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SEEING WITH OTHERS' EYES:
PATTERNS OF IMPOSITION AND FREEDOM
IN SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES

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Abstract

Seeing With Others' Eyes: Patterns Of Imposition And Freedom
In Shakespeare's Comedies

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In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Claudio asks the distraught Leonato, "Are our eyes our own?" (4.1.71). Claudio's question, a demand for confirmation of truth as Claudio, under the influence of Don John has come to view truth, serves as a touchstone for this study of four Shakespearean comedies--*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest*—and *Othello*.

My project is rooted in an analysis of two umbrella-like structures found in the plays, one of which I call *comic imposition* and the other, *tragic imposition*. In the context of comic imposition, I explore Shakespeare's representation of misdirected love, moments of grace and forgiveness, and the inadvertent intertwining of eyes and perception which occurs as characters choose to love freely. In the context of tragic imposition, I consider the dramatist's representation of the fragility of human perception--its easily corrupted nature--and the degeneration of will which seemingly accompanies corrupted perception. In addition, I consider various *modes* through which individual acts of imposition take shape, as well as instances of *resistance*, a dynamic privileged especially in the comedies. Concerns central to my project include the comic

conventions of disguise and magic, the vice of slander, the elusive forces of grace and love, and finally, the elemental magic of an island cosmos that "cares" (*The Tempest* 1.1.16).

In the only tragedy to be included here, Iago's command to Othello, "Wear your eyes thus" (*Othello* 3.3.201), sets the stage for Shakespeare's representation of corrupted vision and the limitation of resistance. In contrast, the comedies privilege another dynamic: Egeus' courtly imposition in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is countered by Theseus' forest resistance, while the potentially-tragic modes emblematic of *Twelfth Night* are balanced by "A natural perspective, that is, and is not" (*Twelfth Night* 5.1.215). Vincentio's admonition to Mariana, "Against all sense you do importune her" (*Measure for Measure* 5.1.431), transforms the Duke's fear-bound journey underground in *Measure for Measure* into one of love and resistance, while *The Tempest*, with its representation of an island's power to subvert tragic imposition and its intimations of a Cosmic Consciousness transcending human perception, closes this study.

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Finally, I would like to thank Prospero, who first showed a child “flowers in the crannied wall,” swans on the Slaney, and sunlight chasing shadows on the hillsides of that island, so close to Shakespeare’s own, upon which I am convinced *The Tempest* must be set. I likewise thank Ariel, who cared for her there, and Vincentio, who these past years lifted a burden from my shoulders and carried it for me. Without all of your help, love, and support, I never could have finished.

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INTRODUCTION

"Are our eyes our own?": Tragic and Comic Imposition and Character Resistance in Shakespeare's Comedies and *Othello*

> Therefore, good Brutus, be prepar'd to hear
> And since you know you cannot see yourself
> So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
> Will modestly discover to yourself
> That of yourself which you yet know not of.
>
> (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.66-70)

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Claudio asks the distraught Leonato, "Are our eyes our own?" (4.1.71).[1] Claudio's question, a demand for confirmation of truth as Claudio, under the influence of Don John has come to view truth, serves as a touchstone for this study of four Shakespearean comedies--*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest*—and *Othello*.

[1] William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton, 1974). All citations of *Much Ado About Nothing* are to *The Riverside.*

My project is rooted in an analysis of two umbrella-like structures found in the plays, one of which I call *comic imposition* and the other, *tragic imposition*. In the context of comedy, I explore Shakespeare's representation of misdirected love, antidotal flowers, and the inadvertent intertwining of eyes and perception which occurs as characters in these plays choose to love freely. In the context of tragedy, I consider the dramatist's representation of the fragility of human perception--its easily corrupted nature--and the degeneration of will which seemingly accompanies corrupted perception in the plays. In addition, I consider the various *modes* through which individual acts of imposition take shape, as well as instances of *resistance* to these acts, a dynamic privileged especially in the comedies. Concerns central to my project include the comic conventions of disguise and magic, the vice of slander, the elusive forces of grace and love, and finally, the elemental magic of an island cosmos that, notwithstanding the boatswain's words, "cares" (*The Tempest*1.1.16).[2]

In the only tragedy to be included here, Iago's command to Othello, "Wear your eyes thus" (*Othello* 3.3.201),[3] sets the stage for Shakespeare's representation of corrupted vision and the limitation of resistance. In contrast, the comedies privilege vision of another sort: Egeus' courtly imposition in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is countered by Theseus' forest resistance, while the potentially-tragic modes emblematic of *Twelfth Night* are balanced by "A natural perspective, that is, and is not" (*Twelfth Night* 5.1.215).[4]

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[2] All citations of *The Tempest* follow the Arden edition, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (Surrey, UK: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1999).

[3] All citations of *Othello* followed the Arden edition, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1997).

[4] All citations of *Twelfth Night* follow the Arden edition, eds. J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik (London: Methuen & Co., 1975).

Vincentio's admonition to Mariana, "Against all sense you do importune her" (5.1.431),[5] transforms the Duke's fear-bound journey underground in *Measure for Measure* into one of love and resistance, while *The Tempest*, with its representation of an island's power to subvert tragic imposition and its intimations of a Cosmic Consciousness transcending human perception, closes this study.

My dissertation focuses upon the dramatic representation in these plays of multiple variations on one theme--the malleability of individual human perception in the face of external influence. Indeed, efforts to alter character perception and resistance to such efforts serve as catalysts to action in the plays, propelling characters upon courses which change not only their own trajectories, but also those of the wider dramatic community as well. As such, these five plays foreground the extent to which externally-initiated alterations in character perception play crucial roles in determining generic outcome in main plots and in subplots.

While to a definitive degree in *Othello* and more subtly in the comedies included in this study, character vulnerability takes on a tragic cast, the comedies[6] privilege another dynamic as well. Certain of Shakespeare's comic characters, victims of external agents' attempts to influence their perception to tragic ends, successfully resist[7] the

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[5] All citations of *Measure for Measure* follow the Arden edition, ed. J. W. Lever (London: Methuen & Co., 1965). .

[6] In that Emilia ultimately triumphs over Iago's machinations, the closing moments of *Othello* might be said to privilege resistance to tragic imposition as well. However, Emilia's resistance is too late, as is Othello's own, to effect *generic* outcome.

[7] I do not term Emilia's resistance in *Othello* as *successful*, although a case for such a judgment might be made. Emilia resists Iago successfully in that she preserves her integrity and allows Othello's story to be told with sympathy after his death. However, Emilia's resistance cannot alter generic outcome in *Othello*: she cannot preserve Desdemona's, Othello's, or even her own life in Act 5. I therefore use the term r*esistance* in this study to designate a complex cluster of character responses. When characters such as Brutus, Claudio, Malvolio, Othello (and Emilia initially), fail to resist efforts aimed at distorting their perception, their failure catalyzes a tragic (or potentially tragic) outcome, whether in the main plot (*Othello*) or in various subplots in the comedies. In contrast, when characters resist potentially tragic

external forces seeking to alter their view of self, world, or love object choice. Hence, my dissertation focuses not only upon Shakespeare's representation of character vulnerability to the influence of external agents--positive and negative, tragic and comic--but also upon the dramatist's representation of determined and ultimately triumphant resistance to potentially tragic pressures.

Claudio's question, "Are our eyes our own?" (4.1.71) directed to Leonato and intended to add weight to the youth's accusations against Hero, ostensibly provides an answer to Leonato's own dazed inquiry: "Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?" (4.1.66). While Claudio's intent is to buttress his charge of Hero as a "common stale" (4.1.65), the irony generated by way of Shakespeare's interlacement of metaphoric language and plot in *Much Ado About Nothing* is easily discerned. Claudio's eyes are no longer his own, and what he thinks he knows about Hero he does not know:

> Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio, but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his oaths, which first possess'd them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my villainy, which did confirm any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enrag'd; swore he would meet her as he was appointed next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he

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imposition, as Beatrice does on behalf of Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, another generic outcome becomes possible. It should also be noted that the comedies frequently portray characters *resisting imposition of a comic nature,* as, for example, when Viola resists Olivia's attentions. The representation of resistance in comedy is, once again, a complex one, and so must be viewed (as is the case with tragic imposition) from a multi-faceted perspective. For example, in *The Tempest*, although Alonso apparently accepts Prospero's invitation to communal harmony, Sebastian and Antonio seemingly *resist* the invitation to forgiveness and integration. I would argue, however, that although Sebastian and Antonio's recalcitrance may be viewed as "resistance" on one level, in actuality it is rooted in a desire to impose the self upon the world in the tragic sense of usurpation. Similarly, in *Twelfth Night*, Olivia resists the seemingly love-directed and comic impositions of Orsino; once again, however, I argue that Orsino's attentions to Olivia, rather than being comic in nature, are actually tragic or potentially tragic manifestations of imposition.

> saw o'ernight, and send her home again without a husband. (*Much Ado About Nothing* 3.3.154-163)

Laboring under the delusion of the false vision placed upon him in Leonato's orchard by Don John--"If you dare not trust that you see, confess not that you know" (3.2.119-120)—Claudio seeks to impose a similarly distorted vision upon the assembled congregation. Thus the true tragedy of *Much Ado About Nothing* is that rather than resisting a vision imposed upon him from the outside--the work of villains--Claudio internalizes the vision and makes it his own.

Derived from the Latin *impōnĕre*, "The action of putting, placing or laying on" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), the term *imposition* as used in this study refers to a constellation of distinct but related concepts, some more conducive to and prevalent in the genre of comedy, and others ultimately more conducive to and pervasive in the genre of tragedy. When discussing *comic imposition*, I intend the term to designate freely-granted love or the results and effects of such love and other graced moments, especially as these qualities prove transformative in Shakespeare's representation of plot and/or character.[8] When discussing the pervasive mode of Shakespeare's *Othello* or the potentially tragic aspects of the comedies upon which I have chosen to write, I invest the term with a another meaning. On these occasions, I use the term imposition to denote a wide range[9] of conscious and deliberate efforts on the part of a particular character to

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[8] In my final chapter on *The Tempest*, *imposition* in the comic sense not only refers to the development of love (as it may in the earlier chapters), but also to the powerful forces of elemental magic, the cosmic presence, the grace which pervades Prospero's isle and becomes an imposing agent in its own right. (In the tragic sense, the term refers in *The Tempest* to the usual operations of usurpation, deposition, and character de-stabilization and co-opting of will as it does in previous chapters on earlier plays.)

[9] I say "wide range," because certain of these maneuvers as Shakespeare portrays them (including those of *Othello's* Iago, *Much Ado About Nothing's* Don John, and *Measure for Measure's* Angelo) are covert and sophisticated. At the same time, direct, obvious forms of what I shall call tragic imposition are also to

force his or her will upon other characters. I argue that attempts of this nature to co-opt and usurp the will, power, authority, and/or desire of others and the dramatic interludes which mark such attempts are generically-definitive moments in these plays.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest*, potentially tragic imposition follows a specific, almost ritualized prelude, and it is upon this patterned prelude to successful usurpation of character that I focus my concern in the matter of tragic imposition. In these plays, attempts to co-opt or destroy the will of a particular character are preceded by and founded upon efforts to corrupt the other's perception. Such efforts may be signaled in the plays by stylized interludes directed to imposing false visions. This dynamic, at once more subtle and more complex than the plot developments which result from it, becomes a variation on a theme in one form or another in each of these plays.[10]

I use the term imposition in its tragic sense, then, to designate Shakespeare's representation of a dynamic that is more profound than mere co-opting of the will. From this perspective, the dramatic developments which most interest me are those preceding the ultimate co-opting of a character's will, the precursors to successful usurpation of perception which results in compliance of will. Because compliance with the imposing agent's will and abdication of individual freedom and subjectivity is often the end result of Shakespeare's representation, the generic implications are obvious.[11]

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be found in these plays, including Antonio's treason in Milan and Prospero's problematic mastery of Caliban, Ariel, and the island.

[10] In *The Tempest*, for example, Antonio corrupts Sebastian's perception as he moves him to desire a crown which can only be gained by fratricide and regicide. In *Twelfth Night*, Maria corrupts Malvolio's perception, and Toby corrupts Andrew's. In Chapter Four on *Measure for Measure*, I argue that Angelo attempts to corrupt the perceptions of almost every character in the play, and does a singular job of corrupting even his own perception.

[11] It is obvious that the protagonist's compliance with an external imposing agent's will and complete abdication of freedom in a play such as *Othello* must have tragic repercussions. However, any form of

Early in *Julius Caesar*, for example, armed with a particular view of human nature—"For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?" (1.2.322)[12]--Cassius draws Brutus into a discussion of the properties of the human eye. Probing Brutus with regard to his views regarding the inability of humans to see their own eyes except in so far as these eyes are reflected in external objects, he elicits the confirmation he seeks from Brutus: "No Cassius, for the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things" (1.2.52-53). Cassius then proceeds to offer himself as the external "reflection," supposedly so necessary for Brutus to fully see himself:

> 'Tis just,
> And it is very much lamented, Brutus,
> That you have no such mirrors as will turn
> Your hidden worthiness into you eye,
> That you might see your shadow. I have heard
> Where many of the best respect in Rome
> (Except immortal Caesar), speaking of Brutus
> And groaning under this age's yoke,
> Have wish'd that noble Brutus had his eyes.
>
> (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.54-62)

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imposition directed solely to the end of usurping perception and replacing it with external perception is treated in this study as tragic or potentially tragic. This principle holds in this study even if on a superficial level such imposition may at first glance appear to be directed to comic ends. For example, three situations often seen as more comic than tragic in nature--Orsino's attempts in *Twelfth Night* to impose himself as love object upon Olivia with total lack of concern for her resistance, Maria's successful efforts to impose distorted consciousness upon Malvolio in the same play, and Helena's attempts to impose herself as love object upon Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in total disregard of *his* desires—are treated in this study as instances of tragic (or potentially tragic) imposition rather than as instances of comic imposition.

[12] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton, 1974). All citations of *Julius Caesar* are to *The Riverside.*

Incorporating flattery into his verbal gymnastics, Cassius begins the process of displacing Brutus' vision and replacing it with his own, a displacement which can only have tragic consequences.

Although at first glance it may not appear to be evident, the imposition of false vision, the corruption of perception, is in fact represented in these plays as a complex, multi-layered process rather than as a simple or easily-accomplished one. Cassius, for example, must exert a certain amount of effort before he can completely usurp Brutus's perception. Indeed, early on, Shakespeare portrays Brutus as possessing clarity of perception and a sense of himself as acting subject:

> Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,
> That you would have me seek into myself
> For that which is not in me? (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.63-65)

Yet Brutus falls just the same, as history and Shakespeare's Cassius—a master imposer in his own right--know he will. Brutus's power to resist externally-initiated corruption cannot withstand Cassius's skillful manipulation.[13]

Characters caught in quandaries involving distortion of perception similar to the one in which Brutus finds himself caught in *Julius Caesar* are to be found in *Othello* and in the potentially-tragic dimensions of the Shakespearean comedies included in this study as well. These comedies--A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest*—all foreground certain characters' attempts to control the will of other characters by corrupting or distorting perception. While we may never

[13] This is as opposed to Shakespeare's representation in the comedies, wherein certain characters, although not all, can and do resist attempts to corrupt their perception. Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Vincentio and Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, and Celia in *As You Like It* all serve as examples of characters who resist various forms of social pressure or slander and remain loyal to cousins or others.

understand why Shakespeare chose to represent an abstract dynamic of this nature--the replacement of one perception by and with that of another—so carefully and in such detail, at least part of the answer may be found in yet another passage from *Julius Caesar*:

> Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet I see
> Thy honorable mettle may be wrought
> From that it is dispos'd; therefore it is meet
> That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
> For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd? (1.2.308-322)

The tragic flaw as a constitutive element of drama manifests itself here. Shakespeare's villains are rarely totally responsible for the outcome of Shakespeare's plays. Cassius can seduce, manipulate, or entreat as much as he wants, but as he himself suggests, Brutus' "honorable mettle" must have within it a quality of being willing to be "wrought / From that it is dispos'd," before Cassius can succeed. From such complex, nuanced perspectives Shakespeare draws his portraits and this study its argument. I argue that Shakespeare represents the question of freedom of action and its relationship to internal perception in these plays; it is this representation that I explore in my dissertation.

Although there is danger in using a term as an umbrella, imposition as I use the term here is just such an umbrella. The term as I intend it cannot be fully contained by any other (single) related concept, including manipulation, domination, entreaty, flattery, or bribery. Imposition may manifest in any or all of these modes, but its complexity cannot be fully captured by any one alone. For example, attempts to dominate, compel,

or threaten (one sense of imposition) suggest an open use of force that attempts to manipulate or seduce do not necessarily imply.

The multi-valent nature of this term as I use it may be best illustrated by comparing *Much Ado About Nothin*g to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In *Much Ado About Nothin*g, Don John and Borrachio must be devious in their efforts to impose distorted vision upon Claudio if they are to be successful. The plan is to proceed, "Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me" (2.2.9-10). In contrast, *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Theseus is quite open in his attempts to impose Egeus' will upon Hermia:

> Upon that day, either prepare to die
> For disobedience to your father's will,
> Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
> Or on Diana's altar to protest,
> For aye, austerity and single life. (1.1.86-90)[14]

There is nothing subtle or devious in this. Theseus does not attempt to seduce or confuse Hermia. Rather, in the way of power, Theseus seeks to elicit obedience from Hermia by leveling terror.

Another distinction with regard to the comprehensiveness with which I invest the term *imposition* might be drawn here as well. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, a play in which imposition is effected primarily through covert manipulation, I argue that Don John and Borrachio's efforts extend well beyond what we might term *manipulation*. Claudio abdicates his perception to the villains, allowing them to become his eyes, his

[14] All citations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are to the Arden, ed. Harold F. Brooks (London: Methuen, 1979).

ears, and his mind. Claudio accepts their desire to co-opt his will by abdicating his own and acting out Don John's intentions. The imposition takes on a life of its own as Claudio re-enacts it for the assembled congregation. Indeed, Shakespeare portrays Claudio in just this way--as internalizing the villainous vision imposed upon him and assuming it as his own. Hence, the irony in Claudio's words and my opening citation, "Are our eyes our own?" [15]

Iago and Don John employ sophisticated and covert forms of manipulation to impose their will, respectively, upon Othello and Claudio, but other less devious modes of imposition are to be found in the comedies which form the nucleus of this study. These modes include threats and attempts to compel (Egeus, Theseus, Orsino, Angelo, Prospero); entreaties so excessive and unwelcome they are in effect attempts to compel (Angelo, Orsino and Helena, for example); attempts to bribe (Helena, Titania, Olivia); attempts to distort vision in potentially less tragic form than the efforts mounted by Iago and Don John (Oberon, Viola, Vincentio, and Prospero, among others).

A particularly destructive form of social imposition, slander--the attempt to impose false vision of character upon truth of character—lies latent below the action initiated by Iago, Don John, Cassius, and Angelo. In that slander must be internalized by those to whom it is directed to have any effect (as it is by Claudio, Othello, and Brutus as well), this study treats slander as the quintessential form of tragic imposition.[16]

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[15] As with Brutus, it should be noted that for all of this to occur, the character Claudio as Shakespeare draws him on some level consents to the usurpation of consciousness which occurs.

[16] Due to the fact that *Measure for Measure's* Vincentio resists and ultimately prevails against Angelo's slander (while Othello fails to resist Iago's), slander as a mode of imposition is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four on *Measure for Measure* than in Chapter Three on *Othello*.

By tragic imposition, then, I designate a more comprehensive dynamic than any one attempt to influence, coerce, mandate, or manipulate. An act of imposition may be any or all of these things, but it is additionally a character's attempts--whether successful or not--to force his or her consciousness upon the psyche of another with the intention that the other adopt the imposer's perceptions, see with the imposer's eyes, speak with the imposer's voice, and comply with the imposer's will. Such a desire to impose perception and consciousness is predicated upon the assumption that the other's mind is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate**.** Imposition which we might term oppressive or tragic in nature takes this view to its ultimate extension; a pervasive subtext in each of these plays suggests that if desire to impose is predicated upon willingness to go to any lengths to do so, not only is the other's physical self at risk, but internal subjectivity is at risk as well.[17]

For the notion of imposition as usurpation of identity, I am indebted to Stephen Greenblatt. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning (1980)*, Greenblatt places a negative cast upon sociologist David Lerner's concept of "empathy" (227)—"the capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation" (Greenblatt 224-225).[18] Greenblatt posits a connection between the "empathy" which Lerner finds so integral to Western imagination and personality and Shakespeare's Iago. This connecting link, which Greenblatt discerns in Renaissance accounts of the New World, is the mode he terms "improvisation" (227). According to Greenblattt, Peter Martyr's accounts of New World explorations contain:

> the power to evoke a crucial mode of Renaissance behavior that links Lerner's "empathy" and Shakespeare's Iago: I shall call that mode

[17] As Othello learns too late.

[18] See Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: Free Press, 1958; rev. ed. 1964).

> improvisation, by which I mean the ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario. (227)

In Greenblatt's view, one result of this improvisation strategy as employed by Europeans may be seen in the Old World's ability to transform New World natives' myths, rituals and structures into fictions benefiting European economic and political interests. Thus, Greenblatt uses the term "improvisation" in the context of operations of "absorption" and "displacement," rather than in the more sympathetic sense in which Lerner employs the term "empathy" as indicative of cultural operations.

While Greenblatt views "improvisation" for the most part as an operation embedded in social and cultural power, I focus rather upon the individual psychological processes[19] which contextualize Shakespeare's characters' acts of perceptual coercion and the resulting abdication of perception, or ensuing character struggle to resist and retain internal vision. As such, rather than considering the plays' social, cultural, or political implications, this study focuses upon individual character choices. Indeed, the willingness of certain of Shakespeare's characters to allow other characters to erase their subjectivity as they accept the perception of another as their own (Malvolio and Andrew, for example), is contrasted with attempts on the part of other characters (Hermia, Olivia,

[19] My reasoning for taking this approach, apart from Harold Bloom's notion of "French Shakespeare" and the textual examples I cite in this introduction and elsewhere in the chapters, may best be explained by citing C. G. Jung, who once said: "It is, unfortunately, only too clear that if the individual is not truly regenerated in spirit, society cannot be either, for society is the sum total of individuals in need of redemption." C. G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1957).

and Isabella, for example) to resist[20] such erasure of internal perception and usurpation of will.

To illustrate the difference between a more theoretical approach (New Historicist or Feminist, for example) and my own, I cite *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Helena. While Helena is not an instrument of state[21] power—far from it--she in fact betrays Hermia to the power of state and culture by informing Demetrius of Hermia's flight. At the same time, through her relationship to Demetrius, Helena serves to erase her own consciousness and subjectivity. In contrast, Demetrius, although he is the beneficiary of patriarchal power where Hermia is concerned, attempts to avoid Helena's pursuit. I argue, then, that Shakespeare's consideration of the dynamic of individual perception retention is a nuanced one, and one that may be effectively considered as a subtext in these plays in its own right, apart from the consideration of political or cultural systems or theoretical frameworks.

A Midsummer Night's Dream provides another example of the distinction between contemporary critical emphases, including Greenblatt's, and my own. Although Egeus attempts to use the state's power to compel his daughter to marry the

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[20] Sometimes, especially with regard to love, both dynamics may be in play. For example, Olivia attempts to resist Orsino's repeated efforts to erase her subjectivity and destroy her power to choose, most notably by her veil and refusal to admit Orsino. At the same time, Olivia also attempts to impose herself as a love object upon the chagrinned Viola-Cesario (despite the page's resistance), and later upon the confused Sebastian. Malvolio serves as another case in point. While Maria and the others impose distorted perception upon Malvolio, the steward attempts to impose himself as a love object upon his amazed mistress.

[21] I realize that there are those who would argue that the Helena who pursues Demetrius with little respect for his wishes and betrays Hermia with little regard for past friendship must be viewed as the quintessential example of the patriarchal state's power to impose itself upon its victims. However, if we consider the wide spectrum of Shakespeare's heroines, it is obvious that Helena might have as easily taken life in this canon as a woman possessing the power to retain her individual perception, subjectivity, and integrity of will. Celia does not betray Rosalind; Beatrice does not betray Hero. Although Helena betrays her childhood friend in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, given other of Shakespeare's heroines, she might as easily have been portrayed resisting the temptation to betray Hermia. Nor is Helena bound to view herself as Demetrius' "spaniel" (2.1.203). This is a vision of herself that she chooses, much to Demetrius' consternation: "I do not, nor I cannot love you" (2.1. 201).

man of his choice, it is the state's power which ultimately reprieves Hermia. In answer to those who view Egeus, like Helena, as no more than a representative of all-encompassing patriarchy, I argue that from such a perspective, Theseus, too, would have to represent the interests of patriarchy. He would not be free to reject Egeus' demands and make his own decision. In contrast to an approach of this nature, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* clearly represents Theseus as ultimately free to make a personal choice: Theseus chooses not to represent patriarchal values or the law of Athens, but rather to subvert both in favor of the lovers. Therefore, it seems to me that the exercise of individual freedom and judgment quite clearly takes precedence over the power of law, custom and culture in Shakespeare's representation in this instance.

In another play, and coming from another character, Claudio's question, "Are our eyes our own?" might signify an alternative (but less commonly represented) view of human perception and freedom, one found more often in Shakespeare's comedies and romances than in the tragedies. Shakespeare represents this mode of external imposition--one which permits the integrity of character perception and freedom of will to be retained--only rarely.[22] It takes dramatic shape on those occasions when one character freely merges or unites his or her perception with that of another in love or compassion.

Prospero's observation regarding Ferdinand and Miranda, "At the first sight, / They have changed eyes" (1.2.441-42), at once voyeuristic and gleeful, signifies comic imposition in this sense. While Prospero attempts to impose love upon Ferdinand and Miranda to fulfill his dynastic project, Miranda and Ferdinand in fact choose to love each other, as Prospero himself notes. In addition to this merging of eyes and wills in *The*

[22] I argue that in mergers based upon tragic imposition--domination, manipulation, compulsion—for example, Hero's union with Claudio or Mariana's with Angelo—this freedom is not fully realized in the context of the play as written.

Tempest, a somewhat similar situation occurs in *Measure for Measure* as Isabella tells Vincentio: "Most bounteous sir: / Look, it please you, on this man condemn'd" (5.1.441). On these occasions it seems to me that Shakespeare suggests the possibility of a character's freedom to merge his or her perception and will with those of another without tragic results. I argue, therefore, that on rare occasions such as these moments in *The Tempest* and in *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare represents the convergence of eyes and perceptions resulting from the power of love or grace as creating a force conducive to the exercise of human freedom and comic resolution.

It seems to me that mergers conducive to comedy occur on the rare occasions when the power of elusive and mysterious forces such as love and grace are in play. In the comic sense, then, imposition is reflective of collaborative activity and freely chosen, consciously-made decisions to love, to act in concert with others, or to be open to allowing what might be termed conversion or *metanoia* to occur.[23] In *The Tempest*, Prospero's island imposes its own form of resistance to tragic imposition; in Shakespeare's closing romance, the play's setting becomes the imposing force in a way not previously portrayed in the canon.[24]

My study also explores character *resistance t*o various forms of imposition. In general in the tragedies, resistance is weak, ineffective, or non-existent; in *Othello*, imposition becomes destructive, and resistance is never a viable force. The comedies, in contrast, are imbued with imposition of a different type, the type leading to love and

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[23] Alonso in *The Tempest*, for example, permits himself to be converted from imposing father and usurping brother.

[24] Yet allusions to this force which will find its ultimate completion in *The Tempest* are present in earlier plays, as for example, in the music, mystery, and magic that characterizes Belmont in *The Merchant of Venice*; upon the occasion of Desdemona's safe arrival in Cyprus; and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where early and somewhat ambiguous intimations of the cosmic presence are to be discerned in the Fairy World of Oberon and Titania.

marriage, but when acts of imposition become tragic or potentially tragic in the comedies, effective forms of resistance are more readily apparent, more potent counters, and more easily accessed as antidotes. In the comedies, resistance may take the form of magical intervention, the protective cloak of disguise, or the power of character action, bumbling and otherwise.[25] Whatever form resistance takes in the comedies, it is effective.

Much Ado About Nothing serves as a case in point with regard to the power of positive resistance as well as with regard to the power of destructive imposition. While Leonato does not resist Claudio's slander—"Death is the fairest cover for her shame" (4.1.116)—Hero has other allies who resist on her behalf. These allies include the friar, who resists social slander by affirming Hero's innocence from the beginning: "There is some strange misprision in the princes" (4.1.185); Beatrice, who, like the friar, affirms Hero in the face of social pressure—"O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!" (4.1.146); and Benedick, who similarly questions the accusations in another act of resistance to the social imposition leveled at reputation that we call slander: "And if their wisdoms be misled in this, / The practice of it lives in John the Bastard" (4.1.187-188). As she refuses to accept Claudio's slander--"Yea as sure as I have a thought or a soul" (4.1.330)—Beatrice plays a crucial role in Shakespeare's representation of resistance. Thus, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the Friar, Beatrice, and Benedick all resist the destructive attempt to distort their perception that Leonato, Claudio, and Pedro fail to

[25] For example, while for Othello and Desdemona, Emilia's resistance is too little, too late, resistance for Olivia comes in the form of a miraculously-rescued twin, and for Hermia in the form of a sudden change of mind in Theseus.

discern. Within the context of the community, then, Hero finds the support she needs to overcome tragic imposition in the mode of slander.[26]

Beatrice's demand that Benedick be enlisted to her cause—"Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that would right her!" (4.1.261-262); "Use it for my love some other way than swearing by it" (4.1.326-327)—while indicative of resistance to potentially tragic imposition, serves as an example of comic imposition in its own right. As opposed to characters in the tragedies, Benedick refrains from acting recklessly; at the same time, he accepts Beatrice's request by way of the comic imposition known as love. Resistance in the mode that Beatrice displays and that Benedick accepts for her sake permits resolution in Shakespeare's comedies to depend upon character work as much as upon *deus ex machina* bumbling, love potions or disguise. Therefore, until *The Tempest*– a play which imposes itself upon the other four by re-writing each—subtexts in the comedies suggest that the only safe reason to see with someone else's eyes is in the process of accepting freely-chosen, eyes-wide-open-love.[27]

In Chapter Five on *The Tempest*, I use the term resistance to nuance another meaning of the term imposition. Although Prospero plays a key role as imposer in this play, the ultimate impositional force in *The Tempest* is not a character in the traditional sense that Shakespeare has portrayed character prior to his career-closing romance. Rather, the imposing force above all in *The Tempest*--one which itself not only teaches

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[26] Despite all this character support for Hero from Beatrice and the others, the forces of comedy nevertheless must intervene in the form of the comic bumbling of Dogberry and Verges, both of whom are better at *resisting* than at *imposing*, better at *bumbling* than at fully *seeing*.

[27] Shakespeare portrays Viola as accepting Orsino in this way, despite the fact that she is quite aware of his faults. Other examples of this mode of courtship include Rosalind's acceptance of Orlando in *As You Like It* and Sebastian's acceptance of Olivia.

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resistance to tragic imposition but in effect actively resists it—is to be found in the elemental magic which pervades Prospero's island. In *The Tempest*, magical and semi-magical forces acting in conjunction with other non-rational forces such as love, compassion, and grace become imposing agents in their own right; as such, they become cosmic conduits of grace.

Imposing agents of this nature obviously transform characters' perceptions in different ways than do agents such as Don John or Cassius, the characters with whom I opened this introduction. Rather than possession and co-opting, imposition as "placing on" in this sense represents nurturance or even conferral of power; this conferral grants others the right to freedom or to grow into freely-chosen love. It presumes that the merging of desire and perception does not necessarily—despite the heroines' silences as the plays close--erase subjectivity.

In conclusion, my dissertation explores the interrelated dynamics of tragic and comic imposition and resistance to both as traced through five plays. My project also foregrounds Shakespeare's use of the human eye as a metaphor for tragic usurpation and/or for perceptions which merge in love. My discussion focuses on these and related themes and patterns woven throughout *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest*. Through these plays, I trace attempts on the part of certain character to make other characters see with their eyes as a prelude to acting out their wills; conversely, I trace the sudden, elusive dimension of character interaction that Shakespeare portrays when loving unions occur without manipulative machinations. Finally, in this dissertation, all roads lead to *The Tempest*, where

Prospero's island becomes the essence and fulfillment of the comedy which has come before.

CHAPTER ONE

"One sees more devils than vast hell can hold" : Courtly Imposition and Forest Resistance In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

How free is love? How free one's choice of love object? What role do external influences play in the formation of love? What role do such influences play in the alteration of internal perception of love object choice? To what degree can love be imposed--coerced or entreated—from the outside? Can the object of one's desire be attained without infringing upon the subjectivity of another? At what point does the process of courtship itself become a cycle of compulsion and/or entreaty?

Complex, intricate questions, these and other issues are played out as subtexts within the multi-faceted levels of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* mythic, fairy and mortal realms. The comedy juxtaposes life-denying efforts to manipulate love in the world of Athens with parodic inversions taking place in the Fairy Land of Titania and Oberon. Eventually, the variegated strands of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* plot and subplots coalesce in a forest realm incorporating communal chaos and personal redemption. In this Green World, authentic lovers Hermia and

Lysander achieve a balance of self-identity and love relationship, while a second pair of lovers--the foils Helena and Demetrius--are to be united in marriage as well, but not quite so fortunately.[1] As the play closes, the Duke of Athens unburdens himself from delusions imposed upon him in Act 1 by a madman who "sees more devils than vast hell can hold" (5.1.9).[2]

Lysander's lines to Demetrius--"Thou canst compel no more than she entreat; / Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers" (3.2.249-50), lines spoken as Lysander remains yet deluded by Puck's mischief and Oberon's command—suggest the two poles of potentially tragic love imposition, compulsion and entreaty, which recur again and again throughout *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Characters in the play seeking to impose love upon other characters for the most part utilize one of these two modes. The mode of compulsion, inverted and parodied in Oberon's imposition of deluded sight upon Titania, figures prominently in scenes portraying Egeus' and Theseus' attempts to determine Hermia's choice of beloved. In contrast, the mode of entreaty, turned topsy-turvy in Titania's efforts to seduce Bottom, dominates Helena's attempts to regain Demetrius' love.[3] I argue that both modes, compulsion and entreaty, are examples of tragic or potentially-

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[1] There are other reasons advanced for this marriage, of course. For example, in "Transposing Helena to Form and Dignity," Lisa J. Moore makes this observation regarding her 1994 role as Helena at the Playhouse Theatre in Seattle under director Mark Jenkins: "During the exchange between Theseus, Egeus, and Demetrius, I finally surrendered my need for Demetrius and resigned myself to his loss. Although that resignation lasted only a moment, it was crucial to Helena's regaining her personhood. When Demetrius did extend his hand to me and declare his love, I could receive it as an equal and as a mature and deserving woman" (Kehler 469). In contrast, I believe that this marriage is a function of generic constraints rather than anything else, given that Helena and Demetrius both separately and as a couple display qualities more often associated in Shakespeare with potentially tragic outcomes than with comic.

[2] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* ed. Harold F. Brooks (UK: Methuen, 1979). All citations are to the Arden.

[3] While there are those who might argue that Demetrius on occasion entreats Hermia for her love, the position taken here is that most often Demetrius presses his suit by way of the patriarchal force of Egeus' favor rather than by his own entreaties, given that his entreaties are emphatically rejected by Hermia.

tragic modes of imposition. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is resolved when Theseus resists the former mode; Helena resists continuing to indulge in the latter (3.2.306-317); and Demetrius suddenly and inexplicably--almost artificially--drops both (5.1.159-175). The crucial resistance, the crucial epiphany, however, is that of Theseus, the Duke of Athens, who suddenly recognizes a "madman" (5.1.10) in the forest where before he had seen a respected elder of the city. In this Green World, after throwing off Egeus' continued efforts to distort his vision, Theseus proceeds to act upon his own internal perception and so concretizes *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* comic closure.

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A Midsummer Night's Dream opens to attempts on the part of certain characters to see that other characters comply with their will in the way of love object choice. Hermia's father, Egeus,[4] and his favorite, Demetrius, attempt to compel Hermia to accept a love she does not choose, while the Duke of Athens initially adds the power of the state to the effort. Meanwhile, in the forests of Fairy Land--for reasons of a somewhat ambiguous nature and to somewhat ambiguous ends[5]--Oberon and Puck impose false visions of love upon Titania in an effort to compel the Fairy Queen to act against *her* will.

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[4] Due to *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* generic identity as a comedy, we know that oppressive and violent attempts to impose love will fail, and resistance to such efforts will be successful. Therefore, while Egeus' behavior sets the tone for *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* initiates the action, and is well within the range of normal behavior in Shakespeare's time, we must take into account its dramatic force. We know from the outset that Egeus will be defeated. Comedy by its very nature will see to it that Hermia will find and be united to a character acceptable to her as a love choice. Despite this generic inevitability, however, my study emphasizes the way that Shakespeare averts potentially tragic imposition through character work with Theseus.

[5] By this I mean there are as many ways of interpreting these--as other events in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*--as there are interpreters and/or critical persuasions. For example, in the influential *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, Jan Kott notes that "Oberon openly announces that as punishment Titania will sleep with a beast" (220). David Bevington's view of Titania's dalliance differs from Kott's, while Shirley

In addition to compulsion, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* likewise foregrounds entreaty as a mode utilized by characters to impose love choice upon other characters: Helena entreats Demetrius; Demetrius, on occasion, entreats Hermia; Titania entreats Bottom. In the grand finale of topsy-turvy forest madness, Demetrius and Lysander both plead with Helena for her favors, while Hermia, due to external machinations, is suddenly placed in the position of entreating Lysander for his seemingly lost love. Overshadowing all else in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* looms the specter of law as death which threatens Hermia's right to act as a freely-choosing subject, if not her physical life, until Theseus suddenly and seemingly inexplicably[6] exorcises this specter of compulsion.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Shakespeare represents characters as going beyond mere attempts to compel or entreat other characters to conform. Imposing agents in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demand more than mere compliance of action or behavior. Rather, efforts to cause characters to displace internal perception and replace this with an outside agency occur often in this play. These efforts foreground the relationship between plot and subplot by way of the eye imagery which pervades both. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* the eyes, the

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Nelson Garner, who is more concerned with the lost of the child and its effect upon the friendship of women in the play than with Titania and Bottom as a couple, views the matter in yet another light: "Though the scenes between Titania and Bottom are charming and hilarious, Titania is made ridiculous. Whereas her opening speech is remarkable for its lyric beauty and her defense of keeping the Indian boy has quiet and dignified emotional power, now she is reduced to admiring Bottom's truisms and his monstrous shape. . ." (52). See Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, Trans. by Boleslaw Taborski (New York: Doubleday, 1964); David Bevington, "'But we are spirits of another sort': The Dark Side of Love and Magic in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7 (1975): 80-92; Shirley Nelson Garner, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'Jack shall have Jill: / Nought shall go ill,'" *Women's Studies* 9 (1981): 47-63.

[6] In the final section of this chapter, from the perspective of imposition, I propose a reason for Theseus's sudden and inexplicable change of heart.

traditional means by which love was thought to enter the heart[7] and ostensibly the place where love change might be effected, become battle grounds, sought after and fought for by the play's imposing agents. Through the metaphor of the eyes as figures of perception, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* privileges interludes framing efforts to subvert internal perception of love object choice and replace it with the perception of the outside agent.[8]

Thus, while attempts to delude perception and warp sight are directed to the end of insuring compliance with the will of the imposing agent, ironically, these efforts assume a life of their own in the play's plot. In the process of attempting to force Hermia to comply with her father's will, for example, Egeus, Theseus and Demetrius also seek to impose Egeus' perception upon Hermia. In a parody of this dynamic, the King of Fairy Land actually imposes distorted vision upon Titania as he seeks to acquire her changeling child. Burlesquing both situations, Titania in her deluded state imposes false visions of a comic rather than tragic nature upon Bottom.

Most importantly with regard to *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* representation of attempts to distort vision and warp perception, Theseus' lines to Hippolyta regarding "madmen" (5.1.4) provide an after-the-fact key to the play's comic resolution:

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[7] As Bloch comments in *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* with regard to the tradition that the eyes were the means by which love entered the heart: "For desire enters through the eyes, and love is always love at first sight" (113). Bloch also notes, however, variations on this theme, including the love by "hearsay" (153) celebrated in Jaufré Rudel's songs and in the courtly ideal of *amor de lonh*. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[8] This may be a preliminary (and perhaps necessary) step to co-opting will and eliciting the desired behavior on the part of the external imposing agent, but I argue that the dynamic deserves consideration in its own right.

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact:
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> That is the madman: (5.1.4-10)

In these lines, Theseus expresses recognition of the delusion under which he has labored since 1.1.[9] I believe it is this recognition, this *insight*—a term which unites both the idea of vision and the idea of perception—which serves as the dramatic catalyst for Theseus' reversal and embarkation upon a new course--"Egeus, I will overbear your will" (4.1.178)--in the forest in Act 4.[10]

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Attempts to mandate love choices assume literary and metaphoric life in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by way of Shakespeare's utilization of Ovidian tales and allusions, especially in the Mechanicals' portrayal of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, and through Helena's allusion to Daphne and Apollo. These metaphoric presentations of mandated love are further integrated into *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by way of the author's use of native[11] folkloric conventions and devices--Cupid's "little

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[9] Theseus first makes his insight explicit by voicing it in 5.1, despite the fact that he acts upon the recognition in the forest in 4.1.176-184 by reversing his earlier course, pardoning Hermia and inviting the lovers to be married with him.

[10] More importantly from my perspective, this allows *character work*, rather than pure magic or solely the conventions of comedy, to become the play's resolving force,.

[11] For illustrations and anecdotal renditions of the native English tradition regarding the pansy and other flowers utilized by Shakespeare in their folk contexts, see Jessica Kerr, *Shakespeare's Flowers* (London: Longman Young, 1969). With regard to the fairies and Puck, see Lou Agnes Reynolds and Paul Sawyer, "Folk Medicine and the Four Fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 10 (1959):

western flower" (2.1.166) and "Dian's bud" (4.1.92)—devices also emblematic by way of their mythic associations in the classical tradition of love and chastity.

It is therefore not to speak hyperbolically to say that certain characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* attempt to influence the love choices of other characters on a regular basis, or that these attempts lend rhythm and structure to the play's plot. Furthermore, as the Ovidian tales and allusions of forced change suggest, machinations to mandate love choice in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by coercing agents (Egeus, Demetrius, Theseus, Oberon, and Helena) escalate to the point of total disregard for the subjectivity of those against whom coercion is directed. At the same time, attempts to coerce and manipulate love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* meet with strong resistance,[12] especially from Hermia, Titania, and, ironically, from Demetrius in the face of Helena's excessive entreaties.

Thus, throughout the play, woven into its fabric, Fairy Land devices such as "Cupid's flower" (4.1.72) and encounters, including Oberon and Titania's in 2.1, give rise to *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* parodic inversions of the attempts to compel love by way of threats which dominate the play's courtly scenes. Other Fairy Land scenes, including Titania's attempts to seduce Bottom in 3.1, echo Helena's attempts to impose love by way of inordinate entreaty. A similar pattern of action pervades *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* close, where the Mechanicals' rendition of *Pyramus and Thisbe* with its theme of compulsion of love to the death

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514-515; Katharine M. Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs Among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959); Ronald F. Miller, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Fairies, Bottom, and the Mystery of Things," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26 (1975): 254-68; Mary E. Lamb, "Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000): 277-312.

[12] Once again in this way--with regard to Hermia's resistance to her father, the Duke, Demetrius, and even to Lysander in the forest, Titania's to Oberon; and Demetrius' to Helena—*A Midsummer Night's Dream* hearkens back to the Ovidian source material.

forms a backdrop to the players' pleas for the bestowal of courtly favor upon their performance.

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While at first glance it might appear that the two modes of imposition which dominate *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, compulsion and entreaty, are totally unrelated to each other, this is not the case. Throughout the course of the play it becomes obvious that these two seemingly diametrically opposed modes are related by at least one element present in each. This common denominator is violence. In *Violence and the Sacred*, René Girard explores the place of violence in relationships based upon rivalry, "the double bind," the triangle:

> In the traditional view the object comes first, followed by human desires that converge independently on this object. Last of all comes violence, a fortuitous consequence of the convergence. As the sacrificial conflict increases in intensity, so too does the violence. It is no longer the intrinsic value of the object which inspires the struggle; rather, it is the violence which bestows value on the objects, which are only pretexts for a conflict.
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> (144)

Because violence or the threat of violence is integral to efforts to displace a loved object or to compel love choice as Egeus seeks[13] to do, the tragic implications are obvious.

[13] As represented in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus of course can only hope to succeed in his project to compel Hermia in so far as he superimposes his own perception and will upon Theseus to elicit the Duke's compliance. That is the crux of the play for me: the old man does in fact influence the Duke.

Yet in addition to violence being overtly present in attempts to compel love, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggests that violence of a more complex if less obvious nature is present in or easily evoked by efforts to co-opt internal vision based upon excessive entreaty. Oberon's initial entreaties for the changeling child--"I do but beg a little changeling boy / To be my henchman" (2.1.120-121)—for example, quickly become commands--"Give me that boy, and I will go with thee" (2.1.143)--and eventually, threats (2.1146-187) which the Fairy King implements ruthlessly. Similarly, in the court scene, the rhetoric of command and compulsion soon overwhelms Demetrius' initial entreaties of Hermia.

In the character of Helena, Shakespeare provides another revelation of the violence which may be hidden, latent, in the mode of entreaty. As Helena's pleas to Demetrius escalate in intensity, she loses her autonomy and does violence to her character by lowering herself to the level of dog. Thus, despite what might seem to be glaring differences in the modes of compulsion and entreaty, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* foregrounds the fluid, ever-shifting, ever-permeable boundary between the two modes. Efforts to sway perception, whether based in threats and attempts to compel or in entreaty, both carry their own form of violence.

As noted in the introduction to this study, I argue that attempts to impose love despite resistance are predicated upon the assumption that the other's mind is a blank slate. Imposition which we might term oppressive or tragic in nature presumes just such a view of the "other" before being actualized in a violent manner. Indeed, in the case of tragic imposition of this nature, there is no "other." Rather, there is only the will of the imposing agent. On these occasions, when the

desire to impose is predicated upon willingness to use violence, to enslave, to destroy, more is at risk than the physical self: subjectivity is at risk as well.

Some might maintain that the process of courtship by its very nature involves alternating attempts to compel and entreat, and that isolating a pattern of this nature in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* only states the obvious. Even if this pattern can be determined to be a significant one in the process of courtship, I argue that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes issue with the pattern in a more comprehensive and systematic way than, for example, does *The Taming of the Shrew*, where the issue seems to be embedded in ambivalence. It is true that in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Oberon compels Titania to give up the changeling child. Despite Oberon's success, however, his tyranny is apparent not only ultimately to Oberon himself--"Her dotage now I do begin to pity" (4.1.46)—but also to Titania--"O how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!" (4.1.78)—and ultimately to the play's audience by way of its absurd[14] nature. Similarly, although Egeus remains obdurate in his desire to determine Hermia's love to the end, even to seeking his daughter's death, Theseus retreats from imposing state-sanctioned execution in response to Hermia's continued resistance and his own forest epiphany in the face of the lovers' collective harmony

It is apparent in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that it is not Hermia who can catalyze comic resolution or bring about the play's precise actualization of Frye's classic formulation of comedy as "a drive toward identity" (118). While Hermia strives to achieve an identity of her own, one based upon faithfulness to internal

[14] Jan Kott, Bruce Thomas Boehrer and others of course view this incident from another perspective than "absurd."

vision, only the Duke of Athens can grant this. Only Theseus, who originally denies Hermia a separate identity from her father--"For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself / To fit your fancies to your father's will" (1.1.117-118)—can bestow the gift of autonomy of perception and integrity of identity that she seeks. It is only as Theseus differentiates his perception from that of another that he can grant autonomy to Hermia and the others.

Growth in the ability to resist the desire to impose love from the outside therefore forms an important dimension of the education of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* pivotal character, Theseus, whose reversal of a previous course of action gives rise to the play's final resolution. In this sense, even as *Measure for Measure* is Vincentio's story, and *The Tempest* Prospero's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is Theseus's story. The play depicts the education of Theseus, the Duke of Athens who tells his beloved, "I woo'd thee with my sword" (1.1.16), and initially backs Egeus in his desire to compel his daughter (1.1.46-121; 4.1.135-6) to accept his will. Lysander's words--"Thou canst no more compel than she entreat"—therefore emerge as significant ones in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with regard to imposition. These words provide insight into the transformation which occurs in Theseus, a transformation articulated after the fact in one of Shakespeare's most profound and brilliant cascades of language (5.1.2-22).

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Tradition locates *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* among other places, in Shakespeare's historical-cultural context (a noble wedding), in its chronological and generic setting, or in the context of the poet's early Green World ventures. At the same time, the transitory/illusory nature of love themes, seasonal elements

associated with the play's imagery and fairy world, and the Mechanicals' play-within-a-play periodically command attention. The question of identity is of paramount importance in this play as well. As Nevo observes, "Twinships, rivalries, ambivalences, tamings and matings, the sameness and difference that hides under the notion of identity, all coalesce in the harmonies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (17).

With regard to festive criticism, C. L. Barber's classic study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* explores Shakespeare's use of the traditional lore and customs of the countryside which by the dramatist's time had become part of the fabric of local folk culture and festivities:

> In the absence of evidence, there is no way to settle just how much comes from tradition. But what *is* clear is that Shakespeare was not *simply* writing out folklore which he heard in his youth, as Romantic critics liked to assume. On the contrary, his fairies are produced by a complex fusion of pageantry and popular game, as well as popular fancy. (124)

Barber's thesis foregrounds the irony inherent in the concept of perceptual imposition as a resonating force in this play. The interludes played out in the court of Athens and in the forest outside the city by Egeus, Theseus, Demetrius, and Helena move beyond the social release of pageantry and May games to incorporate betrayal and the possibility of lethal penalties. Helena betrays Hermia when she knows the penalty for her friend may involve death. She then proceeds to pester Demetrius to the point where she engenders

murderous rage in him. Most un-festive is the subtext to be found in a father's imposition upon a ruler:

> As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
> Which shall be either to this gentleman,
> Or to her death, according to our law
> Immediately provided in that case. (1.1.42-45)

Indeed, the cycles of compulsion and entreaty that Egeus, Theseus, Demetruis, Helena, and briefly, Hermia and Lysander under the influence of external forces, enact overwhelm the play's framework of May games and pageantry and lend an air of realism, especially to Hermia's despair. Therefore, while Shakespeare's use of the festive cultural context may on occasion overshadow the darker issues which threaten to rupture the fabric of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, from the perspective of perceptual imposition the play's latent subtexts cannot be obscured or neutralized. Rather, this framework serves to foreground the subtextual issues of power and control so virulently alive in this play as it provides a blatant (and yet seemingly non-threatening) parody of these issues.

Louis Montrose argues that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reflects the political, cultural, social, and sexual dimensions of Elizabethan England, including the Tudor project and the cult of Elizabeth. Other contemporary critics also situate *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in various psychoanalytic frameworks, in the context of patriarchal assumptions displayed throughout, and/or of other gender-based issues: Bruce Thomas Boehrer, Jean Howard, Lisa Jardine, Coppèlia Kahn, Norman N. Holland and Valerie Wayne, among others, might be noted in this context.

From another perspective with regard to *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* critics note the somewhat limited characterizations to be found in the play:

> Shakespeare defines his characters according to what they represent, according to their labels. The lovers are not individuals, they are "lovers," and the definition of that word will determine their behaviour; Puck's actions too are predicated by the definition of 'Puck'. Nor is the process restricted to characters; even places stand for something, are labels. (Fender 20)

In contrast to views such as Fender's, I argue that if we link characters to their modes of imposition-- compulsion and entreaty--and/or to their desire to resist imposition, it is quite obvious that the characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are distinctively drawn. Hermia, for example, cannot be confused with Helena if she is viewed as resisting the violence of externally-imposed love. Similarly, Helena cannot be confused with Hermia if Helena is viewed as attempting to impose her version of love upon Demetrius by way of an entreaty mode which destroys her own autonomy and fails to respect Demetrius'.

This holds true for Lysander and Demetrius as well. Notwithstanding his forest madness, from the perspective of imposition, Lysander cannot be confused with Demetrius. While Demetrius spends most of the play denying Hermia's right to autonomy of love choice, Lysander takes another tack. Despite his momentarily-maddened[15] state in the woods, Lysander's admonition to Demetrius--"Thou canst compel no more than she entreat; / Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers" (3.2.249-50)--cited earlier in connection with the education of Theseus and the

[15] As Lysander's momentarily-maddened state is clearly determined by an external imposition, this interlude serves to burlesque the issue—as it foregrounds the futility--of external imposition of love choice as well.

modes of imposition which underpin *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, stands as a testimony to the play's subtextual concerns. In conjunction with Lysander's other lines reflecting anti-imposition sentiment—"And, which is more than all these boasts can be, / I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia"1.1.103-4 – I argue that his character is represented as essentially different from that of Demetrius'.

As mentioned in the introduction to my dissertation, while I recognize the merits of gender-based theory as a tool to explicate Shakespeare's plays, my own approach to the heroic, fairy, and mortal worlds of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is set in another framework. Situating the play in a patriarchal context may account for Egeus's attempts to compel Hermia to accept his choice of husband, but it does not fully account for any number of other aspects of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, including the fact that Theseus ultimately overrides Egeus and the law of Athens in Act 4. Nor does the patriarchal context totally account for Helