lieutenancy.[10] Iago tells us that Cassio

> never set a squadron in the field,
> Nor the division of a battle knows
> More than a spinster—unless the bookish theoric,
> Wherein the tongued consuls can propose
> As masterly as he! Mere prattle without practice

[9] In "Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love," Catherine Bates writes that "in Shakespeare's day, the great trading city of Venice was a by-word for civilization and luxury, and the play opens with its citizens' comfortable assurance of that fact just about still intact" (193).

[10] Even the Florentine Cassio may be regarded as an outsider among the Venetians.

Is all his soldiership. (1.1.20–25)

The extent of the veracity of Iago's description of his rival is not relevant here. What is obvious is that Michael Cassio is no Othello. And this is the main reason why the awe-inspiring Othello stands out in the eyes of everyone. For these civilians of a mercantile society, military skill has an exotic charm. Thus, law and order come at the price of mediocrity; this city is incapable of engendering greatness.

The second discrepancy in the dispute is the inconsistency between the initial reaction Brabantio's lawsuit receives and the process through which it is settled. When the wronged senator presents his case to his "brothers of the state" (1.2.96), he is comforted by a unified voice of sympathy. This fellow feeling is remarkable if we remind ourselves of the urgency of the meeting at night of the high officials to deal with the imminent threat of foreign invasion. Brabantio's opening words are that he is not here for "the general care" but rather for his own "particular grief" (1.3.54–55). At first, he does not mention the identity of the criminal; he only states the crime that has been committed on his daughter:

She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks:
For nature so preposterously to err,
Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
Sans witchcraft could not. (60–64)

The Duke puts the dire matters of the state on hold to get to the bottom of the complaint, and even empowers Brabantio with the full force of "the bloody book of law" to punish the person who has "beguiled" his daughter even if this person happens to be the Duke's "proper son" (65–70). Again, this fear of beguilement and witchery is coarse and uncouth, especially among the

wise, old officials of a civilized society. The irrational panic, however, is immediately counterbalanced by insistence upon supporting evidence. What follows in this scene is a fair legal procedure, which is fitting to a rational society. The Duke, with all due respect to Brabantio, informs him that his allegation alone is not sufficient:

> To vouch this is no proof
>
> Without more wider and more overt test
>
> Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
>
> Of modern seeming do prefer against him.[11] (106–09)

The assembly demands concrete and conclusive proof of Othello's black magic. Upon hearing the whole of Brabantio's indictment, the senate's interrogation proceeds by allowing first Othello and then Desdemona to present their defence.

What is even more noteworthy is that the first person to speak after Desdemona's testimony is her father:

> God be with you. I have done.
>
> Please it, your grace, on to the state affairs.
>
> I had rather to adopt a child than get it.
>
> Come hither, Moor.
>
> I here do give thee that with all my heart
>
> Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
>
> I would keep from thee. For your sake, jewel,

[11] This is in sharp contrast with how Othello and Iago, later in the play, proceed against Desdemona.

I am glad at soul I have no other child,

For thy escape would teach me tyranny,

To hang clogs on them. I have done, my lord. (189–98)

Brabantio's anguish at the betrayal of his daughter and the Moor who he often invited to his home is palpably intense, so much so that later "pure grief / Shore his old thread in twain" (5.2.200–01). But in terms of the legal process that takes place before him, he accepts his daughter's decision and forgoes his desire for punishment—a heavy task that neither King Lear nor Shylock could do. The accuser instantly submits to and in no way challenges the verdict of the trial. The obstinate Brabantio's acceptance of defeat once more reveals the advancement this society has made in relation to the pain of dishonour. The outraged senator surrenders to sensible judgement.

Another distinctive sign of the value of logical thinking in Venice is the Duke attempting to console the distressed Brabantio with *sententiae*, even if it does turn out to be ineffective:

When remedies are past, the griefs are ended

By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.

To mourn a mischief that is past and gone

Is the next way to draw new mischief on.

What cannot be preserved, when Fortune takes,

Patience her injury a mockery makes.

The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief;

He robs himself that spends a bootless grief. (201–08)

The irony of the Duke's witticism is that it is these words that are "bootless" in the face of Brabantio's grief, and it is Brabantio who makes a "mockery" of this speech with his retort that

"words are words: I never yet did hear / That the bruised heart was pierced through the ears" (217–18). But the Duke is persistent. A few lines later, his parting words are yet another consolatory witty remark: "If virtue no delighted beauty lack, / Your son-in-law is far more fair than black" (286–87). It seems as if the Duke's argument has as much effect on Brabantio as Brabantio's argument has on the Duke. Nevertheless, that Brabantio's heartache renders him unable to love Desdemona and Othello as before does not deny the significance sound reasoning has in this society. Reason is not always powerful enough to pacify emotion. In *The Future of an Illusion*, Sigmund Freud claims that one of the "widespread human characteristics" is that "arguments are of no avail against their passions" (8). The failure of reason to quell Brabantio's sorrow notwithstanding, Brabantio does yield to the ruling of a judicious legal system.

In short, the Duke sorts out this strife by persuading an indignant citizen to accept an "erring barbarian" (1.3.342–43) as one of their own, not to mention as his son-in-law. This practice of fairness is in fact the preaching of tolerance. Venice has inhibited the classical ideal of revenge and, through law and reason, embraced the virtue of patience. At the start of this tragedy we see a society promoting tolerance; in the middle, we see the intolerant hero of this society showing his true colours:

> All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven. 'Tis gone.
> Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell;
> Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
> To tyrannous hate. Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,
> For 'tis of aspics' tongues. (3.3.441–45)

Shakespeare dramatizes the opposite situation in *Richard II*. The England of Richard still glorifies heroic vengeance: "That which in mean men we entitle patience / Is pale cold cowardice

in noble breasts" (1.2.33–34). John of Gaunt reprimands Richard for having weakened England through his lenient leadership:

> Thy deathbed is no lesser than the land
> Wherein thou liest in reputation sick;
> And thou, too careless patient as thou art,
> Committ'st thy anointed body to the cure
> Of those physicians that first wounded thee. (2.1.95–99)

Even his wife, after his deposition, chastises him for lacking the spirit of retaliation:

> The lion, dying, thrusteth forth his paw
> And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage
> To be o'erpowered; and wilt thou, pupil-like,
> Take thy correction mildly, kiss the rod,
> And fawn on rage with base humility,
> Which art a lion and a king of beasts? (5.1.29–34)

Of course, Richard's weakness is not that he is a patient sovereign. He does desire to fight back, but he does not have the capacity to do so—hence, at the moment of realizing this, his identity collapses. More importantly, after Richard frustrates the duel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray by banishing both from England, Bolingbroke returns to England seeking vengeance and demanding justice, whereas Mowbray joins the campaign "in glorious Christian field, / Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross / Against black Pagans, Turks, and Saracens" (4.1.87–89). Interestingly, "toiled with works of war," Mowbray's remaining days are spent in Venice, where he "gave / His body to that pleasant country's earth, / And his pure soul unto his captain, Christ, / Under whose colors he had fought so long" (90–94). Thus, in *Richard II*,

Shakespeare portrays a community whose idolization of the warrior is being diminished, and for whom the peaceful Christian Venice (set against its hostile non-Christian enemies) serves as a model.

In *Othello*, we never encounter a Turk because the Turkish fleet never arrives. And throughout the play, there is absolutely no information given regarding the cultural values of the Turks. Nevertheless, being Turk and turning Turk have great (negative) implications among the Venetians. The generalized concept *Turk* refers to anything that is opposed to the social system; it is thus synonymous with barbarism. In *The Arte of English Poesie*, when discussing rhetorical figures, George Puttenham lists the "vices" in speech that are "always intolerable" thus: "barbarousness, incongruity, ill disposition, fond affectation, rusticity, and all extreme darkness such as it is not possible for a man to understand the matter without an interpreter" (335). In the following chapter, after explaining that "to speak barbarously" is the "foulest vice" (336), Puttenham presents an etymological analysis of the term *barbarous*: according to some, it refers to "the Africans now called Barbarians"; according to others, it refers to the Arabs who were "driven out of Arabia westward into the countries of Mauritania" by "seditious Mohammedans" (337). Othello's adventurous background and Iago's claim that Othello "goes into Mauretania" (4.2.217) upon learning that Venice no longer requires him suggest the same ambiguity regarding his roots. Puttenham further explains that uncovering the origin of this term is not as significant as what it connotes: that which is "strange." As Michel de Montaigne, in his essay on

cannibalism, observes, "every one gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not in use in his own country" ("Of Cannibals" 34).[12]

In Venice, the external enemy is Turk; the moral values that this city no longer accommodates are Turk; and in the final act, Othello, despite the fact that his origin remains unknown, becomes Turk. Critics who associate Othello's otherness with the otherness of the Turks place too much faith in the Venetian stereotype and disregard his individuality. Thus, the blackness of the Turk is not only a threat from without; it also symbolizes the qualities that Venice is ashamed to have once itself possessed and has now proudly suppressed in order to establish a peaceful community. The city's attitude toward heroic values is masked beneath

[12] In *Things of Darkness*, Kim Hall argues that "the trope of blackness had a broad arsenal of effects in the early modern period, meaning that it is applied not only to dark-skinned Africans but to Native Americans, Indians, Spanish, and even Irish and Welsh as groups that needed to be marked as 'other'" (6–7). Nevertheless, all of these instances of the "trope of blackness," Hall asserts, extract their power from "an idea of African difference" (7). And Hall's main contention in *Things of Darkness* is based on the association of this *trope* with "the dualism of good and evil" (6). Among the examples that Hall offers is Puttenham's treatment of the rhetorical figure *antiphrasis*—a figure of ridicule that employs a phrase opposite to the intended meaning. According to Puttenham, the "Broad Flout" is "when we deride by plain and flat contradiction, as he that saw a dwarf go in the street said to his companion that walked with him, 'See yonder giant'; and to a Negro or woman blackamoor, 'In good sooth, ye are a fair one'" (275–76). As this example shows, blackness is not simply opposed to whiteness; it is a "plain and flat contradiction" to beauty.

racial prejudice. And since patience is of utmost importance in Venice, the urge for revenge is considered to be barbaric. Othello's words to his men once he stops the drunken scuffle in Cyprus clearly reveal the binary opposition between impulsiveness and calmness disguised as Christian antagonism to the Turks: "Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that / Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites? / For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl" (2.3.149–51). Similarly, in his criticism of boldness, Francis Bacon employs an offensive reference to Islam. A "Bold Fellow," writes Bacon, will

> many times, doe Mahomet's Miracle. Mahomet made the People beleeve that he would call an Hill to him, And from the Top of it offer up his Praiers for the Observers of his Law. The People assembled; Mahomet cald the Hill to come to him, againe and againe; And when the Hill stood still, he was never a whit abashed, but said, *If the Hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hil*. So these Men, when they have promised great Matters, and failed most shamefully, (yet if they have the perfection of Boldnesse) they will but slight it over, and make a turne, and no more adoe. ("Of Boldnesse" 33)

We may, therefore, regard the Renaissance image of the audacious Muslim in these and similar examples as a *trope* used to comment on the hazards of impatience.[13]

"Ability to wait is so difficult an accomplishment," writes Friedrich Nietzsche in *Human, All Too Human*, "that the greatest poets have not disdained to make inability to wait a motif of

[13] Impatience can function as an important ingredient for revenge. But this does not mean that all acts of revenge are triggered by impatience. Revenge may be calculated. Revenge may be carried out patiently. In the following chapter, I will discuss in detail the relationship between patience and vengeance in *Hamlet*.

their poems" (43). And of the two examples Nietzsche offers, *Othello* is the first. Nietzsche explains that the mentality of the warrior revolves around the lofty image he has of himself, his vanity. Accordingly, he is quick and vehement in his response to "the horrible promptings of his wounded vanity" (43). Warriors feel compelled to act out their passions. Their steadfast devotion to their self-image shapes their character to such an extent that their "tragic element" becomes "their inability to put off their work"—"they cannot wait" (43). This explains why the impetuous warrior considers a duel, which is the ultimate test in the morality of heroism, "necessary" and "reasonable." Before every duel, the warrior "says to himself: 'either I live on, in which event he dies this instant, or the other way round'. In such a case waiting would mean protracting the torments of wounded honour in the face of him who has wounded it, and this can be more painful than life is worth" (43). What the warrior cannot do is to *not* act. "Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight!" (5.2.80), implores Desdemona just before Othello smothers her; "But half an hour!" (82); "But while I say one prayer!" (83).

This does not mean that the warrior is incapable of patience. Othello is after all known for his composure. "Can he be angry?" asks Iago, "I have seen the cannon / When it hath blown his ranks into the air / And, like the devil, from his very arm / Puffed his own brother—and is he angry?" (3.4.126–29). But even his patience serves his self-love. His defence, for instance, before the Duke and the senators, amounts to self-praise. Before that, he tells Iago that he is immune to Brabantio's charge:

> Let him do his spite:
> My services which I have done the signory
> Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know—
> Which, when I know that boasting is an honor,

I shall promulgate—I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reached. (1.2.17–24)

This is not the kind of patience that the Venetians practice. Born from contempt for the barbarous act of revenge, their patience serves their society. It is a waiting based on the idea of equality and, as Nietzsche points out, achieved when one can "console" oneself with the "reflection" that this injury could have happened to anyone (43). Venice forestalls the expression of anger through reasoning. It is reflective waiting that the Duke, upon hearing the Moor's account of how he wooed Desdemona, teaches Brabantio when he says: "I think this tale would win my daughter too" (1.3.171).

The genius of Iago is that he comprehends Othello's vanity. Othello confides in Iago that he has chosen to hold back his "unhoused free condition" in "circumscription and confine" out of love for "the gentle Desdemona" (1.2.25–27). "Chaos is come again" (3.3.92), Othello is well aware, when he no longer loves her. Othello binds his self-love to his love for Desdemona; his self-possession translates into his possession of Desdemona; and he articulates this translation when he proclaims "My life upon her faith" (1.3.291). The astute Iago recognizes that undermining the latter would threaten the former. Iago provokes the impassioned warrior in Othello so that Venice be reminded of its disgust toward such temperament. The villain succeeds and the tragic hero mourns the loss of his (self-)possession:

Had it pleased heaven
To try me with affliction; had they rained
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head;

Steeped me in poverty to the very lips;

Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,

I should have found in some place of my soul

A drop of patience. But, alas, to make me

The fixed figure for the time of scorn

To point his slow and moving finger at!

Yet could I bear that too, well, very well.

But there, where I have garnered up my heart,

Where either I must live, or bear no life,

The fountain from the which my current runs,

Or else dries up—to be discarded thence,

Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads

To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,

Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin:

I here look grim as hell! (4.2.46–63)

It is "black vengeance," therefore, that turns the "far more fair than black" Othello of the first act into "the blacker devil" (5.2.128) of the final act.

The vanity of the warrior also determines his courage. But Venice celebrates Othello's valiant ambition because it is useful to the city; and thus he is "hotly called for" (1.2.44) to deal with "the general enemy Ottoman" (1.3.49). "Another of his fathom," Iago knows too well, "they have none / To lead their business" (1.1.148–49). This community has equipped itself with a judicial system that can resolve internal conflicts; since it lacks adept fighters experienced in warfare, for external conflicts it depends on a mercenary who is quite familiar with "feats of

broils and battle" (1.3.87). As Cantor puts it, "Venice despises the Turks as barbarians, and yet it recognizes its need to enlist a warlike spirit in its own defence. The city's answer is to hire a barbarian to fight its battles, to fight fire with fire without getting burned itself" (903). The image of Othello as the protector of Venice becomes a model for young and envious Venetians—including Desdemona—to emulate. Like their patience, their ambition shields the social bond from barbarism. The modernization of Venice, therefore, is in fact a *conversion* of the virtues of the warrior, which have been programmed to serve society. These virtues are conditioned to uphold pride in the social order rather than pride in oneself. The real evil in this society is self-love, which has been transfigured into communal love. Having removed vanity, Venice optimistically hopes that all of its citizens will pursue the common good. But, as Nietzsche observes in *Daybreak*, "In the lands where man is restrained and subdued there are still plenty of backsliding and unsubdued men" (109). With every conversion there will also be a *perversion*. Iago is highly critical of the values of his society. His perverted envy does not wish to preserve the social order but to disrupt it by laying bare its weaknesses. In sum, Desdemona's sympathy and Iago's antipathy are opposite manifestations of the virtues of Othello that Venice has appropriated for itself.

To better understand the distinction between Othello and Venice, it is worth going over a number of notable instances of the criticism of the tragedy. T. S. Eliot, in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," faults Othello's refusal to abandon his "individualism" and "vice of Pride" (112), even after the horrible murder of Desdemona. With regard to Othello's final speech, Eliot writes, "What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is *cheering himself up*. He is endeavouring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself" (111). Eliot claims that this "attitude of self-dramatization assumed by some of

Shakespeare's heroes at moments of tragic intensity" (110) is derived from the stoical principles of Seneca, and culminates in Nietzsche, who "is the most conspicuous modern instance of cheering oneself up" (112). What bothers Eliot about Othello is that his "stoical attitude is the reverse of Christian humility" (112). There is a contradiction, however, in Eliot's argument that sheds light on the main difference between Othello and Iago. Eliot first assigns a cause to pride: "universal human weakness" (110); then, he defines it as "the refuge for the individual in an indifferent or hostile world too big for him" (112). The type of pride Eliot has in mind is a "deliberate resignation" (114). One turns to pride *after* one has failed to conform to the social order, because "men who could take part in the life of a thriving Greek city-state had something better to join themselves to; and Christians have had something better" (112). And finally, such stoicism grows into anarchism (114). The secluded individual becomes socially destructive because he could not take pride in the values of his community. His pride in himself is the *consequence* of a lack of pride in society. And that is what humility is: pride with a different target—social pride. Eliot's description of pride is not incorrect, but it is not the pride of a tragic hero. This is a perverted version of Othello's pride; it is the depraved pride of Iago. Eliot does unintentionally hint at tragic pride when he prescribes humility. "Humility," writes Eliot, "is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself" (111). At this impasse in his argument, it is humility that is the consequence of a lack of pride. Humility, which is uplifting social values at the expense of one's vanity, can be achieved once pride, which is uplifting oneself, dies—the former is the converted pride of Desdemona, the latter the tragic pride of Othello. Social pride and anarchic pride are antithetical metamorphoses of tragic pride.

Eliot's conservative criticism aims to preserve social standards such as humility. That he equates Othello's destructiveness with Iago's destructiveness stems from his expectation of moral education from tragedy. He analyzes tragedy from the point of view of the moral effect it has on its spectator, a critical stance initiated by Aristotle's doctrine of *catharsis*. According to this doctrine, the function of tragedy is to cleanse the audience of the pity and fear aroused by the tragic hero. The spectator is encouraged to renounce the hero's *hubristic* tendency. (Kenneth Burke, in his essay on *Coriolanus*, points to three meanings of the Greek term *hubris*: "pride," "excess," and "a civil offence, an insulting air of superiority, deemed punishable by death" [187].) It is not that Aristotle holds pity and fear in high esteem. Like Plato, Aristotle considers these emotions as feminine and harmful to a masculine society. But while Plato banishes tragedy from his republic for arousing these emotions, Aristotle sees the purging of these emotions through tragedy as beneficial to society. As Terry Eagleton explains in *Sweet Violence*, the doctrine of *catharsis* is Aristotle's "ingenious riposte" to the Platonic censure of tragedy: "Tragedy can perform the pleasurable, politically valuable service of draining off an excess of enfeebling emotions such as pity and fear, thus providing a kind of public therapy for those of the citizenry in danger of emotional flabbiness" (153).[14] Thus, from this perspective, Othello is immoral and Iago is the tempter who goads him to actualize his immorality.

[14] It is worth mentioning that Nietzsche vehemently objects to Aristotle's doctrine of *catharsis*. Firstly, he argues, pity and fear are not "discharged" or "relieved" but "*intensified*" after their excitation (*Human, All Too Human* 98). But more importantly, Nietzsche asserts that tragedy in its origin in Greece intended to please the spectator with "*pleasing speech*" not overwhelm them with fear and pity; it delights the spectator to observe the tragic hero "speak well and at length"

More recent Shakespeareans, however, have reduced the moral interpretation to a reading of the play that is limited to religion. Daniel Vitkus, in "Turning Turk," and Robert Watson, in "*Othello* as Reformation Tragedy," employ this method in their allegorical readings of the play as a defence of Protestantism. According to Vitkus and Watson, Othello and Iago together symbolize a dire threat that Protestant England faced at the start of the seventeenth century, the threat of being converted to either Roman Catholicism or Islam. And through the "caricature" of these two religions depicted in *Othello*, Watson argues, "Shakespeare can make his audience into more committed Protestants" (154):

> By making Desdemona a Christlike heroine, Iago a jesuitical devil, and Othello an imperfectly reformed infidel, Shakespeare renews the polemical function of the morality play for a new theological era, depicting a Protestant ideal of marriage sustainable only through the Protestant version of love, as a gift that nothing earthly can earn or repay. I'm not entirely sure what Shakespeare believed in 1604, or wanted us to believe. But a Jacobean audience convinced to value spontaneous love above Venetian traditions, to condemn Othello for letting the dubious evidence of his senses distract him from the certain devotion of his heart, and to hate Iago for deluding Christians into believing in reward and retaliation rather than love, would have found itself endorsing the Protestant Reformation. (168–69)

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when he is "in the most difficult situations," when "life approaches the abyss and a real human being would usually lose his head and certainly his fine language" (*The Gay Science* 80). The purpose of tragedy, Nietzsche contends, is not purgation but pleasure from praising speech.

In "Othello Circumcised," Julia Lupton claims that Othello and Iago correspond to the Judeo-Islamic tradition—or more precisely, the religious practice of circumcision, which Christianity replaced with baptism. "In *Othello*," writes Lupton,

> the romance of Gentile conversion supports the dream of a universal brotherhood that allows Shakespeare to set up and see through the black-white opposition. Yet this Christian-humanist discourse always operates as a universalism minus the circumcised; the Jew and the Muslim are subtracted from the nations of the world ingathered by Christianity, singled out and cut off by the ritual stroke through which they continue to distinguish themselves. (84)

Outside of the religious context, in *A Theater of Envy*, René Girard approaches Shakespeare from the same moral perspective. Instead of pride, Girard focuses on envy—the ambitious drive to imitate the other. According to Girard, "mimetic desire" is not only "imitation in social life as a force for gregariousness and bland conformity through the mass reproduction of a few social models" (3). "Imitation does not merely draw people together, it pulls them apart. Paradoxically, it can do these two things simultaneously" (3). And this "mimetic rivalry" is the "fundamental source of human conflict" and the paradox at the heart of Shakespeare's plays (3). The "resolution" of this human predicament is the "violence of scapegoating" (6). The task of tragedy is to purge its audience of the destructiveness of envy: "It is unanimous victimage that transforms the disruptive force of mimetic rivalry into the constructive force of a sacrificial mimesis periodically reenacting the original violence in order to prevent a return of the crisis" (6). The problem in Girard's argument is not that he universalizes envy (for envy has always existed) but that he universalizes the social tendency to "fear and repress envy" (4). Consequently, he does not distinguish Othello's envy from the envy of the other characters. The

cause of Othello's envy, Girard claims, is an "internal weakness": he "lacks confidence in himself" (290). But to remain a hero, Othello's "self-poisoning" must appear to come from without, from "a sacrificial substitute"; "Iago's role consists essentially in making explicit the thoughts that Othello is vainly trying to repress" (291–92). Similarly, in his essay on the tragedy, Kenneth Burke sees Iago as a *katharma*, a poisoner and scapegoat. Iago, writes Burke, is "a voice at Othello's ear"; and "villain and hero here are but essentially inseparable parts of the one fascination" (166).

There are critics, in contrast, who distance Iago from Othello, but for the sake of their romantic fascination with the former. In *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley sees Iago as the "father" of Goethe's Mephistopheles (170), and in *The Invention of the Human*, Harold Bloom sees Milton's Satan as "the legitimate son" of Iago (434). Both Bradley and Bloom praise the artistic creativity of Iago. This revolutionary, writes Bloom, is a "psychologist, dramatist, and aesthete (the first modern one) as he contemplates the total ruin of the war god Othello, reduced to murderous incoherence" (435). Their readings do not equate Iago's destructiveness with that of Othello; rather, they equate his creativity with that of his creator. "Shakespeare," Bradley notes, "put a good deal of himself into Iago" (189). Intrigued by Iago's genius, such critics regard genius as the distinguishing factor between Othello and Iago. Othello is noble but naïve, Iago a malcontent mastermind. Bloom observes that Iago does not understand "the limits of war" because he "is always at war"; and Othello, "the skilled professional who maintains the purity of arms by sharply dividing the camp of war from that of peace," understands that "his brave and zealous ancient" cannot "replace him were he to be killed or wounded" (434). Being rejected by Othello is "the trauma that truly creates Iago, no mere wicked Ensign but rather a genius of evil who has engendered himself from a great Fall" (436). Thus, an undying devotion to the spirit of

the warrior transforms into an undying spirit of revenge, and a creative "prophet of Resentment" is born:

> In Iago, what was the religion of war, when he worshiped Othello as its god, has now become the game of war, to be played everywhere except upon the battlefield. The death of belief becomes the birth of invention, and the passed-over officer becomes the poet of street brawls, stabbings in the dark, disinformation, and above all else, the uncreation of Othello, the sparagmos of the great captain-general so that he can be returned to the original abyss, the chaos that Iago equates with the Moor's African origins. (437–38)

Conversely, Othello is "a great commander, who knows war and the limits of war but who knows little else, and cannot know that he does not know" (445). Likewise, Bradley argues that all of Iago's attributes are "admirable"; had they not gone to "evil ends," Iago would have been "the perfect man" (191). And "Othello's description of himself as 'one not easily jealous, but, being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreme', is perfectly just. His tragedy lies in this — that his whole nature was indisposed to jealousy, and yet was such that he was unusually open to deception, and, if once wrought to passion, likely to act with little reflection, with no delay, and in the most decisive manner conceivable" (151).

In glorifying Iago, once again, what distinguishes Othello is overlooked. The conservative and the romantic interpretations of *Othello* fail to identify Othello's defining characteristic. In both approaches, Othello is defined in his relation to Iago. In both approaches, Othello remains a homeless warrior whose sense of place is forever burdened by his sense of displacement. In contrast, I would like to identify Othello's distinguishing quality. It is precisely that aspect of Othello that has him feel at home in himself that is neglected—a quality that Iago

clearly does not possess. To do so, I argue that it is first necessary to examine Desdemona, not Iago.

Desdemona, as her father informs us, has been stubbornly "opposite to marriage" (1.2.67). Her marriage to Othello is her escape from "house affairs" (1.3.147); she is not worried that her "gross revolt" (1.1.130) will "incur a general mock" (1.2.69) because she dislikes her domestic life. In the presence of her father and his colleagues, she boldly announces that she has decided to "consecrate" her "soul and fortunes" to Othello's "honors" and "valiant parts" (1.3.250–51). This marks the main difference between Desdemona and Othello: in the previous scene, Othello announces that he is proud of his "parts," "title," and "perfect soul" (1.2.31). I argue that it is not only womanhood that prevents the ambitious Desdemona to become an adventurous and formidable warrior like Othello; her status as a civilized Venetian citizen, who has been taught the moral values of her community, also keeps her ambition within socially acceptable bounds. An ambitious and young woman trapped in a restricted masculine community dominated by her father and his peers, Desdemona lacks autonomy and self-determination, and this lack defines her relationship to her hero: she does not like who she is and yearns to be someone else, someone like Othello. This explains why, upon listening "with a greedy ear" (1.3.149) to Othello's adventures, "she wished / That heaven had made her such a man" (162–63). She strongly objects to returning to her father's house to wait for Othello's return from battle (1.3.239–41) and enthusiastically asks to accompany her hero to Cyprus:

> if I be left behind
> A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
> The rites for why I love him are bereft me,
> And I a heavy interim shall support

By his dear absence. Let me go with him. (252–56)

Obviously, she is referring to her fondness for the rites of war rather than the rites of marriage. Her zeal to become a warrior similar to Othello is vehement, so much so that others quickly discern. Cassio introduces her to Montano as "our great captain's captain" (2.1.74). And in order to "recover the general again" (2.3.249), Iago counsels Cassio to "importune her help to put you in your place again" (292) because the "general's wife is now the general" (288–89). Desdemona's excessive admiration for Othello, therefore, is not simply a manifestation of marital love; it is the worship of the heroic way of life. Why else would she immediately conclude from the discovery that "we must think men are not gods" (3.4.140) that she is an "unhandsome warrior" (143)? This is the same kind of traumatizing rejection that Bloom attributes only to Iago. And a little later, upon observing her valiant hero blinded by uncalled-for jealousy, she is struck by the realization that her obsession with heroism is a mistake when she confides in Emilia that the Venetian Lodovico "is a proper man" who "speaks well" (4.3.34–35), a realization that is promptly lulled by the heartrending Willow Song. Both of these fleeting moments of *anagnorisis* remind Desdemona not of her choice of Othello over other men as husband but of her choice of the life of the warrior over familial life. She has built an ideal image of herself based on the image she has of the adventurous and formidable warrior Othello, an ideal image that proves impossible to actualize.

In other words, I argue that what restricts Desdemona is not only a problem of gender. Desdemona believes that in order to become a productive and useful member of society she must emulate the warrior of which her city has made an example. She wants to become an assertive and competent problem-solver like Othello. And what distinguishes Desdemona from the senators of Venice (including her father) is that they have set limits for themselves so as to avoid

discontentment. Venice has firm boundaries to prevent itself from getting too close to Othello. From his reaction to the news of Desdemona's secret marriage, it is clear that Brabantio never accepted Othello as one of their own. But when Othello told Brabantio of the "process" (1.3.142) of his adventures, he believed that Brabantio actually "loved" (128) him. In fact, for Brabantio, Othello's adventures were only fascinating stories. Venice believes in a firm boundary between fact and fiction, truth and lie. Anything beyond its borders is deemed fiction. And here, I argue, we can recognize Othello's function for Venice. He is hired to serve as an extension of Venice to learn about problems that arise beyond Venice. This foreign object is merely a means to learn. But in the process, this foreign object becomes an object of learning. Venice becomes interested in learning about Othello. And it is the rigid boundary between fact and fiction observed by the Venetians that stops them from bringing his stories into their actual lives. His adventures are perceived and enjoyed as a work of art. The difference between Desdemona and her father is that she does not submit to this rigid boundary. For Desdemona, Othello becomes a beautiful object of imitation. Through Othello, she wants to learn about the "strange" and "wondrous" (160–61) world beyond the borders of Venice. But in Brabantio, there is no genuine love for strangeness or strangers. In conclusion, what restricts Desdemona more than her femininity is a self-imposed restriction firmly established in Venice—the avoidance of contact with strangeness. Venice forbids itself to familiarize itself with the darkness that lies beyond its borders. And Desdemona pays a heavy price for courageously becoming the voice of resistance to this self-imposed restriction.

And while Desdemona's envy is founded on discontentment with the self, Iago's envy is founded on discontentment with others. Desdemona pulls herself up, Iago pulls others down. Iago's envy humiliates its object to change how others perceive it. And the strategy behind his

master plot, disgracing Desdemona in the eyes of Othello to ultimately disgrace Othello, is to blur the distinction between fact and fiction, truth and lie. But these are not the only types of envy in this tragedy. Burke and Girard maintain that Othello represents the ugliness in possessiveness, and his death purifies us of the same ugliness that exists within us all. Bradley and Bloom depict Othello as the possessive tyrant whose authority is undermined by his insubordinate follower. In both cases, Othello is the evil that we must resist. Through this tragic hero, however, we get glimpses of a different kind of envy, an envy that *pulls others up*. It can do this because it is founded on self-regard and self-reliance. That this competent warrior can honour others is due to the fact that he first honours himself—he self-confidently elevates confidence in others. He has elected Cassio as his lieutenant, his place-holder. Upon their reunion in Cyprus, he greets his newly-wed bride with "O my fair warrior!" (2.1.174). But no envy can be free of harm. Just as Othello honours those around him by raising them up, he punishes them when they do not act in accordance with honour. And finally, after realizing the dishonour in his own actions, Othello punishes himself.

Having identified these types of envy in *Othello*, in the following section, I will show that each type articulates itself using its own rhetoric.

THE ISOLATED ABASER

In this section, I will examine the different types of rhetoric in *Othello* in terms of George Puttenham's account of the rhetorical figure *meiosis*. More specifically, I hope to show that the various styles of rhetoric in *Othello* are symptomatic of the type of morality their speaker upholds. In the third book of *The Arte of English Poesie*, "Of Ornament," Puttenham analyzes first the various figures, then the "deformities," and finally "decency." Puttenham's contention is

that "viciosity" will cause "dolor and disliking to the ear and mind"; to avoid this, figures must be decorous so that they "dispose the hearers to mirth and solace by pleasant conveyance and efficacy of speech" (239). Critics have commonly associated Puttenham's decorous and decent figures with the aristocratic manners of the court, and his "vicious" figures with the uncultivated lower classes. For instance, in "Outlandish Fears," Wayne Rebhorn claims that in *The Arte of English Poesie*—as in Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* and Antoine Furetiere's *Nouvelle allegorique*—to conform to decorum means to distance oneself from the socially marginalized, the outlandish. These three Renaissance rhetoricians, according to Rebhorn, teach the orator to build his ethos based on the norms of the social elite. Similarly, in "Poetry and Court Conduct," Daniel Javitch writes that in Puttenham's treatise on rhetoric, the "norms of courtly conduct serve to determine poetic norms" (866). In "Puttenham, Shakespeare, and the Abuse of Rhetoric," David Hillman focuses on that which Puttenham's "ideologically conservative" (79) treatise devalues: the "indispensible range of individual experiences and aspirations, which lie beyond the realm of collective reality" (81). Hillman maintains that Puttenham's indecorous rhetoric represents the style of those at the bottom of the social ladder, who have been denied access to the education of the upper classes. To clarify this, Hillman compares Theseus and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Theseus embodies "the orthodox, rationalistic rejection of the supremely personal experience: his is the voice of absolute authority throughout the play. And, at the level of language, it is above all Bottom and his artisanal companions who continually disrupt this authoritative discourse" (81). In what follows, I hope to show that the rhetoric opposed to the social norm is included within Puttenham's decorous and decent rhetoric, and that the "vicious" use of rhetoric is insulated from both; it is neither at the centre nor in the margins.

Let us first look at a few significant incidents in the plot of *Othello*. Othello belittles Brabantio's threat to punish him for his elopement with Desdemona. The Duke tries to calm down Brabantio's anger at the secret union of Desdemona and Othello. Desdemona pleads to extenuate Cassio's misbehavior. Iago meticulously stage-manages the ruin of Cassio and Othello's reputations in the army. What these instances have in common is the element of diminishment—the outcome in all of them is a reduction. In evaluating an action, we factor in its consequences. Thus, the actions of the Duke and Desdemona are good because they are socially beneficial—the Duke encourages Brabantio to see the positive in his alien son-in-law, Desdemona encourages Othello to see the positive in his outcast lieutenant. Iago, on the other hand, is a nonconforming critic who ingeniously stands up to the flaws of the established order in the military. By exposing Cassio's alcoholism and Othello's violent rage, Iago undermines the military's choice of its leaders. Finally, Othello constantly glorifies himself. From the start of the play to its end, Othello is the hero of his own myth (as a result of which others are rendered inferior from his perspective).

Of course, this is a superficial reading of Iago's rhetoric. On the surface, Iago's attentive exposure of the flaws of others may even appear as a conscientious act, as a service to his community. But we must not forget that this act is a defence mechanism. Iago only disparages those who are in one way or another superior to him. That he must unrelentingly and mercilessly stain the good names of Cassio, Desdemona, and Othello is stimulated by the anxiety caused by his sense of inferiority toward them. And in stark contrast to Iago's belittlement of others, Othello's self-glorification is a manifestation of the confident contentment he feels toward himself. What I wish to expand upon in this section of the chapter is the different types of diminishment that ensue from these different types of rhetoric.

The rhetorical figure that epitomizes an act of diminution is *meiosis*. Thomas Wilson places "Abating" among the schemes and defines it thus: "We make our doinges appeare lesse, when with wordes we extenuate and lessen the same. As when one had giuen his fellowe a sound blowe, being rebuked for the same, said he scant touched him. Likewise, when two haue fought together, to say, that the one had his legge prickt with a sworde, when perchance he has a great wounde" (208). Puttenham's analysis of this figure is more helpful to this discussion. *Meiosis* is dealt with on three occasions. First it appears among the "sensable" figures—figures that affect the mind by altering the sense of words or sentences. The "Disabler" aims to "diminish and abase a thing by way of spite or malice, as it were to deprave it" (269). Then it is discussed in more detail among the "sententious" figures—figures that are more suited to be employed by the orator "to plead, or to praise, or to advise"; in short, to "persuade both copiously and vehemently" (281). Embedded in the "sententious" figures is social utility. Of the purposes of this form of the "Disabler," Puttenham mentions humbling oneself "for modesty's sake and to avoid the opinion of arrogance"; belittling others "for despite, to bring our adversaries in contempt"; lessening the fear of "any perilous enterprise, making a great matter seem small, and of little difficulty"; making "an offense seem less than it is, by giving a term more favorable and of less vehemence than the truth requires"; and extending a friendly gesture toward "our equals or inferiors" by referring to them in informal terms (304–05). *Meiosis* is once more examined as a "vice" along with other "barbarous" and "strange" figures. The technical term for its "vicious" version is *tapinosis*, which Puttenham translates as the "Abaser": "It is no small fault in a maker to use such words and terms as do diminish and abase the matter he would seem to set forth, by impairing the dignity, height, vigor, or majesty of the cause he takes in hand" (344–45). "Vicious" *meiosis* is marked by autonomy; unlike "sententious" *meiosis*, it has no wish to mend

or improve social relations. Nor does it humiliate out of "spite or malice" like "sensable" *meiosis*. Puttenham explains that *tapinosis* is *meiosis* "by ignorance or error" (269). This does not mean that "vicious" *meiosis* is unintentional; rather, it means that it has no intention to benefit or harm others. It is marked by a blatant disregard for others. *Tapinosis* is "vicious" thanks to its unapologetic indifference. That it belittles is the repercussion of it being out of place—it is, as it were, an "erring barbarian" (1.3.342–43).

Othello's rhetoric consistently engages in *tapinosis*. It is free from the anxiety that agitates Iago. When Iago warns Othello that Brabantio has "a voice potential / As double as the Duke's," and will either "divorce you, / Or put upon you what restraint or grievance / The law, with all his might to enforce it on, / Will give him cable" (1.2.13–17), the confident general calmly reminds himself of his own prized accomplishments and noble heritage:

> Let him do his spite:
> My services which I have done the signory
> Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know—
> Which, when I know that boasting is an honor,
> I shall promulgate—I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal siege, and my demerits
> May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
> As this that I have reached. (17–24)

Othello does not insult his opponent. Rather, uplifting himself has the effect of downgrading the hostility directed toward him.

And in the following scene, Othello approaches the distressing news that the Turkish fleet "with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus" (1.3.220–21) with the same rhetorical strategy:

> The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
> Hath made the flinty and steel coach of war
> My thrice-driven bed of down. I do agnize
> A natural and prompt alacrity
> I find in hardness, and do undertake
> This present war against the Ottomites. (227–32)

Self-praise in both cases overshadows the "might" of the threat. Attenuation is achieved through amplification.

Othello's "vicious" *meiosis* is the by-product of self-aggrandizement. That others appear less appealing in the presence of Othello is due to his habit of mythologizing himself. From his own perspective, nothing about him is ugly. Othello poeticizes even his resolve to destroy Cassio and Desdemona:

> Like to the Pontic Sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
> To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
> Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
> Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love
> Till that a capable and wide revenge
> Swallow them up. (3.3.447–54)

Likening the "violent pace" of his desire for revenge to the "icy current and compulsive course" of the Black Sea renders the "retiring ebb" of his "humble love" for his victims impossible to occur.

The clearest example of *tapinosis* occurs in the final scene of the play: after learning the truth about Desdemona and Iago, the "honorable murderer" brashly declares that "naught I did in hate, but all in honor" (5.2.287–88). It is extremely difficult for us to digest this statement because it demeans Desdemona's death, but that is not Othello's intention. Othello is doing the only thing he knows to do: relying on his honour—just as he, immediately prior to stabbing himself, introduces his suicide as an honourable act. It is important to point out that at the end of the play we discover that Othello is conscious of the fact that his version of *meiosis* is foreign to the Venetians when he makes the following request: "I pray you, in your letters, / When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, / Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, / Nor set down aught in malice" (5.2.333–36). He is asking those present to refrain from the "sententious" and "sensable" forms of *meiosis* when they talk of him—he does not wish the account of his actions to be palliated or disgraced.

Contrast this with Desdemona's attempt to reconcile Othello and Cassio by reminding her husband of Cassio's love for him (3.3.46) and his assistance in the process of courting her (68–71). Desdemona's rationalization is that excusing Cassio is for Othello's own good:

> Why, this is not a boon,
> 'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
> Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
> Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
> To your own person. (74–78)

Unlike Othello's rhetoric, in this placatory *meiosis*, diminishment is not a corollary but the primary objective and reinforced by goodwill. Desdemona hopes that Cassio's fault will fade away as she highlights his loyalty to Othello. Desdemona's rhetoric involves the good overshadowing the bad.

The Duke's soothing words to the grief-stricken Brabantio after his daughter announces that it was her own choice to marry the Moor betray the same rhetorical technique:

> When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
> By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
> To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
> Is the next way to draw new mischief on.
> What cannot be preserved, when Fortune takes,
> Patience her injury a mockery makes.
> The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief;
> He robs himself that spends a bootless grief. (1.3.201–08)

The Duke instructs Brabantio to think less of his misfortune by being more accepting. Another example follows a little later when the Duke emphasizes Othello's valued qualities to cast a shadow over his otherness: "If virtue no delighted beauty lack, / Your son-in-law is far more fair than black" (286–87). "Sententious" *meiosis* draws attention toward something pleasant so as to draw attention away from something unpleasant. It is worth adding that these *meiotic* appeasements are carried out through other "sententious" figures. Desdemona uses what Puttenham calls "Resemblance by Example," in which similar examples are offered to support the case; the Duke uses *sententia* (the "Sage Sayer").

Puttenham distinguishes *sententia* from proverbs on the basis of the intention of the former to moralize: "In weighty causes and for great purposes, wise persuaders use grave and weighty speeches, especially in matter of advice or counsel, for which purpose there is a manner of speech to allege texts or authorities of witty sentence, such as smatch moral doctrine and teach wisdom and good behavior" (321). A proverb, which is a "sensable" figure, only seeks to alter judgement. In the opening scene, Iago uses a proverb to convince the reluctant Brabantio that his daughter has eloped: "Sir, you are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bid you! Because we come to do you service and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins and jennets for germans" (1.1.106–10). Brabantio is to trust the message rather than the messenger. With the aid of this proverb, Iago reduces the union between Desdemona and Othello to bestiality. Iago also presents his case as a benefit; he is informing a father that his daughter is missing. His intention, however, is not to placate, but to upset and provoke.

Throughout the play, Iago's "sensable" *meiosis* is unfailingly provocative; it alters the mind by polluting it. He would like to "poison" and "throw such chances of vexation" on "delight" and "joy" so that "it may lose some color" (1.1.66–71). He would like to degrade love to "a sect or scion" of "our raging motions, our carnal stings, or unbitted lusts" (1.3.321–23), and to "set down the pegs" that make the music of love (2.1.192). "I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip, / Abuse him to the Moor in the right garb" (2.1.288–89), declares Iago. To sabotage his lieutenancy, Iago persuades Cassio to indulge himself in drinking. He discredits the self-possessed Othello by arousing his anger, by "practicing upon his peace and quiet / Even to madness" (2.1.293–94)—the same Othello who would not lose his composure when the "cannon" exploded his men in the battlefield and "from his very arm / Puffed his own brother"

(3.4.126–29). After observing Othello's outburst of rage, Lodovico, the representative of the Venetian government, asks with regret and disillusionment,

> Is this the noble Moor whom our full Senate
> Call all-in-all sufficient? Is this the nature
> Whom passion could not shake? Whose solid virtue
> The shot of accident nor dart of chance
> Could neither graze nor pierce?

to which Iago, pleased with his triumph over the hero of Venice, responds, "He is much changed" (4.1.251–55).

Iago's most daring exploit, however, concerns Desdemona, who is "full of most blessed condition" (2.1.237–38). "The wine she drinks," Iago berates Roderigo, "is made of grapes" (2.1.239–40). He urges the enamored suitor to pursue her as an object of lust rather than love. Iago playfully tells Cassio that the Desdemona he regards as the "most exquisite lady" is "full of game": her eye "sounds a parley to provocation" and her voice is "an alarum to love" (2.3.17–23). *Meiotic* belittlement is quite clear in these examples. Iago, in short, is determined to defile Desdemona's chastity by inciting everyone to think of her as fleshly and lascivious, as one more "super-subtle Venetian" (1.3.343).

Ultimately, Iago craftily plants the idea of Desdemona's debauchery in Othello's mind and assures him that "One may smell in such a will most rank, / Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural" (3.3.231–32). Tarnishing Desdemona's reputation is more complicated because Iago

must improvise and invent her adultery.[15] Others witness the intoxicated Cassio losing control and Othello furiously losing his temper. But it is impossible to provide "ocular proof" of Desdemona losing her fidelity. Thus, Iago resorts to *energeia—bringing before the eyes* with words.[16] Iago revoltingly suggests the lie of Desdemona's sexual encounter with Cassio for Othello:

> It were a tedious difficulty, I think,
> To bring them to that prospect. Damn them, then,
> If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster
> More than their own. What, then? How, then?
> What shall I say? Where's satisfaction?
> It is impossible you should see this,
> Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
> As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross
> As ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,
> If imputation and strong circumstances—
> Which lead directly to the door of truth—
> Will give you satisfaction, you might have't. (3.3.394–405)

In these and similar *meiotic* aggravations, Iago stains an admired attribute by foregrounding an undesirable one. A virtue is blemished by means of accentuating an opposite vice.

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[15] In "The Language of Tragedy," Russ McDonald writes that through Iago, this tragedy displays "the danger of fiction in the hands of the wicked" (45).

[16] Puttenham describes *energeia* as the function of "sensable" figures (227).

To summarize, in Puttenham's division of figures, "sensable" figures—such as the "Abuse" (*catachresis*), the "Misnamer" (*metonymy*), the "False Semblant" (*allegory*), the "Bitter Taunt" (*sarcasm*), and the "Loud Liar" (*hyperbole*)—intend to change perspective. They are transgressions that seek the "alteration" of the hearer's "conceit" (262). Puttenham emphasizes repeatedly that these figures do not serve the ear. That is to say, these figures do not sweeten. That is why he distances them from "auricular" figures—those superficial alterations that are *only* "pleasant and agreeable to the ear" (245). Sweet to the ear, "auricular" figures embody leniency and hospitality. While "sensable" figures break the rules of accepted language, "auricular" figures bend the rules to accommodate difference.[17] "Sensable" *meiosis* is ruthlessly critical; it faults and shames something of social value. Should it be moderated by the forgiving sweetness offered by the "auricular," it becomes "sententious"—"as well tunable to the ear as stirring to the mind" (281). And the diminishment caused by these two forms of *meiosis* is quite different. "Sententious" *meiosis* deflates a negative quality *as* it inflates a positive quality. Relying on Kenneth Burke's terminology, the "terminisitic screen" through which "sententious" *meiosis* presents its object *reflects* on its desirable aspect in order to *deflect* from its undesirable aspect. Here is a diminution of negativity. The diminishment of "sensable" *meiosis*, on the other hand, involves either the invention of negativity or the amplification of an already existing negativity. The negative characteristic (whether invented or not) is exaggerated so as to shock. "Vicious" *meiosis*, however, is fundamentally different. It is unashamedly inconsiderate. And the

[17] Desdemona's rhetoric becomes "auricular" when she unexpectedly comes back to life and tells Emilia that Othello is not guilty (5.2.115–22). This act of forgiveness does not change Emilia's opinion of Othello; it is only—as Emilia points out twice—"sweet."

diminishment here is a consequence of this inconsideration. The rhetoric of the other characters always includes the other; it is calculating and tendentious. Othello's rhetoric, however, is isolated and distinct; it is distinction as such. *Tapinosis* is rudely separate, offensively self-centred. That is why, at the start of his trial, Othello admits that he lacks the politeness of the Venetian gentleman.

Chapter Two

A Reading of *Hamlet*: Early Modern Praise and Dispraise

INTRODUCTION

Continuing my discussion of the rhetorical figure *meiosis*, in this chapter, I will concentrate on the strategic use of this figure as a means to practice patience. In *Hamlet*, I will argue, Shakespeare shows the manner in which *meiotic* belittlement can be consciously applied to postpone the gratification of passion.

In his analysis of the traditional principles of rhetoric, Kenneth Burke observes that amplification is "the most thoroughgoing" rhetorical device (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 69). The most basic use of amplification is synonymous with, in the words of Burke, "extension" and "expatiation" (69). One of Burke's examples is Søren Kierkegaard's expatiation of the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac in his *Fear and Trembling*. Amplification is an expansion upon, a more detailed interpretation of, a subject matter, that postpones the conclusion of the matter to a later point in time and space. Amplification as a fundamental aspect of rhetoric, with its delaying interpretation, is the extension of the life of its object. As Michel Foucault puts it: rhetoric as speaking or writing "so as not to die" ("Language to Infinity" 53). Needless to say, such extension is not simply one of length. Amplification, aside from its interpretative enlargement, is at its core repetition. Burke explains this quantitative increase thus: "The saying of something in various ways until it increases in persuasiveness by the sheer accumulation" (69). Furthermore, Burke points out that, because of the inclusion of new elements by its author, Kierkegaard's amplification is not simply an unadulterated expatiation of the Biblical story: "Kierkegaard is here making a purely personal addition to the sacred text. He is not just amplifying principles

already there; he is adding a new principle" (247). Those amplifications that go beyond quantitative increase and do not leave the quality intact must therefore be regarded as a different kind of amplification.

In *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, Russ McDonald discusses Shakespeare and his contemporaries' involvement in the amplification of the English vernacular: "Revelling in the new possibilities of their language, writers (and readers) took pleasure in repetition, variation, exemplification, synonymy, and a host of other specific forms of verbal multiplication" (27). In fact, the Latin term *copia* ("fullness or variety of statement"), McDonald observes, becomes interchangeable with the art of rhetoric in the early modern period (27). And Patricia Parker shows how this rhetorical device, with its different contexts, shapes the early modern text. In *Literary Fat Ladies*, Parker identifies the word *dilation* as a Renaissance equivalent for rhetorical amplification. "Dilation," writes Parker, is "the 'opening' of a closed text to make it 'increase and multiply' and to transform its brevity into a discourse 'at large'" (15).

In addition to the different "resonances" of "dilation" that Parker finds in Renaissance texts (15–17), concentrating on *Othello*, she uncovers a connection between rhetorical amplification ("dilation") and judicial accusation ("delation") (82–83). Parker draws attention to "honest" Iago's manner of opening up the matter of Desdemona's supposed infidelity in the Temptation Scene—"those pauses, single words, and pregnant phrases which seem to suggest something secret or withheld"—which Othello describes as "close dilations working from the heart / That passion cannot rule" (3.3.122–23). Elsewhere, Parker notes that the adjective *close* in Othello's formulation means "secret" or "private" and "partial glimpses of something closed or hid" ("*Othello* and *Hamlet*" 61). On one hand, Iago is secretly exposing and expanding upon Desdemona's secret to Othello. On the other, it is impossible for Iago to bring the secret matter

completely before Othello's eyes: "But how? How satisfied, my lord? / Would you the supervision grossly gape on? / Behold her topped?" (3.3.391–93). To satisfy his lord, the only "ocular proof" (357) that Iago can present to Othello is "imputation and strong circumstances" (403)—that is, accusation founded on convincing circumstantial evidence.

All that Iago's "dilation" can amount to is a partial manifestation of the concealed totality that he is tactfully striving to convey to Othello. "This honest creature doubtless / Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds" (3.3.241–42). Rhetorical amplification, in other words, operates *synecdochically*. In his *Description of Ancient Rhetoric*, Friedrich Nietzsche points out the *synecdoche* (the "encompassing") at work in the rhetorical essence of language in general: "Language never expresses something completely but displays only a characteristic which appears to be prominent to it [language]" (23). Hamlet's account of his grief over the death of his father to his mother is an even clearer example of amplification as *synecdochic* representation: his "inky cloak," "customary suits of solemn black," "windy suspiration of forced breath," "fruitful river in the eye," and "dejected 'havior of the visage" are all unable to "denote … truly" what he has "within which passes show" (1.2.77–85). In "Dilation and Delay," Parker demonstrates that *divisio* or *partitio* is "the principal means of dilating a discourse" (521–23). After the partition of his outward grief into its different parts, Hamlet regrettably admits that the grief he can express would never be the accurate account of his grief "within." Thus, expatiation, despite its extension in length and increase in the number of representations, is still only a part of a whole that remains forever unknown.

Basic amplification (repetition infused with difference and deferral), considering that it functions quantitatively, does not have an opposite that would decrease its object. Quantitative

decrease, not to speak of the matter at all, would amount to silence and forgetfulness.[18] Even rhetorical figures such as *aposiopesis* and *paralipsis*, which deal with silence, strategically highlight and draw attention to their subject matter.[19] The moral interpretation that is critical, although still a quantitative increase, qualitatively diminishes its subject matter. Thus, in his essay on *Othello*, Burke describes Iago's machinations in the Temptation Scene as the translation of "neutral" to "grim" (191). Moral degradation is the opposite to what Burke calls amplification "by dignification" (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 69). According to Joel Fineman in *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*, that praise is "extraordinary language" is evident in the addition of the prefix *epi-* to the *bringing to light* of the *deictic* in the Greek word *epideictic*; the *epi-* points to the "extra," the "supplementary," included in the "showing speech" (5–6). Moral interpretation, therefore,

[18] A dramatic rendition of such silence occurs in *Timon of Athens*. The disappointed Timon first leaves Athens to no longer be in contact with his unfaithful friends. Then, he even puts an end to his insults in isolation—and finally dies. As Russ McDonald, in "The Language of Tragedy," puts it: "Since the evil of flatterers, or 'mouth-friends', is the focus of the first half of *Timon of Athens*, it is not surprising that Timon should figure his suicide as a rejection of speech: 'Lips, let sour words go by and language end'" (45).

[19] *Aposiopesis* is a deliberate interruption in speech prompted by shame, fear, or anger. A famous example is the pause in the middle of Mark Antony's funeral oration in order to spotlight the atrocity committed against Julius Caesar. And *paralipsis* (what Burke translates as "Say the Word") is the accentuating of a topic "under the guise of asking that it be avoided"—Burke's example is the shrewd manner by which Iago introduces the idea of jealousy to Othello ("*Othello*" 193).

entails a qualitative change (either dignifying or degrading) added to amplification in its basic form as the elaborate interpretation of its object. And the two rhetorical figures that epitomize moral dignification and degradation are *paradiastole* and *meiosis*.[20]

In what follows, I hope to identify amplification as moral degradation in Hamlet's conscious thinking. Moreover, as I will show, although moral belittlement develops from critical reasoning, it is not that critical reasoning is absent from moral extolment, but that reason functions differently in these two processes of amplification. In the former, critical reasoning is used to sully a character or characteristic. The latter, however, aims for acceptance and recognition, which initially has no need for critical reasoning. But a plea for acceptance cannot remain uncritical, for it must criticize criticism, it must reason against being reasoned against. In amplification by dignification, critical reasoning, which occurs at a second stage, turns against itself so as to plea for acceptance a second time. The rebuttal (*refutatio*), one could argue, serves a similar purpose in a rhetorical speech. Located after the confirmation (*probatio*), the rebuttal anticipates and fends off opposition to the claim argued for in the previous part. "Confutation," writes Thomas Wilson, "is a dissoluing, or wyping away of all such reasons as make against vs" (*The Art of Rhetoric* 9). In this part of the speech, with the help of the "places of *Logique*," Wilson explains, "wit may finde out bywaies to escape" (129). As reinforcement for the *probatio*, the *refutatio* is an escape from being reasoned against. And among the rhetorical

[20] *Paradiastole* and *meiosis* propose an acceptable or unacceptable rendition of a quality.

figures, *anthypophora* exemplifies such keeping critical reason at bay.[21] The "Figure of Response," according to George Puttenham, "is when we will seem to ask a question to the intent we will answer it ourselves, and is a figure of argument and also of amplification": not only do we "spend much language … to amplify and enlarge our tale," but by "proponing such matter as our adversary might object and then to answer it ourselves, we do unfurnish and prevent him of such help as he would otherwise have used for himself" (*The Art of English Poesy* 289). Thus, in amplification by dignification, even criticism—as the negation of opposition—serves acceptance. It is double affirmation. And I will identify this manner of double affirmation in Claudius's demand for the acceptance of his kingship.

Furthermore, *meiotic* expatiation presupposes the badness of its object, and the amplification is an attempt to reason the validation of this badness. Rhetorical invention is used to provide proof so as to confirm guilt. This is the case with Desdemona's supposed guilt: Othello demands "a living reason" (3.3.406) from Iago; Iago is to "so prove it / That the probation bear no hinge nor loop / To hang a doubt on" (361–63). Iago's "probation," *probatio*, confirmation, aiming for certainty, is "To spy into abuses" and "Shape faults" (146–47) in order to "prove" Desdemona "a whore" (356). Hamlet similarly sets on his vengeful quest to verify Claudius's "occulted guilt" (3.2.73). In *paradiastolic* expatiation, on the other hand, critical reasoning comes not in the form of proof but rather prudent advice. The focus in *meiotic* expatiation on proving with certainty an already established (or, supposed) guilt explains why it

[21] Incidentally, Burke discusses this figure and its risk immediately before amplification. The risk involves the audience jumping in with a response of their own to the orator's question before the orator has a chance to state his desired response (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 68–69).

seems similar to judicial oratory. From this point of view, *paradiastolic* expatiation seems similar to deliberative oratory. In fact, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* highlights this similarity between praise and deliberation: what is praiseworthy, stated in the form of propositions, can be used as material for deliberative oratory; hence, "when you want to set out proposals in deliberation, see what you would praise" (81).

The current situation is never that bad from the standpoint of *paradiastolic* expatiation. As I will show, Claudius employs this form of rhetoric to conceal his crimes and console Hamlet. Another case in point is Othello's speech addressed to the Duke in the opening Act of the play (1.3.128–69). On trial, Othello is asked to defend himself by expatiating upon the "process" of wooing Desdemona, just as Desdemona had "with a greedy ear" asked him to expatiate upon his "pilgrimage." With his "dilation" within a "dilation," with the partitioned and partial account of his "history" that won him the approval of Desdemona, Othello wins the approval of the Duke ("I think this tale would win my daughter too" [171]). It is no wonder, then, that Othello's dilation, wanting critical reasoning, is confused with "witchcraft." Not yet complete, the amplification of Othello's "story" requires its second affirmation. Othello fails to address the opposition. It is the Duke, immediately after Othello's narrative, who alleviates the severity of the domestic conflict ("take up this mangled matter at the best" [172]) and counsels Brabantio with sententious words of wisdom,

> When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
> By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
> To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
> Is the next way to draw new mischief on.
> What cannot be preserved, when Fortune takes,

Patience her injury a mockery makes.

The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief;

He robs himself that spends a bootless grief. (201–08)

After the expansive exposure of the secret—the secret of Othello's "history" and the secret marriage—the Duke reasons with Desdemona's father to let go of his objection to it. It behooves the aggrieved plaintiff to patiently accept what is "past and gone." Not only is the secret now declared by the Duke as acceptable, any objection to it is now unacceptable.

What I hope to ultimately demonstrate in this chapter is the difference between Hamlet's use of *meiosis* and Iago's use of *meiosis*. In the previous chapter, I have shown that Iago humiliates others (Desdemona, Othello, and Cassio, in particular) with the intention of opening eyes. It has become an impulse for him to be constantly vigilant, to constantly alert others. He believes that beneath the surface there is always ugliness. And it is his duty to shed light on the ugliness. He is a seeker of truth—but the ugly truth. For him, depth and perversion have become synonymous. And he is always tempted to expose the ugliness and perversion. This is not a conscious choice. His humility is proof why this is not a conscious choice. Even his humility has become impulsive. He is afraid of an ugly truth to ever actualize. He is truly shocked every time he learns of a violent confrontation between Othello and Desdemona: "Can he be angry?" (3.4.126), "Do not weep, do not weep. Alas the day!" (4.2.123). In these scenes, he is not his usual talkative self. And in the final scene, after learning of Desdemona's death, he turns silent: "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know: / From this time forth I never will speak word" (5.2.296–97). Iago's humility, I believe, is a shield to distance himself from the other. It is a defence mechanism to avoid the ugly anger of the other. Humiliating others and humility, belittling others and himself, in short, are impulsive attempts to expose and postpone the ugly

truth. It is in this sense that Iago embodies *meiotic* expatiation. He delays and expands on what he degrades.

Hamlet, however, is not simply a seeker of truth. Hamlet seeks virtue—for himself and Denmark. But he does not allow himself to *believe* that either he or Denmark is virtuous, for he does not want to end up like his father, blind to the corruption that has permeated Denmark, blind even to the corruption in his own family. Hamlet is constantly vigilant. He constantly alerts others. But his intention is not only to open eyes; it is also to encourage virtue. He belittles others and himself (even life, and the world) to rid himself and Denmark of corruption. Moreover, I believe that this is an act. For Hamlet, *meiosis* is a conscious act. Hamlet consciously acts out the role of the moralizer. Moreover, Hamlet does not wish to delay the truth or delay angering others. In fact, throughout the plot, he repeatedly angers Claudius (and others) with his attempts to discredit the king. What Hamlet delays is the urge to act on his revelations. Hamlet delays his desire for revenge. Thus, for Hamlet, *meiotic* expatiation is a rhetorical means to actively practice patience. A clear indication of this tendency in Hamlet occurs when he cites (incompletely) the proverb, "While the grass grows, the horse starves" (3.2.345). Hamlet interrupts himself when referring to this proverb that incentivizes immediate action. I believe that Hamlet's use of *aposiopesis* here is a manifestation of his disgust toward and suppression of the urge for immediate vengeance that is troubling him.[22]

But before turning to Hamlet and Claudius's rhetoric, with reference to Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric* (particularly because of the inclusion of extended examples for the different types of

[22] I will revisit the applications of the figure *aposiopesis* in the final chapter when discussing King Lear's irresponsibility.

amplification), I will analyze the mechanism the orator may use to dignify or disgrace a topic. In addition to the features that I have already noted, we will see that the systems of valuation set up by *paradiastolic* and *meiotic* expatiation have different understanding of concepts closely tied to morality, such as responsibility and punishment.

Moral amplification plays an essential role in the education of the orator during the Renaissance. But every instruction in treatises of rhetoric is but a formulized manner of thought. Moral interpretation is not merely a tool for rhetorical persuasion. Whether an innate tendency or an acquired habit, it is a way of thinking. In the second section, I will show how Shakespeare dramatizes the conflict that arises from the collision of these two modes of moral amplification in *Hamlet*. The king and the prince are doomed to be at odds with one another because they embody irreconcilable moral perspectives.

PRIDE AND REPUTATION

"Praise," writes Francis Bacon, "is the Reflection of Vertue: But it is as the Glasse or Bodie which giveth the Reflection" ("Of Praise" 157). One point is immediately obvious in Bacon's definition: putting aside the object of praise, praise is a reflection, a pleasant, acceptable repetition. A question arises here: If virtue is already that which that is praiseworthy, why does it need to be praised again? To be merely a pleasant repetition of something that is already pleasant would contradict the essential function of praise, which, as Bacon states, "giveth" pleasantness to its object. Looking at it from a different angle, the question may be asked thus: What is virtue without praise? How can virtue be the external object of which praise is a reflection, which praise reflects, if it does not exist if there is no praise? Putting aside virtue, we are still able to comprehend praise. But putting aside praise, virtue is inconceivable. Virtue cannot exist prior to

praise. What stands before the mirror of praise is not virtue; virtue is what the mirror shows. The pleasant repetition of praise is the making of virtue. "Praise is the Reflection of Vertue"—reflection in the sense of repetition, but also in the sense of conception. Praise is a mode of reflection, a mode of thinking, a mode of image-making, that creates virtue. There is yet another sense of reflection that we must consider in Bacon's definition: virtue, the pleasant and artificial image in the mirror of praise, must be the reverse of what it reflects. What virtue reflects cannot be artificial. Nor can it be pleasant (or unpleasant). What praise molds into virtue is indifferent nature. Changing the nature of nature, this human artifact is an exalted lie about nature for nature. To narrow down nature, which is loaded with very different connotations, we must take into account that virtue is concerned with human characteristics—Bacon writes that praise deals with "a Man's selfe" or "a Man's Office or Profession" (158). We must, accordingly, take nature to refer to human nature. Thus, to paraphrase Bacon's definition, praise is the recognizing of human nature pleasantly, praise is the making known of human nature framed as an ask for its acceptance. Holding up a mirror to human nature, those who praise, the makers of virtue, are apologists for human nature.

Praise, therefore, a form of amplification, is an affirmative attitude toward what is (in human nature). Praise is an amplification of nature in the sense that it makes the most (out) of nature. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether that which is praised is in the essence of being human or acquired as a habit. I am not interested, in other words, in the naturalness or artificiality of the human characteristic itself, in whether it is nature or second nature. What I am interested in is that from praise ensues a palatable rendition of a human characteristic that exists and is noticeably repeated. It is the existence and repetition of this particular characteristic that praise recognizes and instructs us to embrace. More specifically, I

am interested in the process of praise, the rhetorical process of recognition and instruction to embrace, which I will trace in Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric*. I will show that it is not that praise constructs virtue and dispraise vice. No virtue can emerge without its attending vice, and no vice without its virtue. Praise and dispraise are two different attitudes, two different systems of valuation, that propose their own virtue and vice. In praise, there is the vice that, through contrast, reinforces the significance of the virtue. And having identified how praise and dispraise operate, in the following section of the essay, I will show Shakespeare's dramatic embodiment of these two attitudes in *Hamlet*.

"Among all the figures of *Rhetorique*," Wilson argues in the Second Book of his *Art of Rhetoric*, "there is no one that so much helpeth forward an Oration, and beautifieth the same with such delightfull ornaments, as doth amplification" (132). And the most effective kind of amplification, Wilson continues, is praise and dispraise. For praise, Wilson offers the "commending" of a person's "lowlinesse" as example (133); and for dispraise, the "rebuk[ing]" of "backbiters and slaunderers" (133–34). We must take into account that the "lowlinesse" that is commended and the "euill tongue" that is rebuked are conspicuous qualities in the person being praised or dispraised. Thus, to amplify these qualities is to urge the person into a particular relation to the way he is. The amplification, a biased mirror, presents to the person under deliberation a partial view of himself. However, to understand the process of Wilson's praise and dispraise, we must not content ourselves with the mere translation of "lowlinesse" into the more pleasant terms of "gentle behauiour" and "charitie," and the display of the "poyson" of an "euill tongue" as worse than murdering and stealing. Nor must we think that these two examples are unrelated.

The main topic at issue in both of Wilson's examples is "companie." In question is our attitude toward our living together. An exercise in *argumentum in utramque partem*, what is to be decided here is the affirmation or negation of the communal nature of life. To affirm communality is not to cause communality, for it is already there—indifferent and ingrained. "Beastes and birdes" even, which are "without reason," "shroude and … flocke together." Nor is negating communality, needless to say, putting an end to it. Affirmation and negation are means of empowerment and ennoblement in that they separate those "endued" with reason from beasts and birds by assigning responsibility for what must be. And to assign responsibility, to turn what must be into a choice, entails reward and punishment. From affirmation and negation, accordingly, emerge two sets of virtue and vice.

We are destined to live together. "Mortall man" is inevitably bound to others. Our destiny is boundedness. A destiny bounded to others, and a destiny bounded by mortality, by time. We are bound to temporarily live together. To praise this bind is to actively transform it into a "profitable" endeavour, to "declare at large how commendable and how profitable a thing gentle behauiour is." To praise this bind is also to warn against loss: "How hatefull and how harmefull a proude disdainfull man is, and how beastly a nature he hath, that being but a man, thinketh himselfe better then any other man is." We are bound for a temporary life of "lowlinesse." No one is above another. No one is higher than another. And a "noble Gentleman" chooses to profit from his "lowlinesse," from his equality with others. Active humility, humility that is willed, is profitable, whereas pride is harmful. But what is the profit? And what do the proud lose? Time. "[I]f lowlinesse and charitie maintaine life, what a beast is he that through hatred will purchase death?" The amplification of "lowlinesse" into "gentle behauiour" amplifies life. Friendliness actively pursued extends life; hostility shortens it. Virtue in praise is the transformation of a

must-be into an ought-to-be, and its reward is a brief extension of life. The most profound must-be, therefore, is mortality. Praise briefly delays death. In this particular instance of praise, it is the acceptance of our "lowlinesse" (that is: our togetherness and equality) that promises a better and longer life.

The virtue of humility, therefore, is slightly vicious. It requires a small amount of self-acceptance. The acceptance of one's "lowlinesse" is still self-acceptance. And if one has the choice to slightly transgress in order to be virtuous, one has also the choice to transgress excessively. The proud are those who choose to overindulge in self-acceptance. From the point of view of the humble, overindulgence in self-acceptance is a turning against one's community. The non-compliant (that is: the excessively vicious) are like sheep or cattle that "stray," that "striue one against an other." Set against friendly co-operation, hostile competition is marked by lack of restraint. The vice in praise is an extreme state of the virtue. The proud, consequently, "will purchase death" and are "worthie the vilest death of all." Etymologically meaning *to run after*, *to hunt*, *to chase*, the word *purchase* also connotes responsibility. Consider Shakespeare's use of the word in *Antony and Cleopatra*. To appease the irate Octavius and in response to his claim that Mark Antony is "th'abstract of all faults / That all men follow," Lepidus says:

> I must not think there are
> Evils enough to darken all his goodness.
> His faults in him seem as the spots of heaven,
> More fiery by night's blackness—hereditary,
> Rather than purchased, what he cannot change,
> Than what he chooses. (1.4.9–15)

Not a hereditary must-be, what is purchased is chosen. Thus, according to the humble, the choice of the proud—their hostility to their community—not only precipitates death but deserves "the vilest death of all" as punishment. With the virtue of humility comes the desire to strike down the proud—the "Dogges" ready to bite the sheep or cattle that "stray," that "striue one against an other."

The skilled orator should also be competent at finding fault with this envious insistence on togetherness and equality. From the dispraise of "companie" stems a new value: reputation, "a mans good name." But notice that in dispraise, Wilson starts with the censure of his audience, the censure of a particular tendency in the audience, whereas praise starts with acceptance. Dispraise is censuring recognition, a censuring mirror to human nature: "[I]f you would rebuke one that giueth eare to backbiters and slaunderers, you must declare what a great mischiefe an euill tongue is, what a poyson it is, yea, what a murder to take a mans good name form him." The envious insistence on togetherness and equality, a virtue in the previous example, is no longer presented positively; here, it is *meiotically* translated as verbal attack against others, as the poisonous tongue that sullies the reputation of others. Notice also that the verbal act of dispraise is itself a form of verbal attack. The dispraise assumes the form of its referent. The orator, in other words, is as self-critical as he is critical of others in that he shares the unacceptable tendency. But what distinguishes the orator from his audience is his critical awareness. The dispraise contains the acknowledgement of the viciousness—the "poyson"—of his and their tendency. In dispraise, there is condescension. The orator is and is not like his audience. His dispraise unites and separates: criticism functions simultaneously as (self-)belittling identification and drive for distinction. The orator exemplifies virtue thus: like his audience, the orator "seeketh to obscure and darken" the "estimation" of others; but he holds his audience

responsible (and deserving "worthie death") for not adopting his critical stance, for not choosing to be otherwise. The pride of those with a good name is rooted in their choice to be otherwise, in their unwillingness to be their envious selves. While in the previous example, the virtuous are torn between friendliness and envy; in this example, they are torn between self-contempt and distinction. The reputable have their critical weapon turned toward themselves, for a man's good reputation depends on his constant negation of the "euill tongue" of his own envy. Dispraise is the translation of a must-be into an ought-not-to-be. The depreciating image in the mirror of dispraise incites a turning away from the self. The dispraise asks for an averting from and aversion to the self, the pursuit of which hopes to proudly achieve a total riddance of the vicious self. Finally, the orator amplifies his argument by presenting the "euill tongue" that steals our good name as worse than the thief that steals our purse and the murderer that steals our life. The dispraise hopes to inoculate its audience against loss—ironically, through the loss of the self.

In sum, the virtues of maintaining friendly relations and maintaining an enduring respectable reputation are two different renditions of the same property of life. As is now evident, dispraise develops from a shift in perspective in praise. The chidden in praise are able to transform their state into a praiseworthy endeavour. The vice of pride in one becomes the virtue of a good name in the other. Shakespeare's Iago, in the prime of his scheming, makes use of this particular instance of argument on both sides of a case. Needing Cassio to execute his plot, Iago urges him to reconcile with Othello. To goad Cassio to re-establish friendly relations with the general—"to recover the general again" (2.3.249)—Iago argues against the importance of reputation: "Reputation is an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving" (246–47). Reputation has the "most false" appearance of permanence. Later,

however, to excite the violent jealousy of proud Othello, Iago speaks of the importance of reputation:

> Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
> Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
> Who steals my purse, steals trash: 'tis something, nothing;
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands.
> But he that filches from me my good name
> Robs me of that which not enriches him
> And makes me poor indeed. (3.3.154–60)

This time, Iago distinguishes reputation, the "jewel" of the soul, from impermanent "trash." This is an example of deceptive persuasion by means of praise and dispraise. With sinister purposes, Iago is able to shift from one perspective to another.[23] But Shakespeare's Hamlet, as I will demonstrate in the following section, is one whose mode of thinking is dominated by dispraise.

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[23] With regard to Iago's unsettling ability to argue *in utramque partem*, Emily Donahoe, in "*In Utramque Partem*: Arguing Both Sides of the Question in *Othello*," writes:

> While rhetoric primarily provides Othello with a pleasing, ornamented style of speech, it is, for Iago, a malleable medium that allows him to think and speak in many different voices. Though Iago's speech is not, like Othello's, ornamental, not apparently rhetorical, he possesses the ability to speak spontaneously and persuasively on any subject, to see all sides of an issue at once, arguing both sides of any question. (320–21)

Donahoe argues that the main cause of Othello's downfall is his inability to perform the rhetorical practice of arguing *in utramque partem*, which limits his vision. "Speak[ing] primarily

METICULOUS VIRTUE

In Act 1, Scene 4, waiting for the Ghost to appear, and hearing the "kettledrum and trumpet … bray out" (11), Hamlet and Horatio engage in a conversation regarding the custom of excessive drinking in Denmark. Hamlet describes the custom thus:

> But to my mind, though I am native here
> And to the manner born, it is a custom
> More honored in the breach than the observance.
> This heavy-headed revel east and west
> Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations:
> They clepe us drunkards and with swinish phrase
> Soil our addition, and indeed it takes
> From our achievements, though performed at height,
> The pith and marrow of our attribute.

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in simple, confident declaratives and imperatives" (322), Othello lacks the mental habit of taking into account different possibilities. "Othello's incomplete understanding of rhetoric," Donahoe concludes, "leaves him vulnerable to the invisible, unadorned rhetoric of Iago" (328). Moreover, Donahoe points out that among Shakespeare's plays, *Othello* "contain[s] the highest number and proportion of question marks, with a question mark roughly every six or seven lines," which is another indication that the central theme of this tragedy is doubt (314). It is indeed ironic that a play deeply engaged with the rhetorical art of questioning presents a protagonist who lacks this art.

So oft it chances in particular men

That for some vicious mole of nature in them,

As in their birth wherein they are not guilty—

Since nature cannot choose his origin—

By the o'er-growth of some complexion

Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,

Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens

The form of plausive manners—that these men,

Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect—

Being nature's livery or fortune's star—

His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,

As infinite as man may undergo,

Shall in the general censure take corruption

From that particular fault: the dram of eale

Doth all the noble substance of a doubt

To his own scandal. (14–38)

Hamlet's objection to this "native" custom, which is interrupted by the Ghost's entrance, consists of three parts. First, he proposes that although he himself is "to the manner born," the "breach" of the custom is more honourable than its "observance." Next, the reason for this sober denunciation is that the Danes are "traduced and taxed" by "other nations" "east and west" for being "swinish" "drunkards," regardless of the "height" of any "achievements." Finally, to strengthen his argument, he compares the Danes, who observe this custom, to those whose virtues, "be they as pure as grace, / As infinite as man may undergo," due to "some vicious mole

of nature" or "some habit that too much o'er-leavens / The form of plausive manners," are "in the general censure" overlooked because of that "dram of eale." Whether a natural "mole" or an acquired "habit"—that is, whether the work of "nature" or "fortune"—this custom is a "scandal" to which "all the noble substance" pales in comparison.

In the course of translating this custom into a vice, Hamlet establishes an opposition between the ignorant "observance" of the custom and its sensible "breach." Danish "heavy-headed revel" is *meiotically* reproached. The *meiosis* of the custom, then, entails the *meiosis* of those who, though "not guilty," carry the "stamp" of this "defect." The condescending *meiosis* of those who are fated (by "nature" or "fortune") to be shackled to the custom but choose not to pine for release from it, then, leads to the praise of those who find fault with the custom and honour its infraction. The implication of Hamlet's *meiotic* translation is that virtue consists of not only the repudiation of the custom but the repudiation of himself. In Hamlet's critical reasoning, the Danish are rendered liable for a custom into which they are born ("nature cannot choose his origin"), a custom to which Hamlet himself is subject. Incidentally, two scenes earlier, in their first encounter in the play, glad to see Horatio, Hamlet offers to "teach" his friend how to drink like a Dane (1.2.175). And at the end of the play, Claudius's fatal plot with Laertes to eliminate Hamlet relies on his certainty that Hamlet drinks:

> When in your motion you are hot and dry,
> As make your bouts more violent to that end,
> And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him
> A chalice for the nonce whereon but sipping,
> If he by chance escape your venomed stuck,
> Our purpose may hold there. (4.4.156–61)

His moral reflection on this custom, then, does not mean that he does partake. It only means that he does so unwillingly.

Hamlet sets himself apart by his proud unwillingness. That is to say, he distinguishes himself from the rest of Denmark by his desire to reason himself out of his "native" custom. To do so, he must desire to be a non-Dane, he must desire not be his Danish self. In Hamlet's critical reasoning, the reason for his disapproval of the Danish custom is the non-Danish disapproval of it "east and west." Concerned with their reputation abroad, Hamlet sides with "the general censure" from beyond the borders of Denmark. The Danish lack Hamlet's reasoning, which is a criticism, from within and without, of their custom. Not only the blind adherence to the custom but the custom itself (Hamlet is after all discussing the effects of excessive drinking) are responsible for "breaking down the pales and forts of reason" in Denmark. Hamlet holds the Danish accountable for the custom and its effect: lack of reason, not being critical of their own custom. In Hamlet's critical reasoning, therefore, reason is criticism. Reason is praiseworthy *meiosis*. Hamlet, on one hand, for not being able to "choose his origin," identifies with his fellow countrymen in being born into this shameful custom; but on the other, he separates himself from them in joining "other nations" in denigrating his "native" custom. At this point, he is and is not a Dane.[24] Finding himself incapable of priding himself on the unreasonable ways of his country,

[24] In "Wonder and Nostalgia in *Hamlet*" Judith Anderson remarks that "the home Hamlet recognizes and for which he is nostalgic in a positive way is Wittenberg, not Denmark. His disaffection from Denmark is evident in his distressed relation to his current family; his criticism of Danish customs, including the celebratory toasting that is endemic in Nordic culture; and in his explicit desire to return 'to school in Wittenberg'" (364).

he prides himself on his reasonable indignation at them. In contrast to his confident declaration in the concluding Act of the play, "This is I, Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.236–37), in the opening Act, Hamlet finds honour in being ashamed of being a Dane. Virtue, therefore, according to Hamlet, is the reasonable but impossible escape from himself. Reasonable though it may be, virtue is the impossible wish to not be himself.

We must take into account Hamlet's *meiotic* repetitions of this one custom: "vicious mole," "defect," "fault," and "dram of eale." He is truly disturbed by a single vice that would corrupt the reputation of the whole nation. Hamlet seeks a pure and uncorrupted name. Like Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, Hamlet desires an honourable, immaculate name. He seeks for himself and Denmark a state of virtue. Hamlet's moral reflection on the custom of drinking can be viewed as a sign of his pursuit of purity, cleanliness, and righteousness: "The time is out of joint: oh, cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right" (1.5.189–90). Upon his return, he finds Denmark "out of joint" and believes it his noble duty to "set it right." And the means to achieve this state of purity is *meiotic* shame. Shameful awareness of one's instincts and habits, he believes, will lead to self-control. Hamlet's nobility is founded on such self-awareness and self-control.

To get a clearer idea of the process of Hamlet's honourable shaming of the Danish custom, it is worth going over an earlier conversation he has with Claudius and Gertrude. Scene 2 begins with Claudius's speech regarding his replacement of Old Hamlet. The speech that Stephen Greenblatt, in *Shakespeare's Freedom*, describes as "businesslike, confident, decisive, careful, and politically astute" (80). Claudius, according to Greenblatt, is Shakespeare's example of "genuine skills at governance" (80). To ensure a smooth transition of power, Claudius claims ownership of Old Hamlet's Queen and lands. Claudius's political move is mainly aimed at those

"Holding a weak supposal of our worth / Or thinking by our late dear brother's death / Our state to be disjoint and out of frame" (1.2.18–20). Claudius does not only have Norway's young Fortinbras in mind. To secure his authority, he must reckon with two disgruntled princes. To disarm the aggrieved Fortinbras, Claudius reminds Norway of the "bands of law" (24). With the "delated articles" (38) of his letter to the king of Norway, Claudius asks for recognition and the removal of the threat that Fortinbras is posing.

And to disarm the aggrieved Hamlet, whom he now refers to as his own "son" (64), Claudius promises him that his time to rule Denmark will come:

> We pray you throw to earth
> This unprevailing woe and think of us
> As of a father, for let the world take note
> You are the most immediate to our throne,
> And with no less nobility of love
> Than that which dearest father bears his son
> Do I impart toward you. (106–12)

Claudius's speech is a demand for acceptance, the acceptance of his kingship, which he finds challenged from within and without.[25] The new King establishes an opposition between those who "freely" (15) welcome his authority and those who "pester" (22) it. He has "thanks" (16) for the former. With the latter, he must reason. Whereas for Hamlet, reason is criticism from within

[25] Focusing on the King's marriage to his brother's wife, McDonald writes that Claudius "calculates his balances, contrasts, pairings, rhythmic alignments, and aural polish to make his questionable marriage more acceptable to the Danish court" (45).

and without, for Claudius, reason, which relies on contractual laws and promises, is a response to "peevish opposition" (100); it is the disarmament of criticism from within and without. Whereas for Hamlet, reason is criticizing those who do not criticize, for Claudius, it is criticizing those who do: "Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven, / A fault against the dead, a fault to nature, / To reason most absurd" (101–03). For Claudius, reason is to fault reason and expose its absurdity. Despite all of his efforts to steer clear of criticism, Claudius must still criticize criticism (from without). Affirmation is not free from negation, for it negates opposition in its wake. Demand for acceptance is unreasonable in the sense that it pays no heed to reason, but also in the sense that it reasons itself out of being reasoned against. Virtue, according to the King, is the unquestioning acceptance of his authority ("gentle and unforced accord" [123]), which then questions away those who question it. According to the "peevish" Prince, on the other hand, virtue emerges from questioning authority (the authority of a custom, for example). And this is Claudius's greatest weakness: in his pursuit of power, he contends with the opposition using a weapon of which he does not approve and with which he is not as familiar as his opponent, for it is Hamlet who has reason on his side.

In contrast to Hamlet's private broodings, Claudius confidently and publicly presents his authority to Hamlet as possessing the certainty and inevitability of a law of nature, the same law of nature that is disturbing Hamlet: "your father lost a father, / That father lost, lost his" (89–90). On the surface, the speech portrays a concerned uncle consoling a mourning nephew. But Claudius employs the necessity of coming to terms with the "common theme" of the "death of fathers" (103–04) so as to enforce the necessity of coming to terms with his kingship. Claudius presents his kingship as destined as the natural rule of death. His attitude toward his rule is: "This must be so" (106). According to himself, in other words, Claudius is not responsible for his

kingship, for it has been dictated by fate. What Claudius is responsible for is making the most of this opportunity (by claiming ownership of Old Hamlet's Queen, lands, and even son). And it is the responsibility of those within and without Denmark to accept his kingship, for whom he has "thanks." Furthermore, to reaffirm his position, the new King resists the resistance—those who choose not to submit. Who would question the ineluctability of mortality? "A heart unfortified or mind impatient, / An understanding simple and unschooled" (96–97). Who, accordingly, would challenge Claudius's rule, which "must be and is as common" (98) as death? Only "a will most incorrect to heaven" (95). Only Hamlet, who chooses "obstinate condolement" (93) over acceptance.

In alliance with the new King, Gertrude presents a similar argument to her unaccommodating son:

> Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off
> And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
> Do not forever with thy veiled lids
> Seek for thy noble father in the dust—
> Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die,
> Passing through nature to eternity. (68–73)

Gertrude's "Denmark" refers to Claudius. It also refers to the whole of Denmark, which has yielded to Claudius.[26] Being a "friend" to Denmark is not only being like the "common" Dane, acquiescent and unprotesting, in accepting Claudius's replacement of Old Hamlet, but also as

[26] Recall that Hamlet's speech on Denmark's custom of drinking starts as a condemnation of the King's "wassail" (1.4.9), and then expands into the condemnation of the whole of Denmark.

"common" as the fact that "all that lives must die." Gertrude's "common," like Claudius's "common," implies compliance with what is fated to be. "If it be," Gertrude then asks, "Why seems it so particular with thee?" (1.2.74–75). To question—more specifically, to question with *why*—is to suggest responsibility.[27] Gertrude's question intimates that Hamlet has control over his "nighted color" and "veiled lids," that Hamlet possesses the autonomy to choose between "look[ing] like" the "common" and "seem[ing]" "particular." Gertrude's question rebukes Hamlet for choosing the latter. Hamlet, in response, objects not so much to the "common" but rather to possessing the power not to object to the "common": "Nay, it is. I know not 'seems'" (76). He is as powerless to "cast … off" being "particular" as he is to "seem" "particular." Hamlet *is* "particular." As Harold Rosenberg puts it in *The Tradition of the New*, Hamlet "thinks too much not because he is an intellectual but because it is impossible for him to do anything else" (147).

There are further distinctions between Hamlet and Claudius's ways of thinking. In Hamlet's speech regarding the custom that rules over Denmark, to dignify the "breach" of the custom and "soil" its "observance," Hamlet moves from the criticism of its "observance" to the praise of its "breach." Only after criticizing an unreasonable vice does he praise a reasonable virtue. Hamlet's thinking begins with (self-)accusation.[28] In Claudius's speech regarding his own

[27] Recall Claudius's question: "what we know must be and is as common / As any the most vulgar thing to sense, / Why should we in our peevish opposition / Take it to heart?" (1.2.98–101).

[28] Northrop Frye, in his lecture notes on the play, observes that "Hamlet's views of Polonius, of his mother's sin in marrying Claudius, of the treachery of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, while

rule over Denmark, however, Claudius moves from the praise of those who "have freely gone / With this affair along" (1.2.15–16) to the criticism of those whose "stubbornness" is "impious," "unmanly," and "incorrect" (94–95). Here, the "unmanly" vice is subsequent to the virtue. In one, the construction of vice comes first, in the other, second. Claudius's disapproval of the opposition within and without functions as reassertion of his royal status. For Claudius, criticism—as the negation of internal and external negation—serves as a secondary affirmation of himself.[29]

Moreover, Claudius's argument (like that of Gertrude) rests on the law of nature that "all that lives must die." Reference to this property of life implies that since death is inevitable, since life is ephemeral, it behooves one not to become attached to what lives and dies. Hamlet is implored to put an end to his mourning and let go of his pointless longing for his dead father "in the dust." Impermanence being the premise of the argument, detachment is its prescriptive conclusion.

The detachment that Claudius advocates requires further analysis, especially in its relationship with his demand for acceptance. This problem should be looked at from two angles: the new King's expectation of the Danes (and non-Danes) and his own attitude toward his

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they may often be reasonably close to what we're likely to accept, are surcharged with Hamlet's melancholy—that is, they're sick. He sees what's there, but there's an emotional excess in his perception that's reflected back to him" (83).

[29] Frye argues that "except for his crime," Claudius is "healthy"; and "even with his cause," Hamlet is "sick" (93). Also, it is worth mentioning that Frye sees Claudius's crime as the reason for his excessive drinking (93).

temporary rule. Claudius claims that it is "incorrect" to become emotionally connected to what is known to have a transient existence. He even acknowledges the fact that his time to rule will run its course and come to an end (and the young Prince is "the most immediate" to the throne). Yet, his status as King is necessarily accompanied with the obligation that all of Denmark be dependent on him. What is more, later in the play, in his confessional soliloquy, Claudius bemoans that he is unable to pray for forgiveness because he is not willing to part with the rewards of his crime:

> Whereto serves mercy
> But to confront the visage of offence?
> And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
> To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
> Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up.
> My fault is past, but, oh, what form of prayer
> Can serve my turn? 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?[30] (3.3.46–56)

[30] With regard to this speech, Peter Mack, in "Learning and Transforming Conventional Wisdom," writes that Claudius "amplifies the power of grace by presenting pictures of the depth of bloodguilt and the radiance of heaven's cleansing. But then he imagines what he would say and realizes that it will not suffice" (442). Through this amplification, Mack argues, Claudius

The problem can be stated thus: How does one "freely" submit to what one does not become attached to? It is not that detachment from what is transient cancels out submission to it. On the contrary, detachment from what is transient allows for transient submission to it. Such detachment, then, is not the same as resignation. It is the acceptance of impermanence. Thus, asking Denmark to come to terms with the termination of Old Hamlet's rule (and life), Claudius necessarily suggests the eventual termination of his own rule. Only by asking Denmark not to become permanently attached to him is it possible for him to ask for recognition. The acceptance that Claudius demands presupposes its own transience. The demand for the acceptance of the newly appointed King, that is to say, is necessarily accompanied with the law of replaceability, which works for and against the new King.

In the sphere of politics, this is a recurring theme in Shakespeare's tragedies. Political figures are enraged at the fickleness of the public. Coriolanus, for instance, considers this aspect of the commoners as their most obnoxious quality: "With every minute you do change a mind / And call him noble that was now your hate, / Him vile that was your garland" (1.1.173–75). *Julius Caesar* begins with the tribunes berating the plebeians for having forgotten Pompey ("Knew you not Pompey?" [1.1.36]) and celebrating Julius Caesar's ascent to power. And in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Mark Antony is furious that the "slippery" (1.2.180) plebeians, in memory of Pompey, have started to support his son. Outside of politics, in *Othello*, Shakespeare amplifies this theme at length in a domestic setting. What devastates Desdemona's father and then husband is their inability to accept that Desdemona does not belong to either of them—what

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confronts a paradox: "He knows that he needs to be forgiven, yet he cannot fulfil the requirement of repentance in order to be in a position to ask for forgiveness" (442).

Burke describes as "manly miserliness" ("*Othello*" 166). The slipping away of Desdemona from the clutch of the father and husband's desire to possess indefinitely is *meiotically* translated as infidelity. Angry at the loss of her daughter to Othello, Desdemona's father warns the son-in-law: "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee" (1.3.289–90). And later Iago makes reference to this statement in order to stir Othello's sense of possessiveness (3.3.204). In turn, Othello expresses his anger: "O curse of marriage, / That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites" (266–68). Othello's anger, like that of the Roman politicians, is frustration at inevitable loss, frustration at impermanence.

Hamlet feels the same way about Denmark's acceptance of the replacement of his father. Claudius and Gertrude's uneasiness with Hamlet is his prolonged mourning. His long speeches throughout the play are another symptom of his tendency to fixate. Slavoj Žižek writes that this tragedy is Shakespeare's "ultimate play about obsession" (*How to Read Lacan* 35). "'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature," Claudius tells Hamlet, "To give these mourning duties to your father" (1.2.87–88). Hamlet, according to his uncle, is "bound / In filial obligation for some term / To do obsequious sorrow" (90–92). But he is not to "persever / In obstinate condolement" (92–93). "Do not forever," Gertrude similarly admonishes her son, "Seek for thy noble father in the dust." And this is the danger that Hamlet faces. He must be careful not to allow his *meiotic* tendencies to stop being an active pursuit. He must be careful not to become either obsessive or indifferent.

Even before confronting the Ghost, even before being presented with the thought of his father being murdered secretly, Hamlet is deeply worried about the corruption that has taken over Denmark. Hamlet's fate, being critically particular, being particularly critical, is sealed despite the revelation of the Ghost, not because of it. As Claudius is fated to be King, Hamlet is

fated to defy him—"The time is out of joint: oh, cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right" (1.5.189–90). The "breach" of Claudius's rule, that is to say, is as determined as its "observance." The Ghost only encourages Hamlet's hidden drive by offering him (questionable) grounds for his questioning nature. Why else would Hamlet interrupt the Ghost—exactly when it accuses Claudius—with "Oh, my prophetic soul!" (1.5.41)? And why else, after its departure, would Hamlet agree with Horatio's observation, "There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave / To tell us this" (127–28)?

Unlike Denmark, Hamlet is not capable of short-term mourning. That is, unlike Denmark, Hamlet is not capable of turning a blind eye to corruption. The description of his grief over the death of his father to his mother is worth examining:

> 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, cold 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, modes, 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. (1.2.77–86)

The exterior, superficial "forms, modes, shapes," of mourning his father are but a "show," a *synecdochic* manifestation of an unexplainable "woe" "within." Hamlet is, in the words of Lynn Enterline in *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, "plagued" by his "limitations," by "his inability to find

words adequate" to describe his "woe" (127). Moreover, here, there is a subtle attack against Denmark's insincere "show" of mourning—insincere in that it has come to an end. As Bruce Danner observes, "In this strained insistence on his own sincerity, Hamlet employs the topos of inexpressibility to elevate his mourning, even as his dismissal of its exterior form constitutes a veiled contempt for the courtiers' 'show' of mourning, quickly abandoned after the marriage" ("Speaking Daggers" 31). Submitting to Claudius's demand for acceptance would require Hamlet to accept a corrupt Denmark, which is not in the particular prince's nature.

More grievous, outside of politics, is Hamlet's deep disgust at his mother's fickleness. Hamlet is more particular about the relation between being in mourning and being "particular" in his first soliloquy (1.2.129–59), which is articulated immediately before Horatio approaches him to inform him of the Ghost. The soliloquy is an approbation of his "excellent" father and an opprobrium of the "wicked speed" of his mother's "incestuous" replacement of his father with someone as unworthy as Claudius ("she … married with my uncle, / My father's brother, but no more like my father / Than I to Hercules"). Hamlet is obsessed with the irreplaceability of his father and furious at Gertrude and Claudius's audacity to attempt to replace him. In Janet Adelman's words in *Suffocating Mothers*, Hamlet is disturbed by his mother's "undiscriminating sexuality" (13), her "indifferent voraciousness" (20). The "unrighteous" Gertrude is worse than the "beast that wants discourse of reason" because, rather than mourning "longer," she chooses to still find an "appetite" for the "uses" of this "unweeded garden." As Tanya Pollard observes, Gertrude's "insufficient mourning" is "one of Hamlet's most vehement fixations" ("What's

Hecuba to Shakespeare?" 1079).[31] One respect in which *Hamlet* differs from *Othello* is that the former complicates the theme of impermanence with incest. The meticulously righteous Hamlet is not so much disturbed by his mother's "undiscriminating" and "indifferent" lust as her incestuous lust. The thought that Gertrude, in order to maintain her status as queen, would marry any man that would be king disturbs Hamlet, especially since he desires the throne himself. Hamlet's political ambitions aside, he now associates the crown with incest.[32]

Another clear example of Hamlet practicing *meiotic* shaming for the purpose of moral purity occurs when he approaches his mother in Act 3, Scene 4. Here, he demands that Gertrude look into a "glass" to observe her "inmost part" (19–20). In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius uses the

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[31] Jacques Lacan, in his essay "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," argues that Gertrude's desire, her "instinctive voracity," which prevents her from choosing between Old Hamlet and Claudius, manifests itself in Hamlet: "This desire, of the mother, is essentially manifested in the fact that, confronted on one hand with an eminent, idealized, exalted object—his father—and on the other with the degraded, despicable object Claudius, the criminal and adulterous brother, Hamlet does not choose" (12).

[32] Perhaps it would have been easier for Hamlet to accept Claudius's kingship had Claudius not attempted to replace Old Hamlet by taking the place of Gertrude's husband and Hamlet's father. Perhaps Hamlet would have respected Claudius more had Claudius attempted to become a self-sufficient, independent king. It is an extremely difficult task for Hamlet to step out from his father's shadow, especially because they share the same name. Hamlet despises his uncle because, even in the absence of this difficulty, Claudius chooses to literally take the place of his brother.

"glass" (1.2.68) differently. Cassius encourages Brutus to see the "shadow" of his "hidden worthiness" (57–58). But Hamlet wants to show Gertrude the "black and grieved spots" of her "soul" (3.4.89–90). Hamlet believes he must instill a sense of shame in her to prevent her from committing more sin.[33] To "live the purer" (159), Hamlet instructs his mother to let shame take over her "heart" (157) through repetition:

> Assume a virtue if you have it not.
>
> That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
>
> Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
>
> That to the use of actions fair and good
>
> He likewise gives a frock or livery

[33] In his essay "Introduction to These Paintings," D. H. Lawrence contends that Hamlet's horror is a manifestation of the English Renaissance horror of sexual life. "The real 'mortal coil' in Hamlet," writes Lawrence "is all sexual" (185). "Hamlet is overpowered by horrible revulsion from his physical connection with his mother, which makes him recoil in similar revulsion from Ophelia, and almost from his father even as a ghost" (186). And this horror is rooted in the Elizabethan "overmastering fear" of syphilis and its consequences. Syphilis, or the pox, "entered the blood of the nation, particularly of the upper classes, who had more chance of infection. And after it had entered the blood, it entered the consciousness, and it hit the vital imagination" (187). It was not only the horrible disease that frightened the period but the possibility of its transmission from fathers. "I am certain," Lawrence argues, "that some of Shakespeare's father-murder complex, some of Hamlet's horror of his mother, of his uncle, of all old men came from the feeling that fathers may transmit syphilis, or syphilis-consequences, to children" (189).

> That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
> And that shall lend a kind of easiness
> To the next abstinence, the next more easy.
> For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
> And either lodge the devil, or throw him out
> With wondrous potency. (161–71)

To "change the stamp of nature," Hamlet encourages the repetition of "abstinence" motivated by a sense of shame. The repetition that Hamlet instructs is not simply a quantitative increase. This quantitative increase is accompanied with qualitative diminishment.

Conclusion

Virtue, for Hamlet, is a conscious act. And it requires the *meiotic* translation of "the stamp of nature." Hamlet has a tendency to dispraise, a tendency to *meiotically* translate "all the uses of this world" as "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" (1.2.133–34). When he returns to Denmark, he is disappointed to find that the rest of Denmark do not share his disgust with corruption—his uncle's greed and his mother's lust are specially disgusting to him. This is why he shuns Ophelia and asks her to never marry or have children:

> Get thee to a nunnery! Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves—believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. (3.1.119–27)

These words reveal that for Hamlet virtue is a conscious act. Although he is "indifferent honest," he can never rid himself of his "proud, revengeful, ambitious" nature. Hamlet's *meiotic* moralizing is a conscious strategy to delay his "proud, revengeful, ambitious" nature. Had he not been ambitious, he would not be, in the words of Ophelia, "the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword, / Th'expectation and rose of the fair state, / The glass of fashion and the mold of form, / Th'observed of all observers" (147–51). And he is fully aware that "virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it" (115–16). Unlike Iago, Hamlet does not believe that beneath the surface there is only ugliness. For Hamlet, virtue is the postponement of the passions beneath through an act of degrading them. And the passion that Hamlet struggles with the most is the urge for revenge (intensified by the Ghost). This is *meiotic* amplification as delaying interpretation.

Chapter Three

The Craft of Virtue in Shakespeare's Rome

INTRODUCTION

Cicero, the spokesman for Roman republicanism, opens his *De Inventione* by comparing the good and bad that results from the art of rhetoric, and concludes that the good outweighs the bad: "men of eloquence" cause "disasters," to be sure, but eloquence has also founded cities, put out "the flames of a multitude of wars," and established "the strongest alliances and most sacred friendships" (3). And as to the origin of rhetoric, Cicero refers to a time without law or order, when individuals relied chiefly on their "physical strength" (5). It was a man gifted with persuasion, Cicero surmises, that converted "wild savages into a kind and gentle folk": "Men were scattered in the fields and hidden in sylvan retreats (*silvestribus abditos*) when he assembled and gathered them in accordance with a plan, he introduced them to every useful and honourable occupation" (7). This view of rhetoric influenced many Renaissance writers.[34] Thomas Wilson, for instance, in the preface to his treatise on the art of rhetoric, reiterates the same idea of the origin of eloquence, "Some liued by spoyle: some like brute beastes grased vpon the ground: some went naked: some roomed like Woodoses: none did any thing by reason, but most did what they could by manhood" (xliii–xliv). Then one endowed with "the gift of vtteraunce" turned "wilde" into "sober," "cruell" into "gentle," "fooles" into "wise," and

[34] For discussion of the influence of Cicero's link between rhetoric and civility on Renaissance writers such as Thomas Wilson, see Cathy Shrank, "Civil Tongues: Language, Law and Reformation."

"beastes" into "men" (xliv). In "Shakespeare and Language," Jonathan Hope describes the Renaissance conception of language thus: "Inasmuch as it allowed humans to make evident their ability to reason, it was a divine gift, distinguishing humanity from, and elevating it above, the rest of creation" (77). It is this gift, Hope explains, that is able to "raise the monstrous to the level of the human" (77). Similarly, Russ McDonald, in "The Language of Tragedy," writes that the Renaissance "inherited from the earlier Tudor humanists a faith in eloquence and in the power of language to educate, to civilize, and thus to help redeem the fallen race" (44).

Shakespeare's Brutus re-enacts this tale of the origin of rhetoric after the assassination of Julius Caesar. The honourable orator has a plan: to appease the "multitude," who are "beside themselves with fear" (3.1.181–82), by justifying the murder with reasons that are "full of good regard" (226) lest the act be viewed a "savage spectacle" (225).[35] Through Brutus, the slaughter of Julius Caesar, "like richest alchemy, / Will change to virtue and to worthiness" (1.3.158–60). This transformative power of rhetoric, turning primitivism into sociability, shall serve as the basis for my reading of Shakespeare's three tragedies set in the beginning and end of the Roman Republic.

Continuing my reading of inconsiderate tragic heroes, I will move from Shakespeare's modern Venice to his ancient Rome. In the Roman tragedies, Shakespeare presents heroes who, notwithstanding their greatness, are in one way or another indiscreetly immature. Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, and Mark Antony share a certain blindness that is offensive; they are inconsiderate of others. The impulsive sense of superiority that they exude is beyond the patrician disdain for

[35] The English word *savage* comes from the Latin *silvaticus* (meaning "of the woods"), which Cicero uses to describe man not yet civilized through eloquence.

the plebeian. Coriolanus cannot restrain his "soaring insolence" (2.1.242) in the forum or on the battlefield. Cassius is infuriated that he "must bend his body / If Caesar carelessly but nod on him" (1.2.117–18). Mark Antony's "voluptuousness" (1.4.26) ruins two marriages, his political alliance with Octavius and Lepidus, and his respect among the soldiers he leads to disgraceful defeat again and again. While the city is indebted to the accomplishments of its celebrated heroes, it cannot tolerate their incivility. In response, Rome develops specific virtues to suppress the tragic flaws of these difficult men. Volumnia intends to pacify Coriolanus's unrestrained anger by teaching him humility and politeness. Brutus and the conspirators want freedom from the loyalty that Julius Caesar demands. Mark Antony's indulgence is opposed by Octavius's willpower. But each tragedy dramatizes its hero's stubborn resistance to the patient virtue, which ultimately leads to his downfall.

In this chapter, as point of departure, I will examine two opposing demands made in each play in order to juxtapose the hero's *hamartia* with the social virtue to which he will not yield. In *Coriolanus*, which takes place at the dawn of the Republic, the demanding mother has raised her son to relentlessly pursue military honour. The first act of the play depicts Caius Martius fearlessly defeating the Volscian army in the city of Corioli, for which he is given the title "Coriolanus." Now at the height of his career, upon his return to Rome, his mother demands political honour. The arrogant soldier must learn to put aside his angry contempt for the plebeians that he untiringly insults and treat them "mildly" (3.2.142). In *Julius Caesar*, which portrays the final days of the Republic, there is a similar clash of discordant demands made by the two female characters—Portia and Calphurnia. These worried women have an important presence only in the second act of the play, in which they fear for their husbands. In the first scene, Portia insists on unconditional trust from Brutus; and in the second scene, Calphurnia

urges Julius Caesar to exercise prudence and be wary of those around him. And in *Antony and Cleopatra*, which is set during the transition from Republic to Empire, the two demands are made by the queen of Egypt and the future emperor of Rome. Cleopatra pulls Mark Antony toward extravagance, while Octavius pulls him toward restraint.[36]

What I hope to show through these juxtapositions is, first, that Rome's virtues are rhetorical constructs as opposed to the drives of its heroes, which are devoid of design. Whatever the hero's marked feature, it is natural in the sense that it is free of artifice; it is passionate in the sense that it is thoughtless and uncalculated. Consider, for instance, Coriolanus in the midst of battle impulsively and impatiently asking his superior to engage with the enemy:

> I do beseech you
> By all the battles wherein we have fought,
> By th' blood we have shed together, by th' vows
> We have made to endure friends, that you directly
> Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates,
> And that you not delay the *present*, but,
> Filling the air with swords advanced and darts,
> We prove this very hour. (1.6.55–62; emphasis added)

Coriolanus's need to humiliate, Julius Caesar's need to be respected, and Mark Antony's need for gratification are all incautious and impervious to tact or strategy. In short, they are

[36] Linda Charnes, in *Notorious Identity*, argues that "the real battle" in *Antony and Cleopatra* is between Octavius and Cleopatra (112). Charnes adds that "both Octavius and Cleopatra understand how susceptible Antony is to attacks on his 'manhood'" (112).

unrhetorical. The virtue that the hero defies, in contrast, is achieved by means of manipulation and misrepresentation. The humility of Menenius is duplicitous. The independence of the conspirators is envious and comes at the price of disloyalty and deception. And in his pursuit of control, Octavius plots against all those in power. These virtues are deliberate and goal-oriented; they are planned with foresight. This polarity between calculation and impulse is manifest in *Antony and Cleopatra*: Octavius refers to Mark Antony's scandalous adultery with Cleopatra as "present pleasure" (1.4.32). For Octavius, as Gail Kern Paster puts it, this affair "signifies an immersion in the present moment and irrational surrender to the demands of the body" ("The Tragic Subject and Its Passions" 151). However, the idea of Mark Antony marrying his sister Octavia as a political exigency is "studied" and "ruminated"—it is "not a present thought" (2.2.146–47). Ultimately, Mark Antony finds that he is unable to outsmart his rival. "If thou dost play with him at any game, / Thou art sure to lose" (2.3.24–25), the soothsayer warns him. Both Mark Antony and Cleopatra find no other way for Octavius to be "unpolicied" (5.2.304) than suicide.

Inspecting how these prominent figures who represent their society (Cassius, for example), I will demonstrate that behind their social objective there are two motives: a certain sensitive intolerance and greed for power. These two forces are a perverted version of the impatient desire for greatness that they despise in the hero. The conspirators are driven by an impatience of their own to oppress Julius Caesar. It is through Brutus that they are compelled to tame their own impatience, their need for bloodthirsty revenge. Consider Brutus's independence of thought in his response to Cassius:

> What you would work me to, I have some aim.
>
> How I have thought of this, and of these times,

I shall recount hereafter. For this *present*,

I would not, so with love I might entreat you,

Be any further moved. What you have said,

I will consider; what you have to say,

I will with patience hear, and find a time

Both meet to hear and answer such high things. (1.2.163–70; emphasis added)

Brutus delays the "present" urgency to plot against Julius Caesar. He urges Cassius to wait for another time to discuss this pressing problem. Brutus does not disagree with Cassius that Julius Caesar is becoming a problem for the Republic, he disagrees with Cassius's aggressive manner of describing the problem. Brutus must think further by himself, and he demands that Cassius does the same. What Brutus's noble patience reveals is that Julius Caesar's impatience must not be suppressed by an impatient conspiracy. The plot must be patiently thought out. The "savage spectacle" that Brutus avoids is to counteract impatience with impatience. And what is even more noble about Brutus is that delaying the plot to act against Julius Caesar shows that while he comes to the realization that it is necessary to bring Julius Caesar down, he appreciates that Julius Caesar's greatness is due to his impatience. Brutus admires the great man that he must defeat.[37] "It must be by his death" (2.1.10) because the awe-inspiring Julius Caesar could not

[37] Nietzsche calls Brutus's virtue "Independence of the soul" (*The Gay Science* 150). "No sacrifice can be too great for that," Nietzsche expands, "one must be capable of sacrificing one's dearest friend for it, even if he should also be the most glorious human being, an ornament of the world, a genius without peer—if one loves freedom as the freedom of great souls and he threatens this kind of freedom" (150).

have inspired awe without his impatient drive for distinction. Similarly, in *Coriolanus*, I will show, Volumnia admires how anger has served her son on the battlefield. But she detests the tribunes' revengeful manner of banishing Coriolanus. And finally, by the end of the story, Volumnia comes to terms with the fact that there is no longer any place for her aggressive son in the Republic.

In the first chapter, I have demonstrated that a certain kind of anxiety stimulates the moral values of Venice. The Venetians fear direct contact with the unknown that lies beyond the borders of their civilized community. And they associate this unknown with darkness, blackness, and barbarity. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that Rome's virtues, in these three plays, in spite of all the sleight of tongue that goes into their making, are also prompted by anxiety. This marks the difference between Cassius and Julius Caesar. One impatience is spiteful, the other proud. One impatience is fearful, the other *hubiristic*. The hero is recklessly undiplomatic because of his *hubris*; that is, in his unbridled expression of his drive, he is uninhibited by fear. The Romans dread being the object of their hero's drive; they cannot bear to be its recipient. Coriolanus constantly threatens others. The ruling class of the Republic, throughout the play, constantly fears being threatened (first by the insurrection of the plebeians, then by Coriolanus himself). It is in response to this fear that they beseech Coriolanus to practice humility. And Octavius practices self-control from fear of being driven by passion and hence losing control. What Octavius cannot tolerate in Mark Antony is the free expression of his desires.

INVECTIVE AND CIVILITY IN *CORIOLANUS*

Coriolanus cannot endear himself to others because he has grown accustomed to the hostility of war. And he has become an aggressive warrior because he was deprived of being

loved at an early age. To toughen up her daughter-in-law as they wait for news from Coriolanus, the cold Volumnia instructs Virgilia to behave toward her husband in the same manner she has raised her son: "If my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honor than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love" (1.3.2–5). Volumnia began preparing her son for the life of a courageous soldier "when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way" (6–7). The young and attractive boy was forbidden affection and social interaction; he was plunged into the opposite: the rage and loneliness of "cruel war" (12). A clear indication of Volumnia's determination occurs when, after her indignation toward the tribunes gets out of hand, she refuses to calm herself by dining with Menenius Agrippa; instead, she contends that "anger's my meat. I sup upon myself / And so shall starve with feeding" (4.2.50–51). Paul Cantor, in *Shakespeare's Rome*, observes that while "eating and drinking are clearly convivial activities, ways of bringing people together" in *Antony and Cleopatra*, "the rejection of eating and drinking in *Coriolanus* is explicitly associated with the rejection of human company" (33). And in *Suffocating Mothers*, Janet Adelman remarks, "We might suspect her of having been as niggardly in providing food for her son as she is for herself, or rather suspect her of insisting that he too be self-sufficient, that he feed only on his own anger" (148). And to please his demanding mother (according to whom blood "becomes a man" [1.3.36]), the rude bully came to prominence at the age of sixteen "when with his Amazonian chin he drove / The bristled lips before him" (2.2.88–89), and has responded to his mother's request ever since with vigour and enthusiasm. Of course, this is not to suggest that the mother is to be blamed for Coriolanus's insolence. Volumnia herself has been responding to a

call from her city, which requires soldiers who do not shy away from expressing their fury.[38] She has honourably met Rome's demand by building what Stephen Greenblatt, in *Shakespeare's Freedom*, calls an "unstoppable war machine" (108). And Rome has benefitted from the growth of this ambitious boy into what Michael Hattaway calls "an icon of magnificence" ("Tragedy and Political Authority" 117).

I argue that beneath Volumnia's adamant coldness toward her son is an irrational fear of being dependent. Volumnia raises her son to never be needy or dependent. To do so, she has him suffer the dangers of battle from an early age. It is through hardship that Coriolanus becomes an independent warrior. This is clear from the "precepts" that the mother used in order to educate and embolden the son, in order to "make invincible / The heart that conned them": "extremities was the trier of spirits," "common chances common men could bear," "when the sea was calm, all boats alike / Showed mastership in floating," and "fortune's blows / When most struck home, being gentle wounded craves / A noble cunning" (4.1.4–11). Notice that Coriolanus uses the past tense to reiterate these proverbs. He understands that Rome has changed, that his past education leaves him unprepared for a social life in the city.

The political landscape in Rome changes drastically once Coriolanus thwarts its external enemies. His services are no longer needed in the field, but in the forum. Instead of passionate warriors, the Republic now needs effective politicians who can negotiate peace. Volumnia appreciates this shift and immediately adapts. Moments before Coriolanus's arrival from battle, Volumnia thanks the gods for her son's wounds of war and hopes that for these wounds he will

[38] Volumnia's loyalty to Rome is even more evident at the end of the play, when she sacrifices her son for the sake of Rome.

be rewarded the position of consulship: “There will be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place” (2.1.136–37). After she greets her “good soldier” (160), Volumnia makes her new demand: “I have lived / To see inherited my very wishes / And the buildings of my fancy. Only / There’s one thing wanting, which I doubt not but / Our Rome will cast upon thee” (186–90). She calls on her son to seek honour hereafter within the city by being elected by the “general louts” (3.2.66) as consul. The only obstacle is that the “vengeance proud” (2.2.5) Coriolanus is required to “remember / A kinder value of the people than / He hath hereto prized them at” (55–57).

What is now valued in Rome is politeness, even if it is insincere. There are two key encounters between the mother and the son that clearly demonstrate this change in values. Coriolanus and Volumnia meet after he has aggravated the plebeians by insulting them (3.2). The two meet again after his banishment from Rome (5.3). In both cases, the bully is reprimanded by his mother for not getting along with others. In the first meeting, Volumnia instructs the disgruntled Coriolanus on the “use of anger / To better vantage” (3.2.30–31) and “the inheritance of their loves” (68). In the second meeting, Volumnia chastises Coriolanus for persisting in holding a grudge against Rome: “Think’st thou it honorable for a noble man / Still to remember wrongs?” (5.3.154–55). Being political is Rome’s new virtue. More precisely, the aristocrats must humble themselves, even if they are to “dissemble” (3.2.62), in order to win the hearts of the commoners. The warrior is enjoined to please and gain the approval of those he abhors, to restrain his “frown” and instead “spend a fawn upon ’em” (67). This tragedy, therefore, as Katherine Maus puts it in her introduction to the play, “is not merely about a heroic individual but about the community from which he springs and how it is to be governed” (2933).

Katharine Craik, in "Staging Rhetorical Vividness in Coriolanus," points out that while scholars disagree about whether Coriolanus is an eloquent orator or an inarticulate soldier, they seem to agree that his "accomplishments or deficiencies as an orator lie at the heart of the drama" (143). Feigned deference is no easy task for Coriolanus. "Would you have me false to my nature?" (3.2.14–15), the overbearing soldier asks. Coriolanus refuses to "perform a part" (3.2.109). The mother must teach the belligerent boy diplomacy—or, to use her own word, "policy" (42). She entreats Coriolanus to

> Go to them with this bonnet in thy hand,
> And thus far having stretched it—here be with them,
> Thy knee bussing the stones; for in such business
> Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th'ignorant
> More learned than the ears—waving thy head,
> Which often thus correcting thy stout heart,
> Now humble as the ripest mulberry
> That will not hold the handling; or say to them
> Thou art their soldier and, being bred in broils,
> Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,
> Were fit for thee to use as they to claim
> In asking their good loves, but thou wilt frame
> Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs so far
> As thou hast power and person. (73–86)

This passage can be viewed as a guide to the art of humility. It is artful because it is not natural.[39] The change that Coriolanus is asked to come to terms with is to use pleasing words rather than violence to win over the plebeians. The "policy" that Volumnia demands from Coriolanus entails "such words that are but roted in / Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables / Of no allowance to your bosom's truth" (3.2.55–57). Coriolanus should regard winning over the public as if he is conquering a town using "gentle words" (59). But, as Cathy Shrank remarks in "Civility and the City in *Coriolanus*," this soldier is unable "to obey the fundamental rule regulating rhetoric: the need for decorum, suiting your language to the time, place, matter, and audience" (419). And McDonald argues that in stark contrast to the voluble Hamlet, "who loves words," the reticent Coriolanus "despises language so thoroughly that he cannot move into the parliamentary realm of politics" ("The Language of Tragedy" 45). This soldier, McDonald continues,

> confesses that, while he sought out warfare, he "fled from words," and he objects to the recitation of his deeds, resents hearing his "nothings monstered." This last phrase captures his mistrust of language, specifically its inherent failure to represent the world accurately. The man of action cannot tolerate the slippage or lack of correspondence between sign and signified. (45)

Coriolanus, in other words, detests the artificiality of language.

To better understand the nature of the political politeness that Volumnia demands, it is necessary to understand why Coriolanus obdurately refuses to submit to it. Volumnia's speech

[39] Craik claims that it is Coriolanus's "failure as an actor, rather than as an orator," that leads to his downfall (162).

on humility cited above makes use of what George Puttenham, in *The Art of English Poesy*, calls the "Figure of Excuse." Puttenham defines *dicaeologia* (literally meaning "a plea in defense") thus: "Sometimes our error is so manifest, or we be so hardly pressed with our adversaries, as we cannot deny the fault laid unto our charge; in which case it is good policy to excuse it by some allowable pretext" (315).[40] To make peace with his aggrieved audience, Coriolanus is to offer them an excuse for his impoliteness. It is interesting that while Volumnia instructs her son to dishonestly wheedle the public into accepting him as their leader, the vindication she recommends is honest. He must apologize for "being bred in broils"—that is, he must apologize for who he is.[41] Coriolanus has from an early age become uncompromisingly accustomed to

[40] The connection between the "Figure of Excuse" and the "Figure of Extenuation" is worth pointing out. Among the applications of *meiosis* (the "Disabler" or the "Figure of Extenuation"), according to Puttenham, is "to excuse a fault, and to make an offense seem less than it is" (305). Puttenham presents both of these figures as "sententious" (or, rhetorical) figures. However, the main difference between the two figures is that while the "Figure of Excuse" gives a reason, the "Figure of Extenuation" presents as reasonable. *Dicaeologia* justifies a wrongdoing by offering an "allowable pretext." *Meiosis* translates the wrongdoing into something "allowable." As Puttenham puts it, *meiosis* "excuse[s] a fault … by giving a term more favorable and of less vehemence than the truth requires" (305).

[41] There is another instance of *dicaeologia* when Menenius calms the tribunes by offering them the same excuse: "Consider this: he has been bred i' th' wars / Since a' could draw a sword, and is ill schooled / In bolted language; meal and bran together / He throws without distinction" (3.1.318–21). The unrefined soldier is incapable of "bolted language" because he is accustomed

degrading others. What is more, he is praised, "brow-bound with the oak" (2.2.95), and granted an honourable title for humiliating the enemies of Rome on the battlefield "where he did / Run reeking o'er the lives of men as if / 'Twere perpetual spoil" (115–17). Belittling others has become this soldier's second nature. As Menenius explains, Coriolanus "talks like a knell, and his hum is a battery" (5.4.21). "Battle," writes Maus, "is Coriolanus's model for identity formation" (2937). Now he is summoned to belittle himself in public, to which he will not capitulate. Volumnia is essentially asking her son to direct his drive to diminish others toward himself, to internalize his anger.[42]

Furthermore, Coriolanus the bully is not at all afraid of a bully like himself. In fact, he craves to grapple with his equal, Tullus Aufidius: "Were half to half the world by th'ears and he / Upon my party, I'd revolt to make / Only my wars with him. He is a lion / That I am proud to hunt" (1.1.224–27). Likewise, Aufidius desires nothing more than the opportunity to be "beard to beard" (1.10.10) with his worthy adversary. Coriolanus will not humble himself to an opponent because he does not dread combat. It is this proud fearlessness (his *hubris*) that ultimately kills him—abandoned by Rome and surrounded by Aufidius and his men, Coriolanus loses his temper. To Aufidius's "boy of tears" (5.6.100), Coriolanus retorts,

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to war. Since food is central to the plebeians' protest, Menenius's argument that Coriolanus cannot distinguish between "meal" and "bran" (what is edible and what is not) is a fitting analogy.

[42] In "Shakespeare's Classical Tragedies," Coppélia Kahn observes that Coriolanus is Shakespeare's "least inward hero: he has little if any self-knowledge, and only one soliloquy" (218).

"Boy"! False hound!

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there

That, like an eagle in a dovecote, I

Fluttered your Volscians in Corioles.

Alone I did it. "Boy"! (111–15)

Not even under such horrific circumstances does the proud soldier practice policy.

But I argue that there is an even stronger reason why Coriolanus refuses to practice diplomacy. He does not accept his mother's policy because he has been raised to despise the policy of Menenius. There is a fundamental difference between the humility that his mother instructs him to practice and the humility that Menenius practices. Volumnia's humility still has independence as its ideal goal. Menenius, on the other hand, as his famous fable of the belly (1.1) demonstrates, intends to keep the starving civilians inferior and subdued. Neither Volumnia nor any other patrician is genuinely humble. However, although both Volumnia and Menenius practice false humility, there is a perversion in the humility of the latter. Menenius humbles himself to the plebeians only to instill in them even further the belief that they must depend on the aristocracy:

The senators of Rome are this good belly,

And you the mutinous members. For examine

Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly

Touching the weal o'th' common, you shall find

No public benefit which you receive

But it proceeds or comes from them to you

And no way from yourselves. (1.1.139–45)

According to this fable, the plebeians must never free themselves from the patricians. They must never desire independence. Kenneth Burke, therefore, in "*Coriolanus*—and the Delights of Faction," is wrong to equate Menenius's covert animosity toward the commoners with the animosity that Coriolanus blatantly trumpets "and out of his noble carelessness lets them plainly see't" (2.2.13–14). Burke claims that the "function" of Menenius is "to uphold circumspectly, 'reasonably', much the same position that Coriolanus must represent exorbitantly" (194). The difference between their hostility toward the commoners, however, is not a difference in degree but a difference in kind. Coriolanus is disgusted by the commoners because they are not as independent as him. And this is the theme of his insults when he approaches them in the opening scene.[43] In short, Coriolanus will not humble himself because he is too afraid that humility will lead to a relationship of dependency. And here develops the fundamental difference between the tragic hero and the rest of the nobility: "I had rather be their servant in my way / Than sway with them in theirs" (2.1.191–92). The "lonely dragon" (4.1.30) chooses to persevere with his wrath than to adopt, in the words of Burke, "the wiles of peaceful persuasion" (189) that Volumnia or Menenius observe, even if his inflexibility is answered with exile—"I shall be loved when I am lacked" (4.1.15).[44] As Greenblatt observes, it is Coriolanus's reluctance to practice "the humble

[43] Moreover, Menenius is shocked when he learns that the plebeians have been granted "five tribunes to defend their vulgar wisdoms" (1.1.206). This clearly shows that Menenius—and his fable of the belly—does not speak for Rome.

[44] Burke observes how the three meanings of the term *hubris* perfectly characterize Coriolanus: "pride," "excess," and "an insulting air of superiority, deemed punishable by death" (187).

soliciting of votes and hence the acknowledgment of dependency" that leads to his banishment, which the arrogant warrior views as "a declaration of independence" (107–08).

What is more, with ruthless enemies similar to its own Coriolanus, Rome shares this fear of being dependent on another. Rome's greatest fear is to be intimidated, to be dominated. Throughout the play, the city is constantly threatened from without and within. The clearest manifestation of Rome's anxiety occurs in the final act of the play. When the city is under attack, in desperation the patricians nervously argue over who should be sent to plead with Coriolanus to refrain from war. After Cominius (Coriolanus's former general) fails, Menenius suggests the tribunes, "Go, you that banished him; / A mile before his tent fall down and knee / The way into his mercy" (5.1.4–6). Instead of the tribunes, Menenius himself goes to Coriolanus and comes back "with a cracked heart" (5.3.9). Finally, the women and the child are sent to disarm Coriolanus.

The scene where Coriolanus—despite all of his manly efforts to stand his ground ("Not of a woman's tenderness to be" [5.3.129])—decides not to assail Rome, contains what Burke calls a "fatal peripety" (192), because the Volscians will no longer have any use for him following this decision. However, it is not only the hero who undergoes a significant reversal: the three women who have come to dissuade him advance from being "more unfortunate than all living women" (97) to women "who have won a happy victory to Rome" (186)—an accomplishment Cominius and Menenius failed to achieve. "Ladies," Coriolanus compliments them, "you deserve / To have a temple built you. All the swords / In Italy and her confederate arms / Could not have made this peace" (206–09). In this scene, Volumnia successfully stages the art of humility that she earlier failed to teach her son. The opening act of "this most noble mother of the world" (49) is a response to Coriolanus kneeling before her:

Oh, stand up blessed,

Whilst with no softer cushion than the flint

I kneel before thee, and unproperly

Show duty as mistaken all this while

Between the child and parent. (52–56)

She shames her son with modesty that is beyond propriety, and she emphasizes this by describing the act as she performs it. “In kneeling to her son,” Coppélia Kahn remarks in *Roman Shakespeare*, “she reverses the usual gesture of indebtedness only to evoke more pointedly the unusual totality of his debt to her so that he will capitulate to her” (157). Volumnia then speaks on behalf of their grief-stricken appearance: “Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment / And state of bodies would bewray what life / We have led since thy exile” (94–96). This maneuver is significant because it is exactly that which the arrogant son would not humble himself to carry out—namely, laying bare his wounds. And at the end, she once more resorts to kneeling; this time she has them all follow her lead:

Down, ladies. Let us shame him with our knees.

To his surname Coriolanus ’longs more pride

Than pity to our prayers. Down! An end;

This is the last. So, we will home to Rome

And die among our neighbors. Nay, behold’s.

This boy, that cannot tell what he would have

But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship,

Does reason our petition with more strength

Than thou hast to deny’t. (169–77)

Volumnia strengthens the "petition" with a group enactment of the gesture of prayer—on their knees with their hands held up supplicating for "fellowship."

It is noteworthy that Volumnia's "suit" is for Coriolanus to "reconcile" the two sides so that "the Volsces / May say, 'This mercy we have showed', the Romans, / 'This we received', and each in either side / Give the all-hail to thee and cry, 'Be blessed / For making up this peace!'" (135–40). She does not ask Coriolanus to return to the Roman army to fend off its enemy: "If it were so that our request did tend / To save the Romans, thereby to destroy / The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us, / As poisonous of your honor" (132–35). This subtle conciliator is not objecting to Coriolanus's campaign against Rome. She is objecting to any form of hostility whatsoever. Volumnia even expresses her desire to die if Rome and Coriolanus engage in battle (120–25). The blueprint for the rhetorical strategy that Volumnia employs here can be found among the "common topics" in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Aristotle places two contrasting situations side by side. A mother forbids her son to become a public speaker for fear of people hating him for speaking what is just, and the gods hating him for speaking what is unjust. The same mother then encourages her son to become a public speaker, for the gods would love him when he speaks what is just, and the people would love him when he speaks what is unjust. Aristotle uses the word *blaisosis* to describe this dilemma where "good and evil follow either of two things, each opposite to each" (179). In both situations, the thought of an alternative outcome is unequivocally ruled out. The former contrives a deadlock in which nothing but bad can result from the act that the mother would have the son not do. To stop him, the mother thrusts the son into a shameful stalemate—moving forward, the son will only incur wrath and disappointment. When one's intentions foreshadow only disdain, withdrawal becomes the one gesture that does not lead to such an outcome. And conversely, in the latter, nothing but good can

come from what the mother wishes for her son. A similar double bind constitutes the complaint that leads off Volumnia's speech. Regardless of the outcome of the war, the actions of Coriolanus will place these women unavoidably on the side of the vanquished:

> Alack, or we must lose
> The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,
> Our comfort in the country. We must find
> An evident calamity, though we had
> Our wish which side should win. For either thou
> Must as a foreign recreant be led
> With manacles through our streets, or else
> Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin
> And bear the palm for having bravely shed
> Thy wife and children's blood. (109–18)

Coriolanus's "rages and revenges" (85) will hurt no one more than those closest to him.

In the first half of her speech, the disapproving mother berates the warrior for the suffering he will cause his family: "to poor we / Thine enmity's most capital" (103–04). In the second part, the mother visualizes the ignominious fate her son would inflict upon himself were he to go through with the invasion of his city:

> if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
> Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name
> Whose repetition will be dogged with curses,
> Whose chronicle thus writ: "The man was noble,
> But with his last attempt he wiped it out,

Destroyed his country, and his name remains

To th'ensuing age abhorred." (142–48)

Again, this argument opens by evoking the thought that "The end of war's uncertain" (141). But what is not uncertain is that Coriolanus's enmity will harm himself no matter how the assault turns out—the harm this time being his own reputation in history. Michael West and Myron Silberstein note that Volumnia's rhetoric consists of the "copious, openhanded exemplification of the consequences" (322). To prevent war, Volumnia argues that whether Coriolanus triumphs or not, what is beyond doubt is that he will bring shame upon himself and his family. In sum, Volumnia's act of humility in this scene preserves the independence of all parties involved.

FAITH AND REASON IN *JULIUS CAESAR*

In *Julius Caesar*, there is a different virtue that the Republic hopes to install. Here, Calphurnia and Portia, in their resistance to their husbands, reveal the nature of this virtue. Among Shakespeare's Roman tragedies, women have the smallest role in this play. Aside from the second act, the two women are mentioned only twice. In the first act, during the festival of Lupercalia, which was believed to bring about health and fertility, and which took place on February 15 (one month before the assassination), Julius Caesar brings Calphurnia to the event hoping that she will be purged of her "sterile curse" (1.2.9). And in the fourth act, in the middle of their heated argument, Brutus brings up the death of Portia to Cassius (4.3.146), which cools off their quarrel.[45] But in the second act, the women are free to speak because it takes place in

[45] What astonishes Cassius, and what puts an end to the furious altercation, is Brutus's *performance* of patience. Brutus acts out the patience necessary to accept the passing away of his

their homes. Before the assassination, the two wives sense danger, and what they have in common is their insistence that their husbands not leave the safety of their homes. But, as Robert Miola notes in *Shakespeare's Rome*, they are "tragically unrecognized and unappreciated" (97). Kahn suggests that "Portia and Calphurnia worry and warn husbands who actually share at least some of their fears but who, once those fears are voiced by women, gain as it were a heroic warrant to override them" (99). The purpose of this section is to examine the fears of the wives in order to shed light on the *agon* between the husbands, and ultimately to uncover the virtue that the conspiracy wishes to cultivate.

After the conspirators leave their orchard, Portia confronts Brutus about his recent "ungentle" (2.1.242) behaviour toward her. This is the same complaint Cassius makes earlier:

> Brutus, I do observe you now of late.
> I have not from your eyes that gentleness
> And show of love as I was wont to have.
> You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand

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wife. He stages the act of consoling himself: "With meditating that she must die once, / I have the patience to endure it now" (4.3.190–91). And immediately after, Cassius admits that he can never practice such patience: "I have as much of this in art as you, / But yet my nature could not bear it so" (193–94). Nietzsche believes that the function of tragedy is to delight the audience with pleasant speeches at moments when characters are "in the most difficult situations," when "life approaches the abyss and a real human being would usually lose his head and certainly his fine language" (*The Gay Science* 80). If Nietzsche is correct about the function of tragedy, I believe Brutus's performance of patience at this point serves as an excellent example.

Over your friend that loves you. (1.2.32–36)

Although Portia is worried that Brutus's inwardness does not "let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep" (2.1.252), her main concern is that Brutus does not share his thoughts with her, "Make me acquainted with your cause of grief" (256). What is important for Portia is not the "sick offence" that Brutus has been plotting with other men, but that he has refused to confide to her the plot, "Which by the right and virtue of my place / I ought to know of" (268–70). Portia makes her argument by reminding Brutus of his duty as a husband:

And upon my knees

I charm you, by my once-commended beauty,

By all your vows of love, and that great vow

Which did incorporate and make us one,

That you unfold to me, your self, your half,

Why you are heavy. (270–75)

It is a vow that must compel this private man to unfold his "counsels" (298). What Portia demands is to be treated as a friend. "Within the bond of marriage" (280), there must be no secrets, especially in this marriage where the wife has proven her "constancy" (299).

However, Brutus has already shown that he has no interest in vows of friendship or constancy. After all, he is on the verge of betraying the strongest bond to which he is tied, the one between himself and Julius Caesar, "the foremost man of all this world" (4.3.22).[46] And a

[46] For discussions of the father-son relationship between Julius Caesar and Brutus, see Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 108–09; and Garry Wills, *Rome and Rhetoric*, 120–23.

little earlier, when Casca asks the conspirators to "swear our resolution," Brutus vehemently objects, "No, not an oath" (2.1.112–13). In a passionate speech (113–39), Brutus persuades the "secret Romans" not to "palter" in their decision to rebel against "high-sighted tyranny," not because of a promise that they make to one another but because "the time's abuse" calls for this rebellion. He urges them to consider Julius Caesar's dictatorship as "fire" and "spur" for their resolve, and to

> not stain
> The even virtue of our enterprise,
> Nor th' insuppressive mettle of our spirits,
> To think that or our cause or our performance
> Did need an oath.

Brutus presses each man to base his commitment on his own interpretation of the oppressive circumstances that are threatening their Republic. An oath, Brutus asserts, begets dependency that is convenient only for the weak: "Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous, / Old feeble carrions, and such suffering souls / That welcome wrongs" (128–30).[47] As mentioned earlier, what Brutus values is patience, patient thinking. A bond of friendship (whether with his wife or the senators) must be thoughtfully acted out every time the occasion arises. Is not the sole

[47] It is worth adding here that in *The Test Drive*, Avital Ronell describes the oath thus: "when you made a vow of loyalty (no doubt time-canceling and eternal), you were in the throes of passion, in a hysterical conversion scene, you flung yourself at someone's knee – at God, an ideal, a country, a thinking or its thinker – and made an oath of eternal loyalty to this entity" (307).

objective of the conspiracy to abolish dependency? Thus, these "brothers" of the Republic are not to be committed to one another.[48] This is the kind of man from whom Portia expects constant loyalty to a vow. In "Antony in Behalf of the Play," Kenneth Burke points out that Portia appears in the play to show "her deep affection" for her husband "only at those moments when he is sinisterly engaged": "her *love* is conveyed by her *misgivings*" (335). Doubt rattles this woman who asks for constant faith.

In stark contrast, Calphurnia scolds her husband for refusing to take heed of "warnings and portents / And evils imminent" (2.2.80–81): the soothsayer who warns Julius Caesar at the festival to "Beware the Ides of March" (1.2.18); the ghastly weather disconcerting Rome just before the appointed day; the augurers' advice that Julius Caesar not "stir forth today" (2.2.38); and of course, Calphurnia's dream. "I never stood on ceremonies," Calphurnia broods, "Yet now they fright me" (13–14). The essence of Calphurnia's request is for her husband to put aside his blind conviction that he is invincible. "The fault in Caesar," writes Marjorie Garber in *Shakespeare After All*, "is that he does not sufficiently recognize his own human vulnerability" (417). In his usual haughty manner, speaking of himself in the third person (illeism), Julius Caesar shrugs off his wife's panic:

> Caesar should be a beast without a heart
> If he should stay at home today for fear.
> No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well
> That Caesar is more dangerous than he.

[48] The word "brother" is applied to the relationship between Brutus and Cassius nine times throughout the play.

We are two lions littered in one day,

And I the elder and more terrible;

And Caesar shall go forth. (42–48)

Calphurnia wants her husband to pay more attention to his surroundings. She beseeches Julius Caesar to be prudent: "Your wisdom is consumed in confidence" (49). Like Coriolanus, however, Julius Caesar is stubbornly fearless and proud, and will not bend to a feminine voice of caution. What distinguishes Julius Caesar from Brutus is that he expects unconditional loyalty from others. Julius Caesar demands constant, unshakeable vows. Brutus pesters himself with "busy care" (2.1.232), while Julius Caesar pesters others with his careless nod (1.2.118). Is this not the mark of imminent tyranny? Julius Caesar wants "supremacy," Maus argues in her introduction to the play, "because he yearns for the unqualified homage of others" (1687). He does not scrutinize present circumstances or lose sleep about the future like Brutus; instead, he has faith that everything will turn out in his favour. When the conspirators arrive at his house unexpectedly, he still has no clue of the plot against him; more importantly, he believes that these patriotic defenders of the Republic have come, "like friends" (2.2.128), to escort him to the Senate to "give this day a crown to mighty Caesar" (94).

It is important to understand why Julius Caesar disregards all of these ominous signs—it is not from a lack of intelligence. Julius Caesar believes that he possesses the same constancy that Portia seeks in Brutus ("I am constant as the Northern Star, / Of whose true-fixed and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament" [3.1.61–63]). Consistent with his preoccupation with fidelity, Julius Caesar does not base his decisions on signs because signs are unreliable. They are unreliable because they can be interpreted in different, even contradictory, ways. But Brutus, as shown earlier, relies heavily on the personal interpretation of signs. An example of

action prompted by interpretation occurs when Brutus convinces himself that Julius Caesar's murder is necessary: finding no compelling reason in "the thing he is," he decides to "fashion" one for himself (2.1.10–34). As Harold Bloom explains in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Brutus chooses to concoct his own "anxious fiction, and then believe in its plausibility" (108). And in *Rome and Rhetoric*, Garry Wills argues that a "hypothetical" is treated as an "inevitability," and Brutus "commits an *actual* assassination in the name of that *hypothetical* tyranny" (65).

Quintilian, in the fifth book of *The Orator's Education*, distinguishes this type of "necessary" conclusion from the "generally true but not necessary" conclusion (2: 407). Similarly, in the section explaining arguments drawn from cause and effect in his *Topica*, Cicero describes two types of causes: in the first, the "efficient" cause, without doubt, leads to the effect; in the second, the cause only contributes to the materialization of the effect (145). To invent a solid argument, Cicero instructs, the orator must fabricate an irrefutable cause: only when the cause is "efficient" can the orator "make an infallible inference to what is brought about by this cause" (147).

Let us recall how Brutus interprets the act of murder. To justify themselves to "the common eyes" (2.1.179), they are to "be sacrificers, but not butchers" (166), "kill him boldly, but not wrathfully" (172), "carve him as a dish fit for the gods, / Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds" (173–74), and be "purgers, not murderers" (180). As David Daniell observes in his introduction to the play, "killing Caesar is dressed up as something strategic ('boldly') and then culinary ('carve'), as at a superior junket ('a dish fit for the gods')" (54). In all of these, Brutus is employing the rhetorical figure *paradiastole*. Puttenham writes that *paradiastole* (or, the "curry-favel") is "when we make the best of a bad thing, or turn a signification to the more plausible

sense" for the purposes of "flattery, or soothing, or excusing" (269). Such conversion is in fact a form of amplification. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke calls attention to the operation of amplification not only through "extension" and "intensification" but also through "dignification" (69). *Paradiastole*, therefore, attributes dignity to the act that it describes. This explains why Thomas Wilson, in *The Arte of Rhetoric*, mentions this strategy not among the figures but under the heading of "The deuision of amplification" (139). Of course, this is not to say that Julius Caesar is incompetent at interpretation. His reading of the "lean and hungry look" (1.2.194) of Cassius is possibly the most accurate interpretation in this play. Julius Caesar sees right through the envy of him who "looks / Quite through the deeds of men" (202–03): "Such men as he be never at heart's ease / Whiles they behold a greater than themselves, / And therefore are they very dangerous" (208–10). But Julius Caesar confides his evaluation of Cassius to Mark Antony without the rhetorical urgency to act: "I rather tell thee what is to be feared / Than what I fear" (211–12). In addition to denying that he is afraid, Julius Caesar's unrhetorical interpretation is merely a keen observation. It does not inspire action.

Shakespeare's Cicero points to this susceptibility of signs to being interpreted freely as he tries to calm the superstitious Casca, who is terrified by the storm: "men may construe things after their fashion, / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves" (1.3.34–35). Interestingly, immediately after Cicero exits, Cassius enters and, by taking advantage of Casca's terror, talks Casca into joining the conspiracy against Julius Caesar: after implying that "the true cause" (62) of the storm is to portend "some monstrous state" (71), Cassius compares the frightful weather to Julius Caesar:

> Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
>
> Most like this dreadful night

That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars

As doth the lion in the Capitol;

A man no mightier than thyself or me

In personal action, yet prodigious grown

And fearful, as these strange eruptions are. (72–78)

But perhaps the best instance of a sign that is misinterpreted for persuasive purposes is Calphurnia's dream of Julius Caesar's bloody statue (77–79). For Calphurnia, the dream forewarns death. To discredit her, Decius Brutus proposes the opposite, life:

This dream is all amiss interpreted;

It was a vision fair and fortunate.

Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,

In which so many smiling Romans bathed,

Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck

Reviving blood, and that great men shall press

For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.

This by Calphurnia's dream is signified.[49] (83–90)

In his book on dreams, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud, before describing his own theory of dreams, rejects two conventional forms of dream interpretation, the "symbolic" method

[49] Miola suggests another connection between Portia and Julius Caesar: they both turn from their respective sexual identities (96). Just as Portia denies her womanhood by asserting that she is "stronger than my sex" (2.1.296), Julius Caesar identifies with Decius Brutus's image of the nourishing mother of Rome.

and the "decoding" method. Both interpretations of Calphurnia's dream are instances of the former, which "considers the content of the dream as a whole and seeks to replace it by another content which is intelligible and in certain respects analogous to the original one" (122). Freud rejects this method because it has no rules—it is "incapable of being laid down on general lines" (123). "Success," writes Freud, "must be a question of hitting on a clever idea, of direct intuition" (122). No limits exist for the interpreter in staking a claim to the correct meaning of the dream. This is the problem Julius Caesar faces when he is presented with antithetical meanings of the same sign. Ultimately, Julius Caesar leaves with the conspirators because he trusts their promise that he will be given the crown. While Brutus rejects a constant oath, Julius Caesar relies on the faithfulness of his "brothers."

Julius Caesar dismisses his wife's "fears" as "foolish" (2.2.105). But Calphurnia is basically asking Julius Caesar to think of himself, to be patient, to set limits on his pursuit of greatness. Portia, on the other hand, asks to be included (in the conspiracy). She wants Brutus to observe the vows of their marriage. Portia desires to be considered as an equal friend. In short, she demands to be loved. And it is Portia who provides insight into the virtue that the conspirators strive to accomplish.

Cassius instigates the conspiracy by alarming Brutus that he has no "mirrors as will turn / Your hidden worthiness into your eye, / That you might see your shadow" (1.2.56–58). It is wished in Rome, Cassius insists, "that noble Brutus had his eyes" (62). To discredit Brutus's relationship with Julius Caesar, Cassius asks Brutus to reflect on his own name:

> "Brutus" and "Caesar"—what should be in that "Caesar"?
>
> Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
>
> Write them together, yours is as fair a name;

Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;

Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,

"Brutus" will start a spirit as soon as "Caesar." (142–47)

And to hint at the necessity of eliminating Julius Caesar, Cassius makes reference to Brutus's ancestor (also named Brutus) who helped found the Republic by putting an end to the tyranny of the Tarquins: "Oh, you and I have heard our fathers say / There was a Brutus once that would have brooked / Th'eternal devil to keep his state in Rome / As easily as a king" (158–61). To summarize, Cassius advises Brutus to be faithful to himself and his name rather than to his allegiance to Julius Caesar. Throughout his speech, Cassius, like Iago, employs *meiosis*. Cassius diminishes Julius Caesar to change Brutus's perception of him. But there is something more noteworthy about Cassius's accounts of Julius Caesar's weaknesses. The manner of describing his own abilities betrays a deep uneasiness with the fact that he has always been neglected. In Cassius, there is a strong need to be loved. In fact, the conspiracy can be viewed as Cassius's desperate attempt to establish friendship. After all, Cassius does begin by complaining about the distance he feels between himself and Brutus:

Brutus, I do observe you now of late.

I have not from your eyes that gentleness

And show of love as I was wont to have.

You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand

Over your friend that loves you.

And Cassius's animosity toward Julius Caesar is because Julius Caesar does not love others as a friend should. Julius Caesar is no friend to the Republic.

The self-reliant Brutus, however, will not be persuaded by another man; he must evaluate the situation on his own. As René Girard observes in *A Theater of Envy*, Brutus "rejects all suggestions and decides everything all by himself" (189). In keeping with his character, when alone, Brutus deliberates over the danger Julius Caesar's rise to power poses. Distraught by the thought of the "sting" (2.1.16) that Julius Caesar will acquire by being crowned, Brutus concludes that Julius Caesar is "a serpent's egg / Which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous, / And kill him in the shell" (32–34).

The type of reliance on friendship that the conspirators advocate is a reaction to the reliance that Julius Caesar demands from others. What truly frightens these patricians who are envious of Julius Caesar is the breaking of the vows of brotherly friendship that holds the Republic together.[50] Cassius expresses this fear thus: "I had as lief not be as live to be / In awe of

[50] In "'Continuall Factions': Politics, Friendship, and History in *Julius Caesar*," Philip Styrt argues that in this play, the word "friend" is "divorced from its affective meaning" and signifies "political affiliation"—it is the word "lover" that points to "personal connection" (286–87). "Consistently," writes Styrt, "those who share a faction are referred to as 'friends', while those who are linked only by ties of affection, personal attachment, or what we would traditionally call friendship are referred to as 'lovers'" (293). Further, Styrt claims that Brutus and Cassius are both friends and lovers, and "their relationship demonstrates the difficulty of keeping both of those bonds tight at once" (304). (In their first scene together, Cassius presents himself to Brutus as "your friend that loves you" [1.2.36].) Their quarrel in the fourth act derives, according to Styrt, from the "disagreement about the boundaries between the political and the personal" (305). And they resolve the quarrel when "they are back to distinguishing between love and politics"

such a thing as I myself" (1.2.95–96). But with the assassination of Julius Caesar, ironically, it is not only that "ambition's debt is paid" (3.1.84). "Domestic fury and fierce civil strife" (265) ensue because loyalty dies in the Republic. The plebeians, who, in the opening scene, are censured for blindly honouring any patrician in power, turn against all patricians. Girard notes that "After listening to Brutus, then to Mark Antony, the crowd reacts by collectively putting to death an unfortunate bystander, Cinna, in a grotesque parody of what the conspirators themselves have done" (194). Mark Antony, who shakes hands with the conspirators, very soon breaks his "compact" (3.1.217) and later considers betraying his "slight unmeritable" (4.1.12) ally. He does not relish the thought of allocating a third of Rome to Lepidus: "Is it fit, / The threefold world divided, he should stand / One of the three to share it?" (13–15). The triumvirs compile a list of those who must die, a list that includes a brother and a nephew. They also intend to go over Julius Caesar's will again in order to "cut off some charge in legacies" (4.1.9). And Cassius becomes "A hot friend cooling" (4.2.19) who shuns "free and friendly conference" (17), later admitting that his "heart is thirsty for that noble pledge" (4.3.159). This is the heavy price that

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(306). Styrt concludes thus: "By demonstrating what happens when Brutus and Cassius blur the line between these two types of bonds, Shakespeare shows us how the two ought to be kept separate if one wants to function in this political world" (306). In other words, their affection for one another cannot interfere with their calculated political alliance. But I do not believe that Brutus and Cassius put aside their love for one another to be able to resolve their political differences, their different political aspirations. Rather, I believe that only after resolving their political differences are they able to feel affection for one another. Only then are they able to form a brotherly partnership.

the Republic pays to suppress Julius Caesar's dictatorship: from fear of submission, these "brothers" lose friendship and become self-centred. It is now every man for himself.

Gratification and Mastery in *Antony and Cleopatra*

The fate of Rome after the civil war is dramatized in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In this tragedy, there is a different type of hero and a different type of virtue to which the hero does not surrender. Cantor highlights the polarity between the "nonerotic, austere atmosphere" in the Rome of *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* and the "pervasive erotic atmosphere" in *Antony and Cleopatra* (22). Shakespeare already indicates how Mark Antony stands out in Rome in *Julius Caesar*. The surreptitious meeting of the patricians the night before the assassination is contrasted with Mark Antony's vigil of pleasure. Julius Caesar expresses his surprise when he sees Mark Antony awake early in the morning: "See, Antony that revels long a-nights / Is notwithstanding up" (2.2.116–17). The striking feature that qualifies Mark Antony as a tragic hero is his unquenchable desire. That lust is an important theme in this play is underscored by the names of Mark Antony's followers: Philo and Eros. Roman women, however, are no match for him. What is expected of women in the Republic is clearly represented in *Coriolanus*. Virgilia is praised for her "gracious silence" (2.1.164) and, like Calphurnia and Portia, is admonished for expressing her worry about the safety of her husband. And the noblewoman Valeria is praised as "The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle / That's curdied by the frost from purest snow / And

hangs on Dian's temple" (5.3.65–67).[51] Similarly, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the woman offered to Mark Antony is Octavia, "Whose virtue and whose general graces speak / That which none else can utter" (2.2.138–39). The "sober" and "dull" (5.2.53–54) Octavia, however, with her "holy, cold, and still conversation" (2.6.121–22), will not suffice. Mark Antony must seek satisfaction elsewhere.[52] Since Rome is now on the threshold of becoming an empire, the action of this inter-national play is no longer bound in Italy, and self-indulgence is imported into

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[51] Coppélia Kahn, in "Shakespeare's Classical Tragedies," contends that women's chastity in ancient Rome was an accomplishment of Rome's predominant cultural ideal of manly virtue (*virtus*):

> Though women seem "socially peripheral" to the patriarchal Roman state, they are actually "symbolically central" to it, by means of their chastity. Chastity isn't a freely willed practice or a trait natural to women; rather, it arises from their acculturation to patriarchal control over their reproductive power—their wombs. Through the national cult of Vesta, virgin goddess of the hearth, Rome made such control sacred and identified it with the very continuity of the state. (210)

[52] It is worth mentioning that *Titus Andronicus*, which is set in the later days of the Roman Empire, contains the same dichotomy between the virtuous Roman noblewoman and the lecherous foreign temptress. Titus's daughter, "Rome's royal mistress" (1.1.244) Lavinia (who is more chaste than Lucrece [2.1.109–10]), is juxtaposed with Titus's captive, the queen of the Goths Tamora (who, while married to the emperor Saturninus, seduces Aaron the Moor [2.3] and bears his child).

Roman culture from beyond its borders.[53] Philo explains that his general "reneges all temper / And is become the bellows and the fan / To cool a gypsy's lust" (1.1.8–10). And when back in Rome, Enobarbus brags to his engrossed colleagues how they "stayed well by't in Egypt" (2.2.188) with excessive sleeping, drinking, eating, and sexual intercourse. In "Celebrating Idleness," Abigail Scherer describes Shakespeare's Egypt as "a holiday world, ruled by a queen devoted to the glorification of play" (277). The conflict in this tragedy arises from Mark Antony's reaction to the clash between a call for extravagance from abroad and a call for abstinence from home.

Mark Antony's "space" (1.1.35) is in Egypt because Cleopatra entices him to give free rein to his desires. The qualities of the lure of this "enchanting queen" (1.2.127) are highlighted throughout the play. First, the gratifying of desire is boundless. Bloom notes that "Cleopatra and Antony do not bore each other, and clearly they are bored, erotically and otherwise, by everyone else in their world" (549). Enobarbus's tantalizing account of Cleopatra (2.2.203–17), who "beggared all description," confirms that this "rare Egyptian" (230) is beyond the Roman imagination. The licentious Roman must travel to exotic lands for gratification that cannot be "reckoned" (1.1.15). The play opens with a description of Mark Antony's "dotage," which "O'erflows the measure" (1.1.1–2). Mark Antony can never have enough of Cleopatra's "infinite variety" (2.2.248). Enorbarbus knows too well that not even the political marriage with

[53] In "*Antony and Cleopatra*: Empire, Globalization, and the Clash of Civilizations," Cantor argues that in this play "Shakespeare seems more interested in the Egyptianizing of Rome than in the Romanizing of Egypt. Rome has conquered Egypt militarily, but Egypt seems to be conquering Rome culturally" (69).

Octavius's sister can keep Mark Antony in Rome away from his "Egyptian dish" (2.6.122). Mark Antony will always return for more: "Other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies" (2.2.248–50).

Passion is also unpredictable, which explains Cleopatra's whimsical nature. In his introduction to the play, Walter Cohen points to the "restlessness" that dominates the play (2775). To no avail, Charmian advises her queen that in order not to lose Mark Antony, she should refrain from constantly frustrating him: "In each thing give him way. Cross him in nothing" (1.3.9). Later, again with no success, she asks her queen to "keep yourself within yourself" (2.5.76). Cleopatra's capriciousness exceeds mere unaccountable changes of mood. She entertains Octavius's offer to give up Mark Antony (3.13), and twice she has the Egyptian fleet abandon Mark Antony in the midst of battle (3.10; 4.12). Cleopatra's betrayal is not portrayed as a political act; Mark Antony regrets his reliance on the fickle queen:

> Oh, this false soul of Egypt! This grave charm,
> Whose eye becked forth my wars and called them home,
> Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end,
> Like a right gypsy, hath at fast and loose
> Beguiled me to the very heart of loss. (4.12.25–29)

In Egypt, it is the queen who fearlessly shows erratic behaviour. In Rome, however, fickleness is attributed to the people, not the ruler. Octavius likens the "common body" to "a vagabond flag upon the stream," which "Goes to and back, lackeying the varying tide / To rot itself with motion" (1.4.44–47).

Moreover, unrestrained indulgence inevitably leads to humiliation. Octavius praises Mark Antony's past austerity (1.4.56–71). He recalls a time when Mark Antony endured "famine" with

"patience," when he was forced to "drink / The stale of horses and the gilded puddle," when his "palate" had to "deign / The roughest berry on the rudest hedge." And this hardship "Was borne so like a soldier." But now, Mark Antony's reputation as a leader is constantly undermined because of his shameless conduct in Egypt.[54] He is no longer respected among Romans; back home, he is regarded as "th'abstract of all faults / That all men follow" (1.4.9–10). He repeatedly disgraces himself before his soldiers: "Experience, manhood, honor ne'er before / Did violate so itself" (3.10.22–23). His faithful follower Enobarbus finally deserts him: "The loyalty well held to fools does make / Our faith mere folly" (3.13.42–43). Even his attempt at suicide turns into an embarrassing spectacle: "How, not dead? Not dead?" (4.14.103); he then implores the guards to "dispatch" him: "I have done my work ill, friends. Oh, make an end / Of what I have begun" (104–06). What is more, Shakespeare further emphasizes Mark Antony's "basement" (57) by not having him make it to the final act—he dies immediately before the fifth act and the tragedy concludes without its hero.

There is another feature of the grand love affair between Mark Antony and Cleopatra that Burke, in his essay "Shakespearean Persuasion," explains in detail: the "imperiousness of love" (21). "In even the meanest love," Burke asserts, "the lover, however deviously or unconsciously, feels in some way 'ennobled'" (21). Janette Dillon agrees that the "declaration" of their love is "self-conscious and monumentalising" (*Shakespeare's Tragedies* 128). There is a perfect

[54] For discussion of Cleopatra's "facetiousness" (for example, she dresses Mark Antony in her clothes and instructs her diver to put salt-fish on his hook), see James Hirsh, "Rome and Egypt in *Antony and Cleopatra*."

articulation of such aggrandizement when Mark Antony, "stirred by Cleopatra" (1.1.44), glamorizes their lovemaking:

> Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch
> Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
> Kingdoms are clay. Our dungy earth alike
> Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life
> Is to do thus, when such a mutual pair
> And such a twain can do't, in which I bind—
> On pain of punishment—the world to weet
> We stand up peerless. (34–41)

In sum, Mark Antony, who "would make his will / Lord of his reason" (3.13.3–4), can never sate his appetite for the royal seductress, despite her volatile temperament and his own degradation.

Egypt draws Mark Antony to "idleness" (1.2.129); Rome, on the other hand, demands attention to duty. Mark Antony has neglected his responsibilities to his partners: what offends Octavius more than Mark Antony's "lascivious wassails" (4.1.56) is his "foils when we do bear / So great weight in his lightness" (24–25). Rome has been in turmoil during Mark Antony's stay in Egypt. Before her death, Fulvia, Mark Antony's wife, to force him to return to Rome, wages war against Octavius (2.2.101–02). So does Mark Antony's brother. And Pompey, counting on the "amorous surfeiter" (2.1.34) to remain in Egypt, has raised an army against Octavius and Lepidus. Therefore, it is Mark Antony's failure to keep his affairs at home in check as a result of his lustful nature that has upset his relationship with his fellow triumvirs:

> If he filled
> His vacancy with his voluptuousness,

Full surfeits and the dryness of his bones
Call on him for't. But to confound such time
That drums him from his sport and speaks as loud
As his own state and ours, 'tis to be chid
As we rate boys who, being mature in knowledge,
Pawn their experience to their present pleasure
And so rebel to judgment. (1.4.25–33)

Octavius hopes that Mark Antony's "shames" will "drive him to Rome" (72–73). What Rome demands of Mark Antony is the restraint of his desires.

In a seemingly unimportant scene (3.1), Shakespeare shows how these Romans observe this code of behaviour. After conquering the Parthians and slaying their prince, Ventidius is tempted by his soldier to push even further and gain more victory in the absence of his captain. Ventidius, however, refrains, "I have done enough" (12). "Better to leave undone," Ventidius instructs his soldier, "than by our deed / Acquire too high a fame when him we serve's away" (14–15). The temperate fighter fears surpassing his superior should letting loose his "ambition" (22) lead to "too great an act" (13). Instead,

I'll humbly signify what in his name—
That magical word of war—we have effected;
How with his banners and his well-paid ranks
The ne'er-yet-beaten horse of Parthia
We have jaded out o'th' field. (31–35)

In contrast to the impulsive profligacy of Egypt, the dutiful Romans value abstention. Rome fosters mastery over passion. Miola refers to this by pointing out that Cleopatra mocks the

Roman institutions of marriage, government, and law, "all appearing absurdly pompous from Egypt's hedonistic perspective" (119).

Whereas the "ne'er-lust-wearied" (2.1.39) Mark Antony is driven by the desire for pleasure, Octavius seeks dominance—the very quality necessary to build an empire. To prevent Mark Antony from returning to Egypt, Octavius has him marry his sister. Through this "unslipping knot" (2.2.135), Octavius intends to hold a firmer grasp on Mark Antony—recall that the word "slippery" is used earlier in the play to describe the fickleness of the common people (1.2.180). Octavius makes clear that his sister's role is "To join our kingdoms and our hearts, and never / Fly off our loves again" (2.2.161–62). And before the brother and sister separate, Octavius warns Mark Antony that "You take from me a great part of myself. / Use me well in't" (3.2.24–25).[55] Furthermore, a little after the truce with Pompey, Octavius attacks and murders Pompey, and then has Lepidus arrested to keep the spoils for himself (3.5). The only threat remaining becomes Mark Antony once he returns to Cleopatra. And after the death of Mark Antony, Octavius becomes "Sole sir o'th' world" (5.2.119). The political realism of Octavius serves as a foil for the passionate romanticism of Mark Antony.

It is clear that Octavius incessantly covets power. In the banquet scene, to Mark Antony's frivolous "Be a child o'th' time," he soberly replies "Possess it" (2.7.100–01). Possession—both in the form of self-possession and the possession of others—is his virtue. However, Octavius is not unruly like Mark Antony. The power that he covets is acquired in a controlled manner

[55] Octavia is soon afflicted with a fate similar to Volumnia's. She faces a conflict in which she finds it difficult to take sides: "Husband win, win brother, / Prays and destroys the prayer—no midway / Twixt these extremes at all" (3.4.18–20).

because his virtue is propelled by the fear of its opposite: not being in command. During their "wild disguise" (125), the "high-colored" (4) Lepidus is carried off the ship and the revengeful Pompey gives up the opportunity to "be lord of all the world" (63), but Octavius worries about giving in to excess: "It's monstrous labor when I wash my brain / And it grow fouler" (99–100). The ascetic "had rather fast from all four days / Than drink so much in one" (102–03). And finally, it is Octavius who puts an end to the drunken feast: "Our graver business / Frowns at this levity" (121–22). Octavius, who has an authoritative presence in every scene in which he appears, speaks only four times in this scene, three of which are to state his aversion to inebriation, and the other time to ridicule the inebriated Lepidus.

But Mark Antony, who is "already / Traduced for levity" (3.7.12–13), does not share Octavius's fear of not being in control and the humiliation that stems from it. Once more, it is pride and fearlessness that precipitates the hero's downfall. To compensate for lacking Mark Antony's military experience, the young Octavius micromanages the conditions of their confrontation by challenging him at sea. In spite of his soldiers' rational objections that they are fully "prepared for land" (41), Mark Antony's pride forbids him to decline the challenge, simply because Octavius "dares us to't" (30). After the disgraceful defeat, Mark Antony upbraids himself ("Hark, the land bids me tread no more upon't. / It is ashamed to bear me" [3.11.1–2]) and orders his men to no longer follow him "for indeed I have lost command" (23). Enobarbus rightly observes that it is the "itch of his affection" that "nicked his captainship" (3.13.7–8). Mark Antony recklessly loses himself under the influence of his fatal infatuation:

> Egypt, thou knew'st too well
> My heart was to thy rudder tied by th' strings,
> And thou shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit

Thy full supremacy thou knew'st and that

Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods

Command me. (3.11.56–61)

Octavius's virtue of self-command aims to elude exactly such loss of command. The obsession of this "universal landlord" (3.13.72) with control is a response to his fear of losing it. Shakespeare could not have chosen a more fitting virtue to characterize the first emperor of the Roman Empire: taken to its extreme, the virtue of self-mastery grows into the lust to rule.

Conclusion

The virtues that are cleverly devised in these tragedies are not randomly chosen; they correspond to the exigencies of the political context in each play, exigencies that gain momentum by the threat that the impolitic heroes pose. Shakespeare shows that after the overthrow of the Tarquin Kingdom, Rome's guard against the rise of another monarchy does not lower for over four centuries. In the budding Republic of *Coriolanus*, the resistance to monarchy is presented through the point of view of the plebeians, who are to elect consuls, and their tribunes (also elected by the plebeians), who are to protect them from the consuls. Thus, winning the "voices" of the public amicably in elections (whether for consulship or the tribunes of the plebs) becomes an aspiration in the Republic. This government is an amalgamation of democracy and aristocracy. And *Julius Caesar* presents the resistance from the point of view of the patricians. To stop any one of their own from rising above the rest, this class insists on an envious equality. Considered together, *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* betray the inherent anxiety of autocracy that shapes republican values—an autocracy that would have little regard for the commoners and demand full compliance from the aristocrats. But this fear no longer presides

over the Rome of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Rome's military advances beyond the borders of Italy (starting long before the dissolution of the Republic) generate a new anxiety that fuels its imperial enterprise of world domination: the influence of foreign civilizations. The more Rome conquers, the more it fears being conquered and the more it conquers as a result of its fear. What better metaphor for this vicious circle that swells to excess than abstinence from indulgence? And thus begins the long-lasting Roman Empire.

More relevant to the present discussion, like his *Othello*, Shakespeare's Roman tragedies portray a problematic relationship between an unashamedly inconsiderate and overly confident hero and a calculating community. The once-admired hero is finally expelled from the community after he unflinchingly refuses to adopt the caution and prudence of the pragmatic rhetoric practiced and promoted by his peers.

Chapter Four

The Burden of Friendship: Demanding Generosity in *Julius Caesar* and *Timon of Athens*

Introduction

Shakespeare speaks to us about friendship through two characters that we would least expect: the tyrant Julius Caesar and the misanthrope Timon. In what follows, I will show that the two of them embody the desire to impress others—Timon by means of helping other Athenians out, Julius Caesar by means of his great accomplishments for Rome. And generosity, they both find, is a sure way to be loved by others. In both plays, the hero is loved by his city for his unqualified generosity.

In the previous chapter, I have examined Julius Caesar's brazen disregard for the opinion of his peers. Julius Caesar sees himself as "constant as the Northern Star" (3.1.61)—above all other Romans. And the senators of the Republic have grown irate because Julius Caesar does not acknowledge them as equals. Their frustration and fear sow the seeds of the conspiracy against "the foremost man of all this world" (4.3.22). Another manifestation of Julius Caesar's indifference, as I have explained in the third chapter, is his refusal to take heed of all of the signs that tell him not to leave his house on the Ides of March. He discounts even his wife's caring foreboding of imminent disaster. In this chapter, I shall concentrate on a different aspect of Julius Caesar's indifference: his incautious magnanimity. Not only was Julius Caesar generous to his soldiers and the citizens of Rome, but he had a perilous tendency to forgive his enemies. In the first section of the chapter, I will go through a number of texts from before, during, and after Shakespeare's time to show that the historical figure Julius Caesar has been recognized for his generous and forgiving character as much as his ambition. And Shakespeare is no exception.

This is why I believe juxtaposing Shakespeare's Julius Caesar with his Timon will prove fruitful. Although the generous side of Julius Caesar is not portrayed directly, the moment of *peripety* in the play, which takes place in the forum scene after the assassination, rests on Julius Caesar's magnanimity.

But Shakespeare demonstrates that one who has become inclined to give freely also expects to be given freely. Julius Caesar and Timon share a blind faith in the friendship of others. While the hero is celebrated for his propensity for utter giving, his downfall is elicited by his propensity for utter wanting. The hero is cast out because of his heavy expectations, his unconditional expectations that guarantee no return. Julius Caesar demands unconditional loyalty. And in absolute poverty and heavily in debt, Timon asks for money. The social contract is at odds with the hero's burdensome expectation, hence the collective murder of Julius Caesar and the collective refusal to lend money to Timon. To state this in another way, the city fears an ask that foregoes the satisfaction of restitution. Thus, in the second section, I will show how Brutus and the conspirators have Julius Caesar pay back the debt accrued by his ambition. And in response, Mark Antony has the citizens of Rome repay Julius Caesar's generosity by uniting against Brutus and the conspirators. And in the third section, I will analyze Timon's similar demanding generosity.

As I will explain in what follows, society's unfriendly response to Julius Caesar and Timon's neglect of the law of reciprocity neglects their earlier friendly magnanimity. Unconcern for gratitude is itself another failure to reciprocate. That which is expelled, therefore, resurfaces—albeit in an altered form. The return of Julius Caesar as a ghost serves to inform Brutus that suppression is not elimination. The preservation of the sanctity of the law of reciprocity in Rome and Athens comes at the price of ingratitude. In both plays, debts are

unforgivingly settled in reverence to the law. “Did not great Julius bleed for justice’ sake?” (4.3.19), proclaims Brutus. And the strict senators in Athens confidently declare that they “are for law” (3.6.85). This unrelenting desire for justice, however, blinds them to all that they have received from their hero. They then suffer the wrath of the generous but demanding hero. Mark Antony, in the name of Julius Caesar, turns the mob against the conspirators, and Timon finances Alcibiades’s war against the senators. Ultimately, I argue that, in both plays, it is the need for genuine friendship, the need to be truly loved that is brought to tragic conclusion. It is brought to tragic conclusion because the type of friendship that Julius Caesar and Timon seek is ultimately inconsiderate.

The Magnanimous Julius Caesar

It is well known that the Renaissance admired the historical figure Julius Caesar. In his portrayal of this great historical figure, Shakespeare chooses to omit a large portion of the qualities that contributed to Julius Caesar’s greatness. His tragedy portrays the final days of Julius Caesar’s life, focusing on his physical disabilities and the arrogant ambition that led to his violent assassination. In the introduction to the play, S. P. Cerasano points out that “Shakespeare leaves out Caesar’s early and middle career, his military victories, the conflict with Pompey following his legendary crossing of the Rubicon, the infamous affair with Cleopatra, and his concerted attempts to curry favor with the common people” (xix). There is an important item missing in this list: Julius Caesar’s magnanimity.

Adrian Goldsworthy, in his biography of Julius Caesar, writes that he was “utterly ruthless,” to be sure, but he was also “kind, generous and inclined to forget grudges and turn enemies into friends” (3). Julius Caesar’s popularity in Rome rested on “his readiness to forgive

and his willingness to do favours" (217). And as a military leader, Julius Caesar referred to his troops as "comrades" (*commilitones*) rather than "men" or "soldiers": "He and they were all good Romans, serving the Republic by fighting against its enemies, and also winning glory and plunder along the way, which he took care to share with them most generously" (235). "Mutual trust," Goldsworthy continues, "grew up gradually between the commander, his officers, and soldiers as they came to know and rely on each other" (235). Furthermore, after the civil war with Pompey, Julius Caesar forgave those who had sided with his enemy, and "the pardoned Pompeians were allowed back into public life and some treated very well indeed" (515)—including Brutus and Cassius. Regardless of Julius Caesar's political motives, one cannot disregard the natural liberality of his character with which he treated others. Goldsworthy contends that the ulterior motive of Julius Caesar's "lifelong backing for popular causes" was to persuade Romans to accept his dictatorship; nonetheless, "there was a generosity about Caesar's behaviour that was matched by no other Roman who came to power in similar circumstances," and "he did implement a number of measures that were in the interest of a wide part of the population" (515).

Renaissance writers appreciated both sides of Julius Caesar: his political ambition and his admirable generosity. In *The Art of English Poesy*, for instance, when discussing the importance of decorum in poetry, George Puttenham mentions "the magnanimity and honorable ambition of Caesar" as the first examples of subject matters that are "stately and high, and require a style to be lifted up and advanced by choice of words, phrases, sentences, and figures, high, lofty, eloquent and magnific in proportion" (236). In his essay on friendship, among the "fruits" of friendship, Francis Bacon commends Julius Caesar's friendship to Decimus Brutus as an exemplar of the Latin phrase *participes curarum* (meaning "sharers of cares"). And in the

character sketch "Imago Civilis Julii Caesaris," Bacon writes of Julius Caesar's political ambition thus:

> And assuredly in his private wishes he cared more for power than reputation. For he sought reputation and fame not for themselves, but as instruments of power. By natural impulse therefore, not by any moral guiding, he aspired to the supreme authority; and aspired rather to possess it than to be thought worthy of it: a thing which gave him favour with the people, who had no dignity of their own; but with the nobles and great persons, who wished also to preserve their own dignity, procured him the reputation of covetousness and boldness. (36)

More importantly, Bacon ends the essay claiming that "the desire of popularity" was the cause of Julius Caesar's "advancement" and "destruction," "For there is nothing so popular as the forgiveness of enemies: and this it was which, whether it were virtue or art, cost him his life" (41). And Michel de Montaigne, in his essay "Of Books," writes that Julius Caesar "particularly deserves to be studied, not for the knowledge of the history only, but for himself, so great an excellence and perfection he has above all the rest" (355). Montaigne praises Julius Caesar's manner of "speaking of his enemies with so much sincerity in his judgment" but faults "the ordure of his pestilent ambition" (355).

Shakespeare's main source of the play also highlights Julius Caesar's magnanimity as much as his ambition. Plutarch explains that Julius Caesar outdid all great Romans before and during his time,

> One he surpassed in the difficulty of the regions where he waged his wars; another in the great extent of country which he acquired; another in the multitude and might of the enemies over whom he was victorious; another in the savage manners and perfidious

> dispositions of the people whom he conciliated; another in his reasonableness and mildness towards his captives; another still in the gifts and favours which he bestowed upon his soldiers; and all in the fact that he fought the most battles and killed the most enemies. (7: 479)

There are many similar references throughout Plutarch's account of Julius Caesar's life that couple ambition and generosity. For instance, Julius Caesar was a source of inspiration to his soldiers,

> in the first place, because he showed, by his unsparing bestowal of rewards and honours, that he was not amassing wealth from his wars for his own luxury or for any life of ease, but that he treasured it up carefully as a common prize for deeds of valour, and had no greater share in the wealth than he offered to the deserving among his soldiers; and in the second place, by willingly undergoing every danger and refusing no toil. (7: 483)

He won "political influence in consequence of his lavish hospitality and the general splendour of his mode of life," and he won "much good will from the common people for the friendliness of his manners in intercourse with them" (7: 449). He had the habit of courting "the people with banquets and distributions of grain, and his soldiers with newly planted colonies" (7: 577). Plutarch also mentions Julius Caesar's "wonderful clemency" (7: 527). After his victory over Pompey, "Most of those who were taken alive Caesar incorporated in his legions, and to many men of prominence he granted immunity" (7: 553). Not only that, "to some he even gave honours and offices besides, as to Brutus and Cassius, both of whom were now praetors. The statues of Pompey, too, which had been thrown down, he would not suffer to remain so, but set them up again" (7: 575).

In conclusion, what I take from these different sources is that Julius Caesar was motivated by what Bacon calls "desire of popularity." By means of brave military accomplishments and acts of generosity and forgiveness, Julius Caesar sought after a name to be admired by all. And I interpret Bacon's claim that "reputation and fame" for Julius Caesar were "but as instruments of power," that Julius Caesar "cared more for power than reputation," thus: Julius Caesar's desire for power was an inevitable consequence of his desire for reputation. That Julius Caesar "aspired to the supreme authority," that Julius Caesar inclined toward dictatorship, was due to his *hubristically* unrestrained drive to be monumentally impressive, during his own lifetime and "many ages hence." And his name does become monumental posthumously—it serves as the title of succeeding dictators of Rome.

Outstanding Debts

This juxtaposition of the ambition and generosity that is commonly attributed to Julius Caesar has fascinated many writers, including Shakespeare. "Far from sucking the blood of his people," writes David Daniell in his introduction to the tragedy, "as a typical tyrant did, and as Shakespeare's Richard III and Macbeth do, Caesar wants 'great Rome' to suck his 'Reviving blood'" (36). And although Shakespeare does not present the generous side of Julius Caesar, he does make use of his generosity in the development of his tragedy. After the assassination, the speeches of Brutus and Mark Antony to the mob hinge on the opposition between ambition and generosity—while Brutus's speech is a *meiotic* presentation of Julius Caesar's ambition, Mark Antony's speech, which marks the turning point in the play, is a *paradiastolic* presentation of his generosity.

When Julius Caesar falls, Cinna shouts, "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!" (3.1.79). Then Cassius cries out, "Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement" (82). Then Brutus, "Peace, freedom, and liberty!" (111). This is what they plan to announce to the public. And the "knot" (119) of them hope to be remembered "in states unborn and accents yet unknown" (114) as "men that gave their country liberty" (120). In the following scene, when Brutus confronts the angry plebeians, the gist of his argument appears at the centre of his speech in the form of a *chiastic* rhetorical question: "Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freemen?" (3.2.21–23). Through this *chiasmus*, the speaker offers but two choices, one desirable, the other not. And the rhetorical question, which sneakily pronounces its answer in such a conspicuous manner that it renders the interlocutor's attempt at voicing the answer fatuous and redundant, further reinforces the desirable choice. In *Rome and Rhetoric*, Garry Wills describes Brutus's rhetorical strategy as "questioning as bullying" (53). And Don Kraemer explains that Brutus's "begging of the questions and bludgeoning with the answers" appear in "the form of the conditional," but "they are effectively imperative, as befits his ethos of absolute authority" (171). Thus, it is crucial that not only the people but also "many ages hence" (3.1.112) know that Julius Caesar is murdered for freedom. Julius Caesar pays for his ambition so that Rome can be delivered from his bondage. Brutus's first words after Julius Caesar is stabbed to death are: "People and senators, be not affrighted. / Fly not, stand still. Ambition's debt is paid" (83–84). The people and senators of Rome are "affrighted" because Julius Caesar owes a debt, and now they need no longer be "affrighted" because Julius Caesar pays his debt with his death.

Indeed, what sort of debt does Julius Caesar owe that can only be paid with the debtor's death? This is no ordinary debt. It is ambition's debt, and ambition has the future inscribed into

it. Nicholas Royle, in "*Julius Caesar* and the Democracy to Come," writes that this play is about "attempts to predict and seize the future" (222). Julius Caesar's debt is one that has not yet transpired, and yet it is due. Rome is "affrighted" that the ambitious Julius Caesar *will* owe a debt. This is the crime for which Julius Caesar pays heavily:

> It must be by his death; and for my part
> I know no personal cause to spurn at him
> But for the general. He would be crowned:
> How that might change his nature, there's the question.
> It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
> And that craves wary walking. Crown him that,
> And then I grant we put a sting in him
> That at his will he may do danger with.
> Th'abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
> Remorse from power; and to speak truth of Caesar,
> I have not known when his affections swayed
> More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
> That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
> Whereto the climber upward turns his face;
> But when he once attains the upmost round
> He then unto the ladder turns his back,
> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend. So Caesar may;
> Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel

Will bear no color for the thing he is,

Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,

Would run to these and these extremities.

And therefore think him as a serpent's egg

Which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous,

And kill him in the shell. (2.1.10–34)

This speech is an excellent example of self-persuasion. Brutus presents to himself reasoning after reasoning that Julius Caesar may grow dangerous. With modal verbs such as "would," "may," and "might," the core of his argument is prediction. Employing *energeia*, the speaker is bringing before his own eyes the possibility of danger. The "thing" that Julius Caesar is currently poses no threat. The fear is what Julius Caesar will become in the future. Brutus is warning himself so as to stir up the courage to act. The plot to assassinate Julius Caesar, in other words, is a preventive measure, not a curative one—"lest he may, prevent."

Shakespeare takes the essence of Brutus's private rationalization of Julius Caesar's assassination from Plutarch: as the enemies of Julius Caesar observed that his influence "had become great and hard to subvert, and aimed directly at a complete revolution in the state, they perceived that no beginnings should be considered too small to be quickly made great by continuance, after contempt of them has left them unobstructed" (7: 449). The conspiracy is a pre-emptive measure against Julius Caesar rising the ladder of ambition. And as Wayne Rebhorn observes in "The Crisis of the Aristocracy in *Julius Caesar*," for the Roman senators (as well as the tribunes), Julius Caesar's "ascent" would entail "their personal, degrading fall" (88). Plutarch beautifully captures the nature of this ambition,

> Caesar's many successes … did not divert his natural spirit of enterprise and ambition to the enjoyment of what he had laboriously achieved, but served as fuel and incentive for future achievements, and begat in him plans for greater deeds and a passion for fresh glory, as though he had used up what he already had. What he felt was therefore nothing else than emulation of himself, as if he had been another man, and a sort of rivalry between what he had done and what he purposed to do. (7: 577)

This is the side of Julius Caesar that Shakespeare depicts in his play. Julius Caesar may possibly have sensed this urge for "future achievements" many times throughout his triumphant career, but Shakespeare turns its last occurrence into material for tragedy: his intention to dissolve the Republic and establish a monarchy. What is significant in Brutus's future-oriented deliberative speech is that he acknowledges that Julius Caesar does not wish to *take* the crown. Julius Caesar "would be crowned"; that is, he wishes to be given the crown. Note also how Brutus ponders over the threat *giving* Julius Caesar a crown would pose: "Crown him that, / And then I grant we put a sting in him / That at his will he may do danger with." Unlike Claudius (in *Hamlet*) or Antonio (in *The Tempest*), Julius Caesar is not one who would usurp the crown from his brothers in the senate. Instead, Julius Caesar wants to be given the crown willingly. He believes that he deserves the crown, that his accomplishments and generosity have earned him the right to rule over Rome. This is why he has Mark Antony offer him the crown in public. It breaks his heart when he finds that the public do not accept him as king. His seizure is a manifestation of his disappointment.

Let us look at Shakespeare's Julius Caesar more closely. His first appearance in the play begins with a cry, "Calphurnia." In the noise and commotion of a festival that celebrates the foundation of the city of Rome and its very first king, Julius Caesar calls for his wife. He wants

the barren Calphurnia to be touched by Mark Antony in the "holy chase" (1.2.8) of Lupercalia, and he wants Mark Antony to "leave no ceremony out" (11). Julius Caesar wants to set up a dynastic rule in Rome, but he will not simply seize it. He wants a crown to be bestowed upon him—willingly. He has Mark Antony offer it to him three times in order to test the crowd. And as he leaves the festival disappointed, Julius Caesar confides in Mark Antony that he wants "men about me that are fat, / Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep a-nights" (192–93). He wants cheerful and carefree friends, like Mark Antony, who are not "dangerous" (195). He does not want the "spare" (201) Cassius, who, unbeknownst to Julius Caesar, does not attend the festival in order to plot against him with Brutus. And to be able to hear Mark Antony's opinion on the matter, Julius Caesar wants him to come to his other side, because he is deaf in one ear. In the brief role that he has in the play, the Julius Caesar that Shakespeare displays is full of wants. Rather than merely emphasizing his neediness, Shakespeare is also drawing attention to his demanding nature, as does Cassius as he talks Brutus into the conspiracy, "Ye gods, it doth amaze me / A man of such a feeble temper should / So get the start of the majestic world / And bear the palm alone" (1.2.128–31). The ambition that worries Rome is in fact expectation. Julius Caesar expects too much of those around him. Such expectation is worrisome because it sows the seeds of a debt that does not honour the equalizing rules of exchange, a debt in which the debtor is only given and refuses to give back. "It must be by his death," therefore, because Julius Caesar does not respect the custom of reciprocity, which, according to Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Genealogy of Morality*, is "the oldest and most primitive" relationship (49). It is the "will to reciprocity," Nietzsche asserts, that forms the community (106). The great Julius Caesar, who is known in history for his generosity, is murdered by his community because he does not observe its foundational contractual relationship.

To summarize, the Romans fear that a crowned Julius Caesar will "soar above the view of men" and keep the rest of Rome in "servile fearfulness" (1.1.73–74). The conspirators, who regard themselves as Julius Caesar's equals, refuse to give their loyalty when there is no prospect of compensation: "I had as lief not be as live to be / In awe of such a thing as I myself" (1.2.95–96). That they settle the debt before the contractual relationship is violated clearly demonstrates the extent of their fear of a debt that is not settled. The Republic will under no circumstance tolerate such transgression. This intolerance is the basis of Brutus's argument in his concluding rhetorical questions to the mob: "Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak, for him have I offended" (3.2.27–31). And thus, ambition's debt is paid.

But this is not the only outstanding debt that is due in the Republic. Enter Mark Antony with Julius Caesar's body. In the transition between Brutus and Mark Antony, Brutus announces that "The question of his death is enrolled in the Capitol, his glory not extenuated wherein he was worthy, nor his offenses enforced for which he suffered death" (3.2.34–37). The plebeians are summoned to "grace" Julius Caesar's "corpse" and "glories" (54–55). The body that is earlier cut and pierced to pay back one debt must now demand compensation for another. This is truly an exact society, allowing no debt to go unnoticed. Brutus resolves the debt procured by Julius Caesar's ambition, and the debt procured by his generosity is left for Mark Antony to resolve. He starts his speech with how Julius Caesar made Rome rich while he was alive, and ends it with how Julius Caesar will make Rome rich after his death. Julius Caesar's will anticipates a new indebtedness: "To every Roman citizen he gives" (239). Mark Antony presses them to show their

gratitude; he capitalizes on Julius Caesar's generosity to "stir" their "hearts and minds to mutiny and rage" (119–20).[56]

The rhetorical strategy that Mark Antony employs is much more intense than the "bullying" tactic of Brutus. Brutus gives his audience the illusion of choice. His rhetorical questions induce the audience to believe that it has a say in the decision. As Kenneth Burke puts it in "Antony in Behalf of the Play,"

> Brutus … had asked the mob to weigh what he said, and to judge his statements as critics. But, as a matter of fact, he gave them no opportunity to follow his advice. He told them

[56] In "Staging Rhetorical Vividness in Coriolanus," Katharine Craik discusses Mark Antony's use of *evidentia*. The terms *evidentia* and *illustratio* are Latin names for the rhetorical practice of *bringing before the eyes*. With the help of Julius Caesar's body, Mark Antony paints a vivid picture of Julius Caesar's greatness, which "impresses itself irresistibly on the plebeians so that they 'feel / The dint of pity'" (148). Craik's main argument revolves around the *hyperbolic* nature of *evidentia* in *Coriolanus*. To have maximum effect, such instances of *evidentia* must paint an exaggerated flattering description of their object—what Coriolanus himself dismisses as "acclamations hyperbolical" (1.9.51). With regard to Coriolanus, Craik contends that his biggest problem throughout the play is that, in the presence of others, he repeatedly fails to live up to the awe-inspiring accounts presented in his absence by characters such as Cominius. Coriolanus disappoints his audience every time he is asked to present himself as magnificent as he is earlier presented. Julius Caesar, however, does not have this problem. The plebeians must judge Brutus's condemnation of Julius Caesar's ambition and Mark Antony's celebration of his magnanimity without the voice of Julius Caesar himself.

to choose, then he stated the issue in such a way that there was no choice. Those that love Rome, he said, must agree that Caesar should have been killed. Those that do not love Rome, should object. If there are any that do not love Rome, let them step forward in protest. No move—hence, the killing is endorsed. (338)

More importantly, Brutus praises Julius Caesar's generosity as he criticizes his ambition, "As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honor him; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortunes; honor for his valor; and death for his ambition" (3.2.23–27). Brutus does not present generosity and ambition to be exclusive of one another.

In Mark Antony's speech, on the other hand, Julius Caesar could not have been ambitious because he was generous—the two qualities cannot exist together. Misleadingly concurring with Brutus with what Marjorie Garber, in *Shakespeare After All*, calls the "mocking refrain" (412) of "Brutus is an honorable man," Mark Antony uses the rhetorical question to argue that generosity cancels out ambition:

He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,

Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition? (86–95)

Wills points out that this method of questioning is Socratic, which aims to "reduce confidence, inducing disorientation, leading to *aporia*, a puzzled halt"; and the audience is forced into "a *process* of enquiry, a dialogue moving from one mental state to another" (86–87). Mark Antony does not offer a choice, not even a false one. His line of questioning paves the way for an illuminating moment of *anagnorisis*—"here I am to speak what I know" (3.2.99). In proper Socratic fashion, the citizens are humiliated into enlightenment, "You all did love him once, not without cause. / What cause withholds you, then, to mourn for him? / —O judgment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, / And men have lost their reason" (100–03). The enlightenment is the remembrance of love; they are shamefully reminded that they were loved by Julius Caesar. The difference between the arguments of Brutus and Mark Antony is a clear indication that, as I argued earlier, Julius Caesar's desire for power inevitably results from his desire for popularity. His generosity is an instrument for fame. From Julius Caesar's own perspective, here represented by Mark Antony, he was not ambitious. Rather, Julius Caesar only sought the love of all Romans. Now an extension of Julius Caesar—what Burke calls "the plot-substitute for Caesar" (333)—Mark Antony demands love.

The *anagnorisis* then sets in motion the *peripety*. Mark Antony turns the tables on the conspirators (especially Brutus) when he shows the crowd where

the well-beloved Brutus stabbed,

And as he plucked his cursed steel away,

Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,

As rushing out of doors to be resolved

If Brutus so unkindly knocked or no;

For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.

Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!

This was the most unkindest cut of all;

For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,

Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,

Quite vanquished him. (174–84)

It is this account of Brutus's ingratitude that infuriates the crowd: "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!" (202–03). Earlier, after Brutus's speech, the citizens condone the death penalty for ambition. Now, they agree with Mark Antony that ingratitude deserves the same penalty. The reversal in this tragedy is from the censure of ambition to the censure of ingratitude. Like ambition, ingratitude is the failure to reciprocate. Ironically, Brutus and Mark Antony condemn the same transgression: being given without giving back. The two orators inveigh against indebtedness from opposing points of view. As Kraemer observes, the forum scene is "a dramatic rendering of *argumentum in utramque partem* (arguing both sides of the question)" (175).

This tragedy is about freedom—getting even to become free.[57] Perhaps its most significant irony is that while these Romans prove that they are willing to do anything in order to be free, their most deep-seated anxiety is the act of freely giving. Rome is unforgivingly hostile

[57] Even the suicides of Cassius and Brutus are committed for this purpose. Both men call out Julius Caesar's name before they die. Cassius's final words are: "Caesar, thou art revenged, / Even with the sword that killed thee" (5.3.45–46). And Brutus interprets being haunted by the ghost of Julius Caesar to mean that his "hour is come" (5.5.17–20).

to any man who turns a deaf ear to the law of reciprocity.[58] The patricians betray the ambitious Julius Caesar to avoid the risk of being loyal to him without the return of their favour; the plebeians betray the conspirators not only because of their failure to requite Julius Caesar's generosity but also because they themselves are now "heirs" to his generosity—their revolt is motivated by both revenge and gratitude. In both cases, the contractual relationship insures the closure that frees them from indebtedness. The plebeians turn against the conspirators not simply because Mark Antony surpasses Brutus in oratory. Each orator resolves a different debt: ambition does not come with the certainty of reimbursement, and the generous will guarantees the reimbursement for the rebellion.

THE BOUNTIFUL TIMON

Let us turn from Rome to Athens. The generosity that is absent in *Julius Caesar* is lavishly presented in *Timon of Athens*. There is no calculation in Timon's generosity. As William Scott observes in "The Paradox of Timon's Self-Cursing," Timon is "generous in impulse" (295). Wilson Knight, in "The Pilgrimage of Hate," calls Timon the "universal lover," whose "charity is never cold, self-conscious, or dutiful" (240). Timon's generosity has indeed become an "impulse" for him, and he is not simply a "universal lover." Timon seeks to be universally loved. Timon is not simply a friend who befriends unconditionally; he is also a friend who seeks to be befriended unconditionally. "I never tasted Timon in my life," notes an onlooker, "Nor came any of his bounties over me / To mark me for his friend" (3.2.72–74). This onlooker,

[58] Pointing out the parallels between Brutus and Julius Caesar, Rebhorn observes that Brutus is "half-deaf just like Caesar" (89).

incidentally, is named “Stranger.” He is estranged from Timon because Timon does not “mark” him with his “bounties.” It is by means of “marking” others with his “bounties” that Timon strives to be universally loved.

Timon’s first act in the play is to free a friend from “creditors most strait” (1.1.98). “I am not of that feather,” Timon declares, “to shake off / My friend when he must need me” (102–03). Timon then invites this friend to come to him after he is “enfranchised” (108) for further assistance, “’Tis not enough to help the feeble up / But to support him after” (109–10). And in the following scene, when the friend comes to pay Timon back, Timon refuses to accept his money,

> You mistake my love.
> I gave it freely ever, and there’s none
> Can truly say he gives if he receives.
> If our betters play at that game, we must not dare
> To imitate them. Faults that are rich are fair. (1.2.9–13)

Many Athenians, whether in actual need or not, likewise come to “taste Lord Timon’s bounty” (1.1.265). In “Timon in Shakespeare’s Athens,” with regard to the Old Athenian who next approaches Timon to complain about his daughter falling in love with a poor servant, Robert Miola writes that Timon “displays his tragic inability to distinguish between true and false needs, between the deserving and undeserving” (24). Miola sees Timon’s act not as “the virtuous exercise of a charitable heart” but as “the vicious satisfaction of ‘fond desires’ for self-esteem through material possessions,” and Timon’s offer of money not as a “gift” but as a “bribe” (24). Miola reads this episode as a “vicious” economic transaction between Timon and the old “curmudgeon,” while in fact Timon is helping out the two lovers, which also benefits the Old

Athenian. As Hannah Crawforth, Sarah Dustagheer, and Jennifer Young observe in *Shakespeare in London*, it is after Timon informs the Old Athenian that the servant is an honest man who loves his daughter that Timon promises to help the servant (177).

I argue that there is no "vicious" intention behind such generosity. Such unchecked dispensation is neither "vicious" nor the same as wastefulness. As Timon affirms, "No villainous bounty yet hath passed my heart. / Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given" (2.2.168–69). Timon's generosity is indiscriminate, to be sure, but it is for the sake of love and friendship—"'tis a bond in men" (1.1.146). And Timon, with his wealth, wishes to strengthen this bond. A friend, according to Timon, gives gifts for a worthy cause. And what worthier cause than friendship itself? For Timon, friendship is the act of giving for the sake of friendship, hence its unconditional nature. His generosity is "unwise"; that is, imprudent, incautious, impolitic. This sort of uncalculated social behaviour unavoidably becomes inconsiderate. The high expectation that ensues from such inconsideration disregards social norms. It is indifferent toward the expectations of others. In other words, Timon has faith in the bond of friendship. It is his blind faith in friendship taken to its extremity that, on one hand, welcomes all, and on the other, becomes demanding and thus unwelcome. And from the point of view of those around him, his inconsideration and indifference appears "vicious."

The first act of the play focuses on characterizing Timon's unconditional largesse. "Magic of bounty" (6) draws everyone to Timon's free gifts. And, as Coppélia Kahn notes, according to Timon himself his magnanimity "needs no replenishment, it cannot be depleted, it has no limits" (39). One happy recipient praises Timon's bounty thus:

> He pours it out. Plutus, the god of gold,
> Is but his steward. No meed but he repays

Sevenfold above itself; no gift to him

But breeds the giver a return exceeding

All use of quittance. (1.1.267–71)

Ken Jackson claims that Timon "truly seeks the pure gift without exchange" (49). Anthony Dawson and Gretchen Minton, in their introduction, claim that Timon's hospitality is "non-reciprocal, and hence, in a crucial way, non-social" (73). These gifts are not given in recompense. Nor are they given with the expectation of recompense. But it is important to highlight that Timon's "non-reciprocal" generosity is "non-social" in the sense that he gives blindly without the obligation of any contractual relationship. That is, he does not wish to secure the social bond of friendship through the calculated contract. Rather, he wishes to secure the "bond in men" through the reciprocal act of giving unconditionally. Timon envisions (vainly) a different sort of "non-reciprocal" relationship: a relationship that is absolutely, unconditionally reciprocal. That is what is "non-social" about his behaviour.[59]

With friendship Timon greets his guests, "Ceremony was but devised at first / To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcomes, / Recanting goodness, sorry ere 'tis shown. / But where there is true friendship, there needs none" (1.2.16–19). According to Timon, "true friendship" is opposed to a "hollow" "ceremony" that is "devised" only "at first to set a gloss on … recanting goodness." "Recanting goodness," goodness that recants itself, goodness that chants itself back, goodness that calls back goodness. This is a perfect formulation for the remuneration that the

[59] In "Shakespeare's Classical Tragedies," Coppélia Kahn observes that both Timon's philanthropy and misanthropy "seem rooted in primitive fantasy rather than being rational responses to reality" (221).

economy of exchange exacts—the absolution of indebtedness. The type of friendship to which Timon is opposed is manifest when one of his creditors complains that Timon's

> days and times are past,
> And my reliances on his fracted dates
> Have smit my credit. I love and honor him
> But must not break my back to heal his finger.
> Immediate are my needs, and my relief
> Must not be tossed and turned to me in words
> But find supply immediate. (2.1.21–27)

The creditor bases "reliances" on dates. And due to the debtor's "fracted dates," there is an exaggerated urgency in his complaint. Since leniency on the debt would only heal the debtor's finger but break the creditor's back, the creditor insists on instant "relief" from the debt.

Such largesse, such blindness, nevertheless, is dangerously incautious: "'Tis pity bounty had not eyes behind, / That man might ne'er be wretched for his mind" (1.2.158–59). And very soon, Timon, in Kahn's words, "figuratively and literally, digs his own grave" (41). Is not Timon's careless gift-giving similar to the careless "forgiveness of enemies" that Bacon identifies as the cause of Julius Caesar's downfall? Timon's friendship figures an altruism founded on faith that reciprocated friendship cannot accommodate. Reciprocated friendship, in contrast, is founded on the fear of not being repaid. Instead of faith, reciprocated friendship demands certainty. And in awe of Timon's altruism, the citizens of Athens immediately reject its calling. This is the same awe that distances Cassius from Julius Caesar. And very soon, Julius Caesar is figuratively and literally cut from the Republic.

When Timon's money runs out and he is pestered by creditors, Timon voices his confidence in the help of his friends: "Never speak or think / That Timon's fortunes 'mong his friends can sink," to which his steward Flavius responds, "I would I could not think it. That thought is bounty's foe; / Being free itself, it thinks all others so" (2.2.224–27). Here, Shakespeare highlights this feature of free bounty (which foreshadows the protagonist's downfall): blind faith in the free bounty of others. What Shakespeare presents in the first two acts of this play is what is missing in his *Julius Caesar*. Act three portrays a needy Timon full of wants.

Like Julius Caesar, Timon, through intermediaries, tests the generosity of those who have in the past benefited from his generosity. Note how earlier Timon describes to Flavius his assurance of the generosity of others: "And in some sort these wants of mine are crowned / That I account them blessings. For by these / Shall I try friends. You shall perceive how you / Mistake my fortunes: I am wealthy in my friends" (2.2.176–79). Unlike the recipients of his gifts, he does not go to them himself; he sends his servants to ask for money. Timon expects to be given money willingly. Then we are shown three instances of rejection. Timon's "mouth-friends" (3.6.88) refuse to help because they fear that their money will not be returned: "this is no time to lend money," says one friend, "especially upon bare friendship without security" (3.1.37–38). As Kahn puts it, "Timon gave as a friend, and expects to borrow as a friend, but instead he is being treated like any debtor bound not by the ties of friendship but by the conditions of a legal contract" (50). And finally, just as Julius Caesar leaves the festival of the Lupa feeling betrayed by a Rome that does not trust him with a crown, Timon leaves an Athens that "girdles in those wolves" (4.1.2) who do not trust their money to him on "bare friendship" alone. "Broken by the discovery of his friends' ingratitude," Russ McDonald summarizes, "disillusioned with their

flattery, a victim finally of empty promises, Timon retreats into a desert cave" (*The Arts of Language* 186).

Both societies obdurately resist being obligated to give freely. In the morning of the Ides of March, Julius Caesar believes that his guests are "like friends" (2.2.128) because of their (dishonest) promise to generously "give this day a crown to mighty Caesar" (94). Similarly, Timon's guests are "like brothers" (1.2.99). "We are born to do benefits," Timon declares, "and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends?" (97–98). While uncalculated generosity in another is celebrated, there is an aggressive resistance at the heart of these cities that is highly sensitive to the demand of being freely generous oneself, a resistance that wards off, in Athens, the "disease of all-shunned poverty" (4.2.14), and in Rome, "servile fearfulness." The desire to not give to the other, in sum, is the aggressive reaction to the other's desire to be given.

Conclusion

Timon and Julius Caesar give freely in the name of friendship. Such absolute freedom is rigorously inattentive to the enclosure imposed by the law of reciprocity. In the name of friendship and with the same rigorous inattention, they also become too demanding. While Athens and Rome value friendship, the friendship that Timon and Julius Caesar demand is a heavy ask. The city appreciates and enjoys the liberality but, from fear of an outstanding debt, cannot abide by the ambitious tyrannical demand. And ingratitude is necessarily a consequence of casting out their demanding friendship. The trauma of the tyranny suppresses the appreciation into forgetfulness. Hidden in the recess of his dark garden, Brutus betrays the secret of ingratitude:

O conspiracy,

Sham'st thou to show thy dang'rous brow by night

When evils are most free? Oh, then, by day

Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough

To mask thy *monstrous* visage? Seek none, conspiracy.

Hide it in smiles and affability. (2.1.77–82; emphasis added)

The faithful Flavius recognizes the same secret in the "ingrateful seat / Of *monstrous* friends" (4.2.45–46; emphasis added). So does the onlooker: "oh, see the *monstrousness* of man / When he looks out in an ungrateful shape!" (3.2.67–68; emphasis added).[60] Could not the fact that tyranny pushes generosity into oblivion be the reason why the playwright leaves the dictator's

[60] In *Othello*, it is jealousy that is associated with the "monstrous." At the end of the first act, Iago devises his devious plot: "Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light" (1.3.381–82). In the third act, Othello falls prey to the "monster" in Iago's thought (3.3.106) and is then gradually possessed by the "green-eyed monster" (164). But King Lear, like Timon, is devastated by the "Monster ingratitude!" (1.5.33). This "marble-hearted fiend," Lear bewails, is "More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child / Than the sea-monster" (1.4.225–27). Similarly, in *Coriolanus*, the plebeians who rebel against Coriolanus are referred to as the "monster" (3.1.92). One citizen deliberates over standing up to Coriolanus's hostility in spite of his many services to Rome thus: "Ingratitude is monstrous, and for the multitude to be ingrateful were to make a monster of the multitude, of the which we, being members, should bring ourselves to be monstrous members" (2.3.9–12).

magnanimity out in *Julius Caesar*? The play is haunted by the forgetting of gratitude—just as Brutus is haunted by the "*monstrous* apparition" (4.3.281; emphasis added).

Chapter Five

Shakespeare's Tragic Rhetoric of Temptation

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, I have looked at a number of uses for the rhetorical figure *meiosis*. In what follows, I will look at this figure from the point of view of its opposite figure—*paradiastole*. By focusing on the rhetoric of temptation in *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, I will show that in order for temptation to appear attractive, it requires the dignifying translation of *paradiastole*. Moreover, we will see that *paradiastole* contains within itself the operation of *meiosis*.

"I do love thee; and when I love thee not / Chaos is come again" (3.3.90–91). How does Iago bring about the murderous chaos in Othello's marriage? Brutus loves Julius Caesar, yet Cassius turns him against "the foremost man of all this world" (4.3.22). Macbeth is the king's loyal "kinsman," "subject," and "host" (1.7.13–14), but the "weird sisters" (1.5.7) and his "dearest partner of greatness" (9–10) provoke him to ruthlessly assassinate the helpless Duncan in his sleep. And how do Goneril and Regan's protestations of their love for the old Lear subtly contribute to his "evil" (1.1.164) decision to banish Cordelia despite the fact that he "loved her most" (120)? This chapter examines the rhetorical strategy that is employed by these characters whose temptation leads to horrible consequences. I will analyze a common feature in these tragedies: the "friendly" voice that summons malice. This voice (like that of "honest" Iago) is trusted as an ally because it identifies with a hidden drive that it recognizes in its trusting interlocutor.

More specifically, I hope to distinguish two dimensions of this malicious rhetorical identification. First, the tempter identifies a latent drive in the victim. This drive is innocuous so long as it remains hidden—that is, unexpressed. Lady Macbeth does not invent ambition in Macbeth; she invents an argument that inspires its unhindered expression in him: "Hie thee hither, / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear / And chastise with the valor of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round" (1.5.23–26). To be able to embolden their father in his "hideous rashness" (1.1.149)—his careless decision to abdicate his sovereign responsibilities—Goneril and Regan recognize Lear's "unruly waywardness" (294) and "unconstant starts" (296). The tempter is dangerously perceptive. Consider Julius Caesar's concern regarding Cassius: "He is a great observer, and he looks / Quite through the deeds of men" (1.2.202–03).

This is one sense in which temptation rests on identification. But the formation of this destructive alliance requires more than identifying (and encouraging) the dormant tendency. The tempter identifies *with* his victim by giving him the assurance that he also pursues this tendency. To foment jealousy in Othello, Iago has first to "confess" that his own "nature's plague" is to "spy into abuses" (3.3.145–46). The union is cemented by a shared goal. And such a union necessarily entails antagonism. In bonding with his victim by wheedling him into believing in a common objective, the tempter creates a common enemy out of the one who is opposed to the drive—a "scapegoat," in the words of Kenneth Burke, who serves as "a device that unifies all those who share the same enemy" ("Terministic Screens" 51). Here develops the motive for murder in these tragedies. Desdemona is not simply the object of Othello's jealousy. Her trusting and forgiving nature stands opposed to his doubtful, vengeful paranoia. Temptation, in short, entails the identification *of* and *with* the drive of its prey.

My argument in this chapter is that the two dimensions of identification in temptation are epitomized by the flattering amplification in *paradiastole* and the belittling diminution in *meiosis*. And before turning to the tragedies to examine the reversal of values that occurs in the rhetoric of temptation, in the first section of the chapter, with reference to ancient and early modern texts on the art of rhetoric, I will present a brief account of the manner in which *paradiastole* creates meaning.

THE GAME OF *PARADIASTOLE*

The two rhetorical figures *paradiastole* and *meiosis* bring about a reversal of values—the one inflates its subject, the other deflates. For *paradiastole*, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* offers the following as example: "When you call [*appelles*] yourself wise instead of cunning, brave instead of over-confident, careful instead of mean" (4: 139). Quintilian calls this figure "distinction" and emphasizes that it is a form of "definition" ("by which similar ideas are distinguished"). *Paradiastole* is an appellation. More precisely, it is the flattering renaming of a vice as a virtue "similar" to it—the flattering renaming of a cunning man, for instance, as a wise man. In view of the examples that *Rhetorica ad Herennium* provides for *definitio* (for instance: "That act of yours is not bravery, but recklessness, because to be brave is to disdain toil and peril, for a useful purpose and after weighing the advantages, while to be reckless is to undertake perils like a gladiator, suffering pain without taking thought"), the author seems to have *meiosis* in mind (317).

The type of amplification and diminution in *paradiastole* and *meiosis* is not always discussed among the figures by manuals of rhetoric. Quintilian himself is reluctant to regard

paradiastole as a figure. Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, for instance, teaches this rhetorical strategy to the would-be orator in the section dealing with epideictic oratory:

> One should assume that qualities that are close to actual ones are much the same as regards both praise and blame; for example, that a cautious person is cold and designing and that a simple person is amiable or that one who does not show anger is calm; and [when praising] one should always take each of the attendant terms in the best sense; for example, [one should call] an irascible and excitable person "straightforward" and an arrogant person "high-minded" and "imposing" and [speak of] those given to excess as actually in states of virtue, for example, the rash one as "courageous," the spendthrift as "liberal." (79)

Rhetorica ad Herennium discusses this device in the section dealing with deliberative oratory. After introducing the virtues that are relevant to "political deliberation" (161)—wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance—the author advises that they "are to be enlarged upon if we are recommending them, but depreciated if we are urging that they be disregarded": the orator is to describe what his opponent calls justice as "cowardice, and sloth, and perverse generosity"; wisdom as "impertinent, babbling, and offensive cleverness"; temperance as "inaction and lax indifference"; and courage as "reckless temerity" (167–69). And Cicero, after discussing the same four virtues of deliberative oratory in *De Inventione*, explains that vice is not only the "opposites" of these virtues "but also those qualities which seem akin and close to these but are really far removed from them" (333).

The effective application of *paradiastole* and *meiosis* is among the skills of an orator equipped for *argumentum in utramque partem*, which, as Russ McDonald explains, is a significant practice in rhetorical education during the early modern period, and of which

Shakespeare makes use "in the creation of dramatic conflict" ("Rhetoric and Theater" 451).[61] In his study of the influence of examples of *paradiastole* in ancient Greek and Roman texts on early modern rhetorical handbooks, Quentin Skinner asserts that Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* is the first in England to discuss this form of "rhetorical redescription" ("Paradiastole" 151). Wilson considers giving "vices the names of vertues" as a useful "kinde of amplification" (138–39). But, Skinner continues, it is Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* and Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* that, following Quintilian, first name and define this technique as *paradiastole* among the figures ("Paradiastole" 152).

Puttenham and Peacham, however, feel differently about this figure. In addition to flattery, as Puttenham notes, the *Curry-Favel* is used for "soothing" and "excusing"; it extenuates the vice by "moderating and abating" its severity (269). That is, it symbolically makes light of a serious transgression by veiling it behind an agreeable translation. The name *Curry-Favel*, Skinner explains, "drawn from the grooming of horses, doubly hints at the idea of smoothing over blemishes or faults. To 'curry' means to smooth or comb out, while Fauvel was the name of the horse in Gervais de Bus's fourteenth-century poem, *Le roman de Fauvel*, whose initials spell out the vices of *Flaterie*, *Avarice*, *Vilanie*, *Variete*, *Envie* and *Laschete*" (*Reason and Rhetoric* 164–65). Puttenham, in other words, as Daniel Javitch points out, is not troubled by

[61] For a discussion on Iago's use of *argumentum in utramque partem*, see Emily Pitts Donahoe, "*In Utramque Partem*: Arguing Both Sides of the Question in *Othello*," *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2018, pp. 314–38. And for the use of this device in *Julius Caesar*, see Don J. Kraemer, Jr., "'Alas, thou hast misconstrued every thing': Amplifying Words and Things in *Julius Caesar*," *Rhetorica*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1991, pp. 165–78.

the figure's "moral or epistemological dubiousness"; he is interested in its "aesthetic effect" ("Poetry and Court Conduct" 877). Skinner writes that he is interested in its ability to invent "unfamiliar ways" to view an action ("Moral Ambiguity" 279). And Laura Kolb writes that he is interested in its ability to "subtly … alter shared perceptions and social reality" ("Debt's Poetry" 403). Peacham, on the other hand, does not condone this "vice of speech," for it opposes the truth and maintains wickedness (168–69).

The lie of *paradiastole* is the discovery of a good in something that is conventionally condemned as bad.[62] It is, in Bacon's words in his essay on praise, "shews, and *species virtutibus similes*" (258–59). A fit device for epideictic oratory, *paradiastole* turns opprobrium into approbation. In the process of this transformation, *paradiastole* self-destructively undermines *any* claim to truth. What is exposed in the *paradiastolic* lie is that both the customary disparaging interpretation and the new adulatory interpretation fail at perfect definition. In fact, *paradiastole* changes the nature of definition: what follows the sabotage of the truth-telling signifier is a contest between inadequate signifiers to grasp an elusive signified. The chaotic

[62] It is important to emphasize here that *paradiastole* is different from exaggerated praise. While both may be employed for purposes of flattery or temptation, the lie of exaggerated praise is an effect of *hyperbole*. Unlike *paradiastole*, *hyperbolic* praise does not entail the translation of a negative concept into its positive version. Among Shakespeare's tragic heroes, it is perhaps Coriolanus who is most immune to exaggerated praise. In the opening Act, the "modest" Coriolanus rebukes Cominius and Lartius for praising his accomplishments: "You shout me forth / In acclamations hyperbolical; / As if I loved my little should be dieted / In praises sauced with lies" (1.9.50–53).

conflict that results from this lie is evident, when used with ill intentions. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke writes that "a thing is identified by its properties"; its identity is established by "ethical" descriptions of its properties (23–24). And "cunning" rhetoric establishes identity by describing a property of interest "using terms not incisive enough to criticize it properly" (36). Thus, in rhetorical identification, there is always "the possibility of malice and the lie"; there is always the possibility of "deliberate cunning" when "an identification favorable to the speaker or his cause is made to seem favorable to the audience" (45). Shakespeare encapsulates the workings of this evil lie in the speech of Hecate (3.5.2–33), the "mistress" of the witches in *Macbeth*. The "art" of this "close contriver of all harms" has "a dismal and a fatal end": "distilled by magic sleights," the "artificial sprites" that she conjures up, "by the strength of their illusion," bring about "confusion."

King Lear

Let us look at the *paradiastolic* game in *King Lear*. Whereas Julius Caesar is cut from the Republic because of his inattention to the opinion of others, King Lear is shut out of his kingdom as a result of blindly leaning on what his daughters say (or do not say). As the "all-licensed" (1.4.168) Fool mockingly observes, Lear was "a pretty fellow" when he had "no need to care for" their opinion (159–60). It is his own obligations to which he is inattentive, while naively hoping to "retain / The name and all th'addition to a king" (1.1.132–33). Stephen Greenblatt groups Lear with Richard II, Mark Antony (in *Antony and Cleopatra*), Coriolanus, Duke Vincentio, and Prospero. What these characters have in common is "the desire to escape from the burdens of governance," which "leads to disaster" (*Shakespeare's Freedom* 81). In *The Development of Shakespeare's Rhetoric*, Stefan Keller points to the many times that Lear resorts

to the rhetorical figure *aposiopesis* (literally meaning "becoming silent") (192–95). According to Puttenham, an "auricular figure of defect," the "Figure of Silence" or the "Figure of Interruption," which is "when we begin to speak a thing and break off in the middle way," can serve several purposes: when the subject is "needed no further to be spoken of," when the speaker is "ashamed or afraid" to speak, or when the speaker wants to appear "threatening, and to show a moderation of anger" (250). Keller identifies these functions in Lear's use of the figure—both in interrupting the speech of others (like Kent in the opening scene) and his own speech. Can we not also consider this figure, which withdraws from speech before it is completed, in the context of *King Lear*, to epitomize the act of abandonment? After all, Peacham does liken the use of *aposiopesis* to retreat in war (118).

Aside from his anger, fear, and shame, does this figure not also illustrate Lear's "fast intent / To shake all cares and business" so that he can "unburdened crawl toward death" (1.1.36–39)? Lear's "darker purpose" (34) is the shameless dereliction of his duties, the deliberate avoidance of fulfilling them. His need for love from his daughters is a need to depend on them (and loving Cordelia "most," he relies mainly on "her kind nursery" [120–21]). By securing the future of his daughters with their inheritance and in return demanding security from them, Lear is, Katharine Maus writes, "divesting himself prematurely" (*Being and Having* 120). Lear's wish, therefore, is to unburden himself of the autonomy required for carrying out one's responsibilities, the most important of which is the caring for oneself.

Goneril and Regan team up with their father not simply by means of their (extravagant and empty) promises to look after him—it is by means of what their promises of love imply. Their moving speeches in the opening scene contain implicitly within themselves Lear's explicit "darker purpose." When Goneril boasts of her unspeakable love ("A love that makes breath poor

and speech unable" [1.1.58]), she does more than vow to devote herself entirely to her father's imposition. As does Regan, who is "made of that self-mettle" (67) as her sister, when she contends that she is "alone felicitate" (73) in loving Lear and that she is "an enemy to all other joys" (71). In addition to giving assurance to their father that they will fulfil his need, the astute sisters identify with this need. Goneril and Regan's "glib and oily" (222) declarations of their love for Lear insinuate a blatant lack of care for their own responsibilities as wives to their husbands.[63]

In flattering her irresponsible father, Goneril describes her own avoidance of (marital) responsibilities as an indescribable good:

> Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter:
> Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,
> Beyond what can be valued rich or rare,

[63] Lynda Boose argues that Cordelia's inheritance is Lear's "attempt to keep her"; Lear "will not freely give his daughter her endowment unless she purchases it with pledges that would nullify those required by the wedding ceremony" ("The Father and the Bride" 332–33). Similarly, in his psychoanalytic reading of the play, Jeffrey Stern sees Lear's love test as a marriage ceremony: before choosing a husband for Cordelia, Lear demands "the ultimate claim of her affection as well as of her allegiance." "Pledging her truth of love to Lear," Stern asserts, "she will in effect be plighting her troth to him." The same applies, Stern contends, to Goneril and Regan—Lear "will give his lands to their husbands after the daughters have sworn a husband's prerogative to him." Thus, Lear intends "to regain by marrying its new queen(s) the kingdom he has renounced" ("The Transference of the Kingdom" 300).

No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor,

As much as child e'er loved or father found,

A love that makes breath poor and speech unable.

Beyond all manner of so much I love you. (1.1.53–59)

Unlike Cordelia, Regan plays the *paradiastolic* game of undercutting a previous interpretation by proposing a more appealing one, and outdoes Goneril:

I am made of that self-mettle as my sister

And prize me at her worth. In my true heart

I find she names my very deed of love,

Only she comes too short, that I profess

Myself an enemy to all other joys

Which the most precious square of sense professes,

And find I am alone felicitate

In your dear highness' love. (67–74)

Both speeches are attempts to "find" a name (in terms of love) for careless dependency. These rhetorical inventions, on the surface, pleasingly express the love of a child to her parent. Both instances, however, contain a disguised indifference to the love of a wife to her husband. More than their pleasing expression of filial love, it is this inconsideration that appeals to Lear's own carelessness.

At this point, Lear expects Cordelia to invent an even "more opulent" (84) name. But Cordelia instantly detects her sisters' ruse and exposes it:

Why have my sisters husbands if they say

They love you all? Happily, when I shall wed,

That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

Half my love with him, half my care and duty.

Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters.[64] (97–101)

Cordelia's "nothing" is a refusal to take part in the *paradiastolic* game of "more [or] less": "I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less" (90–91). Her defiance is a defence of acting responsibly in accordance with one's "bond" after Goneril and Regan vie with each other to dignify irresponsibility. It is, as Kenneth Graham puts it, "the resistance of a consensual moral law that has been driven underground" ("Plainness" 455).

It is worth adding that in contrast to Goneril and Regan's glib game of *paradiastole*, Kent plays the dangerous game of *parrhesia*. In *The Courage of the Truth*, Michel Foucault writes that

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[64] Under different circumstances, in *Othello*, Desdemona makes a similar argument for "divided" love for father and husband:

My noble father,

I do perceive here a divided duty.

To you I am bound for life and education;

My life and education both do learn me

How to respect you. You are the lord of duty;

I am, hitherto, you daughter. But here's my husband,

And so much duty as my mother showed

To you, preferring you before her father,

So much I challenge that I may profess

Due to the Moor my lord. (1.3.179–88)

this tragedy "begins with a story of *parrhesia*, a test of frankness: who will tell the king the truth?" (286). In his *Fearless Speech*, Foucault argues that *parrhesia* entails frankness, truth, risk of punishment, criticism, and sense of duty. Based on Quintilian's question, "What is less 'figured' than true freedom?" (4: 49), Foucault writes that *parrhesia* is "the zero ground" of rhetorical figures (21). Such truth-telling is devoid of any flattering amplification. Foucault explains that the rhetorician, to persuade his audience, may conceal his own opinion beneath rhetorical devices, but the *parrhesiastes* frankly expresses "his *own* opinion … avoiding any kind of rhetorical form which would veil what he thinks" (12). And he does not have any doubts about the truth of his opinion: "The *parrhesiastes* says what is true because he *knows* that it *is* true; and he *knows* that it is true because it is really true" (14). He is in possession of the truth and his "truth-having is guaranteed by the possession of certain *moral* qualities," the most important of which is courage (15). Courage is the "proof" of his sincerity because of the risk he takes in standing up to a figure of authority to disclose his truth; he may even "risk death to tell the truth instead of reposing in the security of a life where the truth goes unspoken" (17).

The danger in the game of *parrhesia* comes from the possibility of the critical truth "hurting or angering" the figure of authority "who exercises power over him" (17). *Parrhesia* is always from "below" and aimed at "above" (18). Notwithstanding the danger involved, the *parrhesiastes* speaks the truth not because he is forced to speak, for he is "*free* to keep silent," but because it is his duty; his voluntary truth-telling is "out of a sense of moral obligation" (19). In *parrhesia*, Foucault summarize, "the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy" (20).

The *parrhesiastic* declaration of one's own opinion (in spite of hurting or angering the other) stands in stark contrast to the flattering identification with the other. Wilson has nothing but praise for the former strategy. In a world filled with "flatterers, fauners, and soothers of mens sayings," Wilson wishes there would be more "honest" orators who "speake boldly and without feare, euen to the proudest of them" (230). It is therefore quite interesting that *Institutio Oratoria* considers *oratione libera* as a figure only when it is "feigned and artificially produced," only when it is a mask for *adulatio* (4: 48–49), and that *licentia* in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* impartially encompasses truth-telling and flattering identification (348–55). According to the latter text, there are two types of *licentia*. The first is "when, talking before those to whom we owe reverence or fear, we yet exercise our right to speak out, because we seem justified in reprehending them, or persons dear to them, for some fault." But to avoid appearing "pungent," the orator is to add praise (*laude*) to his *licentia*, for "the praise frees the hearer from wrath and annoyance, and the frankness deters him from error."[65] What is more, such precautionary praise leads to friendliness (*amicitia*): the orator will seem "friendly both to the hearers and to the truth." And the second is "craftier" than the first. It is, under the "pretence" of frankness, either to simulate fear about stating that which the audience finds acceptable or to reproach that which the audience finds reproachful. This type of *licentia* does not require to be "mitigated by praise" because it is "of itself agreeable to the hearer's frame of mind."

[65] Puttenham has this type in mind in presenting *parrhesia* as the need of the "fine and subtle persuader" to "seem to bespeak pardon" so as to palliate the "offence or scandal" of his "licentiousness" (312).

Neither type of *licentia* (nor Quintilian's *oratione libera* when it is a cover for flattery) is the dangerous *parrhesia* that Foucault examines in his genealogy. In the first type, which leads to amity between the speaker and the hearer, praise defuses the risk involved in the exposure of the truth. It is no longer blunt, unvarnished truth but truth "mitigated" by *paradiastolic* laud. As David Colclough observes, *parrhesia* becomes "a figure of excusing, essentially an apology for speaking out, rather than the act of speaking out itself" ("The Rhetoric of Free Speech" 194). And the second type is *paradiastolic* or *meiotic* identification under the guise of truth.[66]

Accordingly, the "all-licensed" Fool, despite all of his blunt truth-telling, does not count as a *parrhesiastes* precisely because he is "all-licensed" and consequently immune to Lear's anger.[67] More relevant to the present study, it becomes clear that it is not only the content of Kent's truth that hurts and angers his king. His dutiful participation in the dangerous game of *parrhesia* "out of a sense of moral obligation" is a direct offence to Lear's decision to "shake" all of his duties and obligations. Kent's "unmannerly" objection to the "mad" Lear hopes to bluntly correct his misjudgement of Cordelia:

> What wouldst thou do, old man?
> Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
> When power to flattery bows?

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[66] It is not surprising, then, that after *licentia*, the author discusses *deminutio*, which is to "moderate and soften" the speech "in order to avoid the impression of arrogant display" (355).

[67] A good example of *parrhesia* occurs in *Othello* when, at the end of the play, Emilia finally finds the courage to speak out against her husband despite the consequences of disclosing the truth.

To plainness honor's bound

When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,

And in thy best consideration check

This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment:

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,

Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds

Reverb no hollowness. (1.1.142–52)

But for the Lear whose "bow is bent and drawn" (140), the "untender" (103) truth pales in comparison to the seductive lies.

Lear sides with Goneril and Regan against Cordelia because their subtle acknowledgement of their inattention to duty in their exaggerated testimonies of exclusive love taps into Lear's own desire to free himself of "all cares and business." He falls for their replies to his test of love not because they assure him that they will care for him (for Cordelia promises that as well) but because they indirectly cheer his intention to put himself completely in the care of his daughters—they indirectly cheer dependability. And he grows angry at Cordelia's "nothing" for two reasons. First, as William Dodd notes, "aware that Lear is exercising power over her by requiring her to place her agency at his service," Cordelia's refusal to care only for him is a refusal to sacrifice her "autonomy" ("Impossible Worlds" 490). More importantly, her refusal angers Lear because it indirectly counsels him to preserve his own autonomy and care for himself—just as Kent's warning to "reserve thy state" (147) angers him. Cordelia's adamant "plainness" (1.1.126), as Graham puts it, is composed of patient self-sufficiency and angry assertiveness, "withdrawal from emotional involvement with the world around it" and "forceful declarations or assertions to influence the world from which it is withdrawing" ("Plainness"

441). Her silence is both a pronouncement of her independence and a denouncement of her father's dependence.[68]

Like Timon of Athens, Lear's careless generosity soon meets with disappointment. His dependence on Goneril and Regan spirals out of control and into their humiliating desertion of him. Ironically, it is the "weary negligence" (1.3.12) and "faint neglect" (1.4.62) of Goneril that initiates the rift between the father and his wicked daughters. The very quality that lovingly unites them against Cordelia now hatefully divides them. (Another aspect of this irony is that it is Cordelia—not Goneril and Regan—who later in the plot separates from her husband to care for her father.) Even so, Lear stubbornly carries on with his carelessness: after the failure of surrendering his royal powers to the "unnatural hags" (2.2.459), he surrenders himself into the care of nature ("Here I stand your slave, / A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man" [3.2.19–20]). This time, however, Lear is recklessly aware of the dangers involved: "you servile ministers" of nature "That will with two pernicious daughters join / Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head / So old and white as this" (21–24). His negligence of himself reaches its climax as he gradually dispenses with even his reason. And in madness, he approaches "the thing itself": "Unaccommodated man" (3.4.98–99). The king divests himself of the most basic manners of caring for oneself.

Julius Caesar

[68] This reluctance to take responsibility that sets the plot in motion also concludes it. As Greenblatt observes, the play ends with "a chorus of renunciation"; and it remains unclear who among the survivors will take control of Britain (*Shakespeare's Freedom* 92).

Returning to *paradiastole*, we find that it does more than lie. As the rhetorical figure *identifies* the vice by interpreting it as a virtue, in commending it, the rhetorician *identifies with* the vice. In the act of praise, the subject is the advocate of its object. Moreover, this form of praise (the discovery of goodness in the bad object) unavoidably lays blame on the subject of the initial blame that it is countervailing. The established negative interpretation is denounced as a lie. In their analysis of *paradiastole* in Montaigne and Hobbes, Rachelle Gold and Jim Pearce underline the "violence" and "anxiety" in this figure of "strife," a figure that is "born of and tending toward the reproduction of contention" ("The Perils of Paradiastole" 188). Blame operates in tandem with praise in *paradiastole*. As Frank Whigham observes in *Ambition and Privilege*, "flattery and slander … interpenetrate absolutely" (40). With regard to Puttenham's example of calling an unthrift a liberal gentleman, Whigham writes: "a 'literal' description of the 'fact' of prodigality in the spendthrift can be defused by terming the quality 'liberality' and so converting the criticism to praise. At the same time, such a conversion deflects attention from the substantive remark to the character of the critic; not only is the spendthrift 'really' a liberal gentleman, but the critic is a slanderer" (40). Let us now look at how Cassius slanders Julius Caesar as he glorifies envy.

Like Othello, Brutus murders one whom he loves out of honour, out of a sense of duty to prevent a future offence:

> But 'tis a common proof
> That lowliness is young ambition's ladder
> Whereto the climber upward turns his face;
> But when he once attains the upmost round
> He then unto the ladder turns his back,

> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend. So Caesar may;
> Then, lest he may, prevent. And since the quarrel
> Will bear no color for the thing he is,
> Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,
> Would run to these and these extremities.
> And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
> Which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous,
> And kill him in the shell. (2.1.21–34)

Brutus "fashions" a suspicion into a surety. Or, as Garry Wills puts it, Brutus treats a "hypothetical" (that is, Julius Caesar's tyranny) as an "inevitability," and leads the conspirators to execute "an *actual* assassination in the name of that *hypothetical* tyranny" (*Rome and Rhetoric* 65). Brutus's worries about the future of Rome, however, are not misguided. The Republic is losing its freedom of speech. The first act of the play contains several references to the suppression and censorship that Julius Caesar has implemented in Rome. The tribunes of the people, Murellus and Flavius, "for pulling scarves off Caesar's images, are put to silence" (1.2.278–79). When talking Caska into joining the conspiracy, Cassius is cautious not to use Julius Caesar's name ("Now could I, Caska, name to thee a man" [1.3.72]). And when the "blunt" (1.2.288) Caska asks if the person under discussion is Julius Caesar, Cassius replies, "Let it be who it is" (1.3.80). Even Brutus is afraid to engage in a dialogue with Cassius when the subject is Julius Caesar (1.2.162–75). Brutus instructs Cassius to continue their conversation in the privacy of their homes (296–99). And the second Act begins with the secret meeting of the

"faction" (2.1.77) in Brutus's garden at night. Thus, compared to the conspiracy of Othello and Iago, theirs is not a conspiracy born of deluded paranoia.

Like Othello, Brutus wishes in vain that he could put a stop to this future threat without having to shed blood:

> We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
>
> And in the spirit of men there is no blood.
>
> Oh, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit
>
> And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
>
> Caesar must bleed for it. (167–71)

Unlike Othello, however, it is not the drive to punish past misdeed that moves Brutus but rather the drive to equality. There is an uncompromising resistance to being abused in Othello; in Brutus, to being overshadowed. Othello murders Desdemona because of her alleged adultery, Brutus murders Julius Caesar because his dictatorship would infringe upon the rightful freedom of all Romans.

To defeat the rise of a dictator, in the opening Act, Cassius ennobles (and enables) envy when he urges Brutus to carefully observe his own name by comparing it with that of Julius Caesar, for envy develops from such comparison:

> "Brutus" and "Caesar"—what should be in that "Caesar"?
>
> Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
>
> Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
>
> Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
>
> Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,
>
> "Brutus" will start a spirit as soon as "Caesar." (1.2.142–47)

But by honouring envy, by honouring "thoughts of great value, worthy cogitations" (50), Cassius is also furtively inveighing against the man who upbraids careful observation (201–03), the man who with his careless nod has "become a god" (116). In *The Gay Science*, Friedrich Nietzsche *paradiastolically* renames the honourable envy of Brutus that brings down the despotic Julius Caesar as "Independence of the soul": "No sacrifice can be too great for that: one must be capable of sacrificing one's dearest friend for it, even if he should also be the most glorious human being, an ornament of the world, a genius without peer—if one loves freedom as the freedom of great souls and he threatens this kind of freedom" (150). Nietzsche hints at the difference between the envy of Brutus and Cassius when he highlights Brutus's "finest honor" in appreciating the "height" of Julius Caesar. The spiteful Cassius does not think highly of Julius Caesar.

"Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar," Brutus soliloquizes, "I have not slept" (2.1.61–62). Taking into account that Julius Caesar "would be crowned" (12), "whetting" Brutus against Julius Caesar signifies urging him to realize that he must take a stand against Julius Caesar's "high-sighted tyranny" (117). Similarly, in *Macbeth*, the verb *whet* (etymologically meaning "to sharpen") connotes the violent reaction to tyranny. Malcolm convinces Macduff to revenge the slaughter of his family: "Be this the whetstone of your sword. Let grief / Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it" (4.3.228–29). In the bloody context of *Macbeth*, *whet* is associated with anger, which the composed Brutus avoids. And in *Hamlet*, the ghost of the father reappears to "whet" the son's "almost blunted purpose" (3.4.110). Denmark and Scotland are not

opposed to kingship itself—the problem is the murderous usurpation of the crown.[69] The Roman Republic, on the other hand, due to its bitter experience with monarchy, equates kingship with tyranny ("My ancestors did from the streets of Rome / The Tarquin drive when he was called a king" [2.1.53–54]). "Whetting" Brutus against Julius Caesar also foreshadows the manner of the assassination: Julius Caesar is stabbed to death for his ambition. Thus, Brutus has not been able to sleep (as his wife confirms [252]) ever since he has sharpened his resolve and his sword to prevent the tyrannical rule of Julius Caesar. Moreover, recalling Celia's remark, in *As You Like It*, that "the dullness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits" (1.2.49–50), whetting is associated with thinking.[70] Brutus's initiation into the conspiracy begins with his "friend" (1.2.36) Cassius

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[69] In *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling*, Michel Foucault argues that Shakespeare's political plays centre around "the question of the foundation of sovereign right": "How can a sovereign succeed in legitimately exercising power that he seized through war, revolt, civil war, crime, or violating oaths?" (58). Shakespeare seems to also be interested in the question of dynastic succession. With regard to *Macbeth*, in "Linguistic Taboos and the 'Unscene' of Fear in *Macbeth*," Silvia Bigliazzi claims that through the character of Banquo, Shakespeare presents a contradiction that makes "the idea of dynastic succession ambiguous": Banquo "reinstat[es] patrilineality and at the same time challeng[es] the very idea of royal descent, as Banquo is no king himself" (57).

[70] It is worth mentioning that the consonant pairing of *whet* with *wit* is a common topic in early modern texts. Thomas Wilson, for instance, in his treatise on the art of rhetoric, writes that "those that haue good wittes by Nature, shall better encrease them by arte, and the blunt also shall bee whetted through arte, that want Nature to helpe them forward" (6). And in the section discussing the role of memory in oratory, Wilson instructs the orator on how "to amende an euill

wishing that "noble Brutus had his eyes" to see "this age's yoke" (61–62) and ends with Cassius's parting words, "think of the world" (300), the same Cassius who is "very dangerous" (210) for thinking too much. It is not only thinking about Julius Caesar's tyranny that appeals to Brutus. Thinking itself, which is being silenced under Julius Caesar's tyranny, "whets" Brutus. David Daniell highlights the cold rationality to which Brutus is accustomed—manifest in his planning out the assassination for the conspirators, in his behaviour toward his wife, in his funeral oration to the plebeians, in his quarrel with Cassius ("Introduction" 49–60). A serious motive behind Brutus's harsh sentence "It must be by his death" (2.1.10) is the liberation of thought. Finally, in addition to all of this, "whetting" Brutus refers to stimulating a desire of his. Thus, not only Brutus himself, but that which Cassius has awakened in him will not sleep.

Just as Iago "echo'st" (3.3.105) Othello, Cassius becomes a "glass" (1.2.68) for Brutus to "discover" (69) himself in Cassius, to see his own "shadow" (58) through "reflection" (68). As Miranda Anderson observes, after equating "the limits of perception" with "the limits of introspection," Cassius offers "the external medium of his extrospective perspective" as a "supplement to Brutus's troubled introspection" ("Fission-Fusion" 162). Cassius's "story" (1.2.92) is one to which they can both relate: "I cannot tell what you and other men / Think of this life; but, for my single self, / I had as lief not be as live to be / In awe of such a thing as I

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memorie, and to preserue a good," concluding with: "euen as by labour the witte is whetted, so by lithernesse the witte is blounted" (245). Francis Bacon, in his praise of friendship, says that friendship is "healthful and sovereign for the understanding" (170). With this "fruit" of friendship, "a man learneth of himself, and bringeth his own thoughts to light, and whetteth his wits as against a stone, which itself cuts not" (171).

myself" (93–96). This opening is an invitation (extended to Brutus and other men) to death should they find themselves in "awe" of an equal. Death is preferred to fear of another man. And since the "subject" of this relatable "story" is "honor" (92), such a death would be honourable. We can be certain that this is not only the "story" of his "single self" because he has already heard Brutus say he would not have Julius Caesar as king (82), and he relates this story immediately after Brutus's "Set honor in one eye and death i'th' other / And I will look on both indifferently; / For let the gods so speed me as I love / The name of honor more than I fear death" (86–89). Cassius is indeed echoing Brutus. But for Brutus to take part in a secret "story" that is "of yourself which you yet know not of" (70), Cassius must ease into it as though it is the "story" of his "single self."

Despite their shared "story," what distinguishes Cassius from Brutus is that which he has in common with Iago: his opposition to Julius Caesar is out of rancorous spite, not honour. According to Plutarch's account of Julius Caesar's life, Brutus's own desires to oppose Julius Caesar had been "blunted" by the generous clemency and favouritism that Julius Caesar had shown him:

> For not only had his life been spared at Pharsalus after Pompey's flight, and the lives of many of his friends at his entreaty, but also he had great credit with Caesar. He had received the most honourable of the praetorships for the current year, and was to be consul three years later, having been preferred to Cassius, who was a rival candidate. For Caesar, as we are told, said that Cassius urged the juster claims to the office, but that for his own part he could not pass Brutus by. (7: 587)

And in his account of Brutus's life, Plutarch writes that Brutus "objected to the rule, but Cassius hated the ruler" (6: 143).

What drives Cassius and what he awakens in Brutus is envy, the wary eyeing of another's rise. Julius Caesar perceives the envy in Cassius: "He reads much, / He is a great observer, and he looks / Quite through the deeds of men" (1.2.201–03). "Such men as he," Julius Caesar continues, "be never at heart's ease / Whiles they behold a greater than themselves, / And therefore are they very dangerous" (208–10). The Republic, Coppélia Kahn notes, "is intricately bound up with the basically agonistic, highly competitive nature of the Roman ruling elite" ("Friendship and Emulation" 273). And in "The Crisis of the Aristocracy in *Julius Caesar*," Wayne Rebhorn reads this tragedy as "a struggle among aristocrats—senators—aimed at preventing one of their number from transcending his place and destroying the system in which they all ruled as a class" (78). In the Republic, Rebhorn writes, "each man sees the rise of another as an impairment of his personal status and importance, as a degradation or loss of rank even when such a loss has not actually occurred" (87). Rebhorn, however, is not interested in the difference between Brutus and Cassius. Instead, Rebhorn argues that the envy that drives all of the senators in *Julius Caesar* is a re-presentation of the aristocratic identity in Shakespeare's England.

Be that as it may, Cassius's envy is a spiteful one.[71] His accounts of the swimming contest in the "troubled Tiber" (100–15) and Julius Caesar's fever in Spain (119–28) betray his hatred as he degrades the "tired Caesar" who was as helpless "As a sick girl." Not once throughout the play does Brutus insult Julius Caesar. The honourable Brutus acts out his envy

[71] In *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, Andrew Hadfield claims that Cassius has "honourable" and "personal" motives for assassinating Julius Caesar, the latter being "having been slighted by the dictator" (176).

but never forgets his love for the object of his envy: "As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honor for his valour; and death for his ambition" (3.2.23–27). Mark Antony, at the end of the play, appreciates this difference between Brutus and Cassius:

> This was the noblest Roman of them all.
>
> All the conspirators save only he
>
> Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
>
> He only in a general honest thought
>
> And common good to all made one of them. (5.5.68–72)

While it is the envy of Brutus and Cassius that has Julius Caesar pay for his ambition with his death, it is only Brutus's envy that is for the "common good"—bringing Julius Caesar down so as to preserve equality in Rome. It is Brutus's consideration for the whole of Rome that stands opposed to the inconsiderate Julius Caesar, not the selfish envy of the conspirators.

Macbeth

We have seen that *meiosis* is naturally embedded in *paradiastole*. But this is a *meiosis* that is implied rather than openly developed. Values reversed, Cordelia's "price" falls (1.1.195) in the eyes of Lear because she does not support his wish to abandon "all cares and business," the very wish that his "pelican daughters" (3.4.72) invitingly celebrate. The "divers purposes" of *meiosis* that Puttenham explains are particularly pertinent here: to appear modest and "avoid the opinion of arrogance"; "to bring our adversaries in contempt"; "to comfort or cheer any perilous enterprise," "disable" and "abase" our "enemies and … their forces," and "make light of

everything that might be a discouragement to the attempt"; "to excuse a fault"; and to foster "pleasant familiarity" with our "equals or inferiors" (304–05). These functions of *meiosis* are engrafted in *paradiastole* as well. Puttenham himself, when expanding on *meiosis*, arrives at *paradiastole*: the "Disabler" is used

> to excuse a fault, and to make an offense seem less than it is, by giving a term more favorable and of less vehemence than the truth requires, as to say of a great robbery, that it was but a pilfry matter; of an arrant ruffian that he is a tall fellow of his hands; of a prodigal fool, that he is a kind-hearted man; of a notorious unthrift, a lusty youth; and such like phrases of extenuation, which fall more aptly to the office of the figure Curry-Favel. (305)

Among the "offices" of *paradiastole* there is *meiosis*.

Here it is necessary to distinguish between two types of *meiosis*. While *meiosis*, in general, brings amity and accord between the speaker and his audience by modestly extenuating their character flaw and comfortingly debilitating the might of the objector to this flaw, there is a special type of *meiosis* that carries out all of these functions but out of spite. This explains why Puttenham discusses this figure twice. Before its full treatment (304–06) among the "sententious" (or, rhetorical) figures, *meiosis* is briefly mentioned (269) among the "sensable" figures. The "sensable" *meiosis* is used to "diminish and abase a thing by way of spite or malice, as it were to deprave it."

Immediately after, Puttenham cautions against the "vice" of *tapinosis*, which is to "abase your thing or matter by ignorance or error in the choice of your word." What is peculiar is not only that Puttenham feels the need to warn against this "vicious manner of speech" before *tapinosis* is fully disapproved of (344–45) in the separate section allotted to the "vices" in

speech. When describing *tapinosis* in its appropriate place, it is not the words "ignorance" and "error" that are repeated but the words "diminish" and "abase": "It is no small fault in a maker to use such words and terms as do diminish and abase the matter he would seem to set forth, by impairing the dignity, height, vigor, or majesty of the cause he takes in hand." This is not to suggest that *tapinosis* is not inadvertent *meiosis*; this is to suggest that inadvertent *meiosis* is only one form of *tapinosis*. Puttenham seems to be more critical of deliberate spiteful *meiosis* than inadvertent *meiosis*, especially since he translates the Greek *tapinosis* into the "Abaser" (the same word he uses to describe spiteful *meiosis*).[72] According to Puttenham, therefore, while "sententious" *meiosis* "disables" its object, "sensable" *meiosis* "disables" its object by "abasing" it out of "spite or malice." To revise an earlier statement: among the "offices" of the *paradiastole* of the tempter there is spiteful *meiosis*. In such a *paradiastole*, the defence of the vice is necessarily attended with the malicious attack against the virtuous censure of that vice. I will show this feature of *paradiastole* in the rhetoric of Lady Macbeth.

Even before his appearance in the play, we learn of Macbeth's drive. The wounded Captain (who has received his wounds rescuing Malcolm from "captivity" [1.2.5]) tells Duncan of the "brave Macbeth": "Disdaining Fortune with his brandished steel, / Which smoked with bloody execution, / Like valor's minion carved out his passage" (16–19). Malcolm, who will succeed Duncan, is shown to be less competent in battle than Macbeth in this warrior society. This itself is an incentive for Macbeth to "o'erleap" (1.4.49) him. More important is Macbeth's "disdain" for Fortune in battle. "Doubtful it stood" (7) when Fortune was on the side of the

[72] Quintilian uses the term *humilitatis* to describe the Greek *tapinosis* (meaning "lowering" or "reduction"), "by which the importance or dignity of something is diminished" (3: 366–67).

enemy. “Like Valour’s minion,” nevertheless, Macbeth “carved out his passage” through the doubt. Macbeth has little patience for Fortune and her uncertainty.[73] Fortune, Bryan Lowrance observes, in early modern culture, embodies “non-autonomy,” “the fragility and possible failure of action,” and “passivity” (“Modern Ecstasy” 828). Fighting for his king, Macbeth leaves nothing to chance. Instead, “with bloody execution,” he “carves out” the outcome of the battle. This urge to secure success foreshadows Macbeth’s susceptibility to the “charm” (1.3.38) of the three witches and their “strange intelligence” (77). It is the simplicity and certainty in their manner of predicting the future, the definiteness of their “prophetic greeting” (79) that he “shalt be king hereafter” (51), that takes hold of Macbeth’s attention. As Kenneth Burke observes, the witches are “representative of Macbeth’s inner temptations” (*Grammar* 307).

Not yet resolved, Macbeth sides with Fortune—“If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me / Without my stir” (1.3.146–47)—because, as his wife knows well, he is “too full o’th’ milk of human kindness” (1.5.15) to remorselessly secure his future success through evil means:

> Thou wouldst be great,
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
> That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
> And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou’dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, “Thus thou must do,” if thou have it;
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do,

[73] Recall the “shift and change of mood” (1.1.85) of Fortune in *Timon of Athens*.

Than wishest should be undone.[74] (16–23)

Lady Macbeth understands that she must suspend "human kindness" in Macbeth for him to "screw" his "courage to the sticking-place" (1.7.60) and realize his ambition.

Lady Macbeth is tempted by the promise of the witches more than her husband, and she plans to use her own persuasive skills to scold that which stands in the way of the crown. To encourage Macbeth's "black and deep desires" (1.4.51), she unites with him in his impatient urge to forge the future: "I feel now / The future in the instant" (1.5.55–56). This phrase, Howard Marchitello avers, "speaks directly to the dream of instant action that collapses present and future into a single moment" ("Speed and the Problem of Real Time" 433). Greenblatt asserts that Lady Macbeth, after reading the letter from her husband, "speaks of the crown as if it were already on Macbeth's head" ("Introduction" 2711). "It is she," write Sandra Clark and Pamela

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[74] In "Linguistic Taboos and the 'Unscene' of Fear in *Macbeth*," discussing "linguistic interdiction" in this play, with regard to this passage, Silvia Bigliazzi writes:

> Lady Macbeth mentions neither the crown nor the murder but alludes to them only through strategies of indirection pivoting on deictic markers ("that," "it"), a most generic action verb ("do") and a prefixed negative ("undone"). Her allusiveness suggests the symbolic enormity of the crime, which requires reticence even in solitary rumination … Lady Macbeth does not pronounce what she has in mind, thus inaugurating a strategy of reticence which will prove to be crucial in the play's communicative system … Whether in the presence of each other or in solitude, Macbeth and his wife never call the crime by its name but by the generic, although pragmatically and symbolically highly connoted, master concept "doing." (60)

Mason, "who not only determines that he will become what the Sisters have 'promised' but also that this should come about 'the nearest way'" ("Introduction" 9–10). To summarize, Lady Macbeth wishes for the eradication of the distance between the present thought of the act and its future execution.

First, before Macbeth's arrival, she builds her own courage by emptying herself of the "milk of human kindness":

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
> Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between
> Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
> And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
> To cry, "Hold, hold!" (38–52)

To inspirit her "mortal thoughts" with "cruelty" and fortify her "fell purpose" with "gall," she liberates them of "remorse" and "compunctious visitings."

And later, using a most unnerving imagery, she conveys to Macbeth this resolve that no feelings of pity or guilt can unnerve:

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
> And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this. (1.7.54–59)

And thus, Lady Macbeth with her "undaunted mettle" (73) teams up with Macbeth to unleash his drive to "carve," "with bloody execution," how the future plays out.

Now let us look at this instance of identification from a rhetorical point of view. Earlier in the play, it is "justice" that is "with valor armed" (1.2.29). And later in the play, "wisdom" is said to "guide … valor / To act in safety" (3.1.53–54). The type of valour that is valued in Scotland cautiously fights against injustice. But Lady Macbeth associates valour with the persuasive effects of her tongue, which is to embolden Macbeth's ambition to "play false" and "wrongly win." The word *valour*, derived from the Latin *valere*, etymologically connotes both "courage" and "worth." The valour of her tongue intends to *paradiastolically* "encourage" a new "worth" in ambition. Recall that after Goneril describes her love to be "beyond what can be *valued* rich or rare," Regan asks to be "prize[d] … at her *worth*." Cassius dignifies envy as "Thoughts of great *value*, *worthy* cogitations," which is a "hidden *worthiness*" (1.1.57) in Brutus. And Iago assures Othello that he has "*worthy* cause" to be jealously "too busy in my fears" (3.3.252–53)—that is, to be engrossed in the affairs of others. Thus, to brace Macbeth's ambition (an ambition that does not shy away from the "illness" that "should attend it"), Lady Macbeth

must invent a new name for ambition. The "unsex[ed]" valour of her tongue recasts ambition in terms of manly valour: "When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man" (1.7.49–51). To advocate such manliness, she becomes as manly as the man she wants her husband to become.

Lady Macbeth also knows that this new valuation requires her to "chastise" that which "impedes" it. What prevents the ambition to "play false" and "wrongly win" is Duncan's manner of rewarding his soldiers: "I have begun to plant thee and will labor / To make thee full of growing" (1.4.28–29). Fortune, which Macbeth "disdains," best represents Duncan's uncertain reward system, a system in which the time of reaping the rewards of one's deeds is never determined. Such a system demands patience, for the reward remains in doubt. Duncan's first words to Macbeth highlight this uncertainty:

> O worthiest cousin!
> The sin of my ingratitude even now
> Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before
> That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
> To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,
> That the proportion both of thanks and payment
> Might have been mine. Only I have left to say,
> More is thy due than more than all can pay. (1.4.14–21)

Macbeth can never be certain of the "thanks and payment" for his service to Duncan.

It is this doubt that Lady Macbeth must "chastise"—that is, viciously rename. Doubt, consequently, is *meiotically* feminized. Adelman, in *Suffocating Mothers*, draws attention to the "womanish softness" and "feminine vulnerability" of Duncan (132). Even his murder, Adelman

points out, is "a display of male sexual aggression against a passive female victim" (133)—Macbeth likens himself to Tarquin as he approaches Duncan's bed (2.1.55). The "unsex[ing]" of Lady Macbeth, therefore, also includes her being cleared of the doubt that is associated with Duncan. And after freeing herself of "remorse" and "compunctious visitings," she disparages doubt to her husband as unmanliness: "Wouldst thou have that / Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life, / And live a coward in thine own esteem, / Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'" (1.7.41–44). Lady Macbeth *meiotically* devalues doubtful fortune as she *paradiastolically* values the resolute valour to seize fortune. Incidentally, Shakespeare shows the potential for this *meiotic* attack against doubt in Macbeth early in the play: the word *disdain* etymologically means "to consider unworthy." This is further insinuated in the sexual imagery in "carv[ing]" Lady Fortune with his "brandished steel."

Macbeth's "vaulting ambition" (1.7.27), which is incited to "outr[u]n the pauser, reason" (2.3.108), is quite different from the despotic ambition of Julius Caesar. It is Julius Caesar's careless nod (1.2.118) that arouses the envy of his fellow senators. Julius Caesar's wish to "soar above the view of men" (1.1.73), "scorning the base degrees / By which he did ascend," is a flagrant disregard for the equal rights of others. While Julius Caesar's ambition "scorns" those beneath him, Macbeth's ambition "disdains" the unpredictability of chance. Macbeth's wish to soar is a violent impetuousness to clutch the future fruits of his action in the present. In "*Macbeth*'s War on Time," Donald Foster claims that Macbeth is "plagued" by an "impulse to take revenge on *time itself*" (324). "Macbeth's answer to his humiliation at the hands of the clock," Foster argues, "is to take a literal revenge: he will attack time with a dagger, will break time's laws, will take the future now in the ignorant present, seizing forcibly that which he has come already to perceive as his" (329). Macbeth yearns for that act that would be "the be-all and

end-all" (1.7.5). He wants the assassination of Duncan to "catch / With his surcease success" (3–4); that is, he wants to raze the gap of uncertainty between the execution of the act and its promised reward—"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly" (1–2). The assassination, however, as Greenblatt explains, "proves … politically untenable": "There are no clean murders. One crime leads to another and then to another, without bringing the criminal any closer to the security or contentment that each desperate act is meant to achieve. Macbeth cannot stop the bloody acts; instead he must multiply and extend them" ("Introduction" 2713).

Othello

As the final example, I will demonstrate the presence of *meiotic* devaluation in *paradiastolic* unveiling in Iago's rhetoric. Othello himself captures this duality with his phrase "close dilations," which also intimates "close delations." As Patricia Parker explains, Othello's phrase suggests rhetorical "opening," "uncovering," or "bringing before the eye" at the same time that it suggests "secret accusations" ("Dilation" 61)—that is, the simultaneous operations of *paradiastolic* amplification and *meiotic* diminution.

Othello is a conscientious guardian of justice. He cannot allow any misdeed to go unpunished. Three times he leaves his newly-wed bride to correct a wrong—to respond to the "scurvy and provoking" (1.2.7) insults of his furious father-in-law, to protect Cyprus against the unexpected threat of a Turkish invasion, and to settle the drunken "barbarous brawl" (2.3.151)

between his soldiers.[75] These incidents serve to highlight the extent of Othello's sensitiveness to the barbarity of injustice. Not considering the Turkish threat, which dissipates on its own, the other two altercations are incited by the mischievous Iago. The first is resolved through a rational legal process supervised by the Duke (1.3). As Alvin Kernan observes, "the assembled, ranked governors of Venice … control passions that otherwise would have led to a bloody street brawl and bring justice out of what otherwise would have been riot" ("Introduction" lxvi). And the "foul rout" (2.3.189) in Cyprus is resolved through Othello's ruling to discharge the one responsible: "he that is approved in this offense, / Though he had twinned with me, both at a birth, / Shall lose me" (190–92). For the upright Othello, the committing of an offence equals the losing of his love. In addition, Othello makes an "example" (230) of Cassio for his inappropriate behaviour so as to discourage misbehaviour in others—punishment as a means to deter further crimes. To prevent being betrayed again, in other words, Othello makes an example of anyone who betrays his love. Even his suicide at the end of the play can be viewed as self-punishment for the unjust murder of his wife. As Paul Cefalu observes in "The Burdens of Mind Reading in Shakespeare's *Othello*," in the final scene Othello "emerges as the divine leveler of his own prior acts of cruelty" (294).

With material that he garners from the two disputes that he instigates, shrewd Iago concocts his "monstrous" (1.3.382) plot to meticulously work Othello's sensitiveness to injustice into paranoid jealousy. It is obvious from the start of the play that Iago himself suffers from

[75] Othello is abused even before his appearance in the play. As Janet Adelman observes, "no other play subjects its ostensibly tragic hero to so long and intensive a debunking before he even sets foot onstage" ("Iago's Alter Ego" 125).

jealousy—disturbing thoughts that come with the anxiety of being abused. He tells Roderigo that he hates Othello because he believes he has been unfairly treated in Cassio's promotion. Iago, who has shown his competence to Othello "at Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on others' grounds, / Christened and heathen" (1.1.27–28), should have been selected as lieutenant. Instead, Othello has appointed the "counter-caster" (29) Cassio,

> That never set a squadron in the field,
> Nor the division of a battle knows
> More than a spinster—unless the bookish theoric,
> Wherein the tongued consuls can propose
> As masterly as he! Mere prattle without practice
> Is all his soldiership.[76] (20–25)

Later, when he is once more brooding over the cause of his hate for Othello, he suspects that Othello has cuckolded him: "It is thought abroad that twixt my sheets / He's done my office. I know not if't be true, / But I, for mere suspicion in that kind, / Will do as if for surety" (1.3.365–68). Iago's uncanny ability to conceal his contempt for Othello from Othello is indeed remarkable:

> Others there are
> Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,

[76] Iago also resents the courtly eloquence of Cassio. In "*In Utramque Partem*: Arguing Both Sides of the Question in *Othello*," Emily Donahoe suggests that "it seems possible that Cassio was promoted and Iago passed over in part because of the differences in their rhetorical abilities or at least because of their skill in relating to the Venetian aristocracy" (326).

Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves

And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,

Do well thrive by them and, when they have lined their coats,

Do themselves homage. These fellows have some soul

And such a one do I profess myself. (1.1.47–53)

This "traitor" is as "ensteeped" as the "guttered rocks and congregated sands" that "enclog the guiltless keel" (2.1.69–70).

Iago's revenge against Othello, therefore, is not based on "surety" of wrongdoing but "mere suspicion" of wrongdoing treated as "surety."[77] As Catherine Bates puts it, the "credibility" of Iago's "tissue of lies rests … on the force not of truth but of probability and plausibility" ("Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love" 191). And knowing that Othello will act upon wrongdoing, Iago schemes to lead Othello "by th' nose / As asses are" (379–80) to regard "suspicion" as "surety." To do so, in the temptation scene (3.3), Iago forms a secret alliance with his victim to pry into the affairs of others to expose misconduct.[78] And for Othello to let his guard down to enter into this private partnership of paranoid eavesdropping, Iago first admits to his own paranoia: "I confess, it is my nature's plague / To spy into abuses and of my jealousy / Shape faults that are not" (145–47). Thus identifying with his victim gives Othello the solace of knowing that he is not alone in being jealous.

[77] In contrast, the Duke refuses to accept Brabantio's charge against Othello based merely on "thin habits and poor likelihoods" (1.3.108).

[78] Cefalu argues that the motive for Iago's evil is "his consuming tracking of others" (271).

That Othello trusts Iago even after Iago reveals that he "imperfectly conceits" (148) from "his scattering and unsure observance" (150) points not only to Othello's trusting nature but also to his own closeted inclination to "spy into abuses." In fact, is this not why Venice hires Othello in the first place? The function of this mercenary for the city is to courageously go beyond the borders of Venice so as to uncover misconduct. Among the multiple senses that Patricia Parker identifies in the term "close dilations" (122)—and its alternate "close delations"—in Othello's request to Iago to reveal the "monster" (106) in his thoughts, one is particularly germane here. Aside from meaning "secret" or "private," the adjective *close* in this term refers to "something constricted or closed" ("Dilation" 61). Accordingly, "close dilations," Parker points out, "convey the sense of partial opening and partial glimpses of something closed or hid."[79] Thus, despite all the exhortations of Othello prompting Iago to "dilate" and "delate" the secret that is "too hideous to be shown" (3.3.107), Iago's "close" monstrous thought is not completely unknown to Othello. As Burke observes in *A Grammar of Motives*, "Iago, to arouse Othello, must talk a language that Othello knows as well as he" (414). From one perspective, Othello's repeated pleas to know Iago's hidden "monster" appear as though he is testing the waters before his own—with which he is familiar "by parcels"—surfaces.

Thanks to Iago's encouragement, Othello can now freely give voice to his suspicions: "Haply, for I am black / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have, or for I am declined / Into the vale of years" (3.3.261–64). Othello agonizes over these doubts after

[79] Earlier in the play, Othello tells the Duke that in the process of wooing Desdemona, he was implored to "dilate" his "pilgrimage" to her because "by parcels she had something heard" (1.3.153–54).

Iago leaves. More importantly, these doubts are already stated by Othello earlier in the play prior to the machinations of Iago. In Venice, before he delivers his "unvarnished tale" (1.3.90) to the Duke, Othello explains,

> Rude am I in my speech,
> And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace
> For, since these arms of mine had seven years' pith
> Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
> Their dearest action in the tented field,
> And little of this great world can I speak
> More than pertains to feats of broils and battle;
> And, therefore, little shall I grace my cause
> In speaking for myself. (81–89)

Here, Othello admits that, being accustomed to "feats of broils and battle," he lacks the charm and grace of a city gentleman. And a little later when Desdemona asks for permission to accompany her husband to Cyprus, Othello assures the Duke that it is not "to please the palate of my appetite, / Nor to comply with heat the young affects / In my defunct and proper satisfaction" (259–61). Desdemona's presence will not distract him from his military duties because he no longer possesses "young affects."

In both cases, Othello seems to suggest that the love between him and Desdemona exists in spite of his shortcomings.[80] It is therefore important to remember that the doubts that Othello entertains after Iago awakens "the green-eyed monster" (3.3.164) in him are not invented by Iago. Iago cleverly nurtures the "ensteeped" jealousy. As Burke writes in his essay on *Othello*, Iago embodies "steely suspicion" (187); nevertheless, "Othello's suspicions … arise from within, in the sense that they are integral to the motive he stands for" (166). Similarly, Kernan observes that Iago exploits "latent 'Iagolike' feelings and thoughts in Othello" ("Introduction" lxxi). And Iago knows well that there is no remedy once these paranoid doubts are let loose in the mind: "Not poppy, nor mandragora, / Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world / Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep / Which thou owed'st yesterday" (3.3.327–30).

Furthermore, Othello's words immediately after he voices his doubts are: "She's gone, I am abused, and my relief / Must be to loathe her" (265–66). Once more, abuse signifies the cancelation of love. Desdemona, like Cassio before her, loses Othello's love. And in the final scene, as Othello approaches Desdemona's bed to murder her, he is less concerned about putting an end to Desdemona's life than he is concerned about putting an end to her crime: "Yet I'll not shed her blood, / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow / And smooth as monumental

[80] Tom McAlindon observes in "What Is a Shakespearean Tragedy?" that "the sheer speed with which Othello's love and nobility are turned to hatred and baseness is sometimes taken as incontrovertible proof that both (if genuine at all) were exceptionally fragile" (8).

alabaster; / Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men" (5.2.3–6). This is punishment as a means to prevent the recurrence of the crime.[81]

In sum, in the reversal of values that Iago orchestrates, it is paranoid doubt that is encouraged, and the trust that Desdemona embodies is disgracefully contrived as certainty of adultery. Iago crafts this reversal in irony: "That cuckold lives in bliss / Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger; / But, oh, what damned minutes tells he o'er / Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet soundly loves" (3.3.165–68). Thus, in temptation, the target of the *meiosis* is the prevailing system of valuation that stands in the way of the unconventional system of valuation that the *paradiastole* ventures to advance.

Conclusion

In my reading of these four tragedies, I have tried to show that temptation does not take place in a vacuum. There is a "darker purpose" that is already "ensteeped" in the victim of temptation—a suppressed wish that is shared by the tempter and his victim. For the victim, his "darker purpose" is "close"; but the tempter openly and secretly pursues his. It is open in the sense that he is conscious of his wish. It is secret because his society is intolerant of it. The tempter, in other words, is inherently vindictive. And the temptation leads inevitably to chaos.

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[81] In *Shakespeare's Freedom*, Greenblatt claims that in Othello's murder of Desdemona, there is "a perverse, perverted fantasy of undoing the hideous stain that he believes she has brought upon herself and turning her again into the smooth, unchanging paragon of beauty that he desires" (32). Greenblatt's statement views this act of punishment as a means to rectify Desdemona's alleged crime.

After espying his wish in his victim, the tempter "dilates" a relatable "story"—which is and is not the "story" of his "single self"—to bring the victim's wish before his eyes. Like a "mirror," the tale of this confession to his own dark wish "echoes" that of the other. At the same time that the "close contriver" adds "worth" and "value" to the wish, he spitefully "chastises" the customary interpretation that demands its suppression. Such "close dilations," therefore, do more than "whet" the "distilled" wish. Once in league with his tempter, the victim becomes violently "whetted" against the one who does not approve of his "black and deep desires."

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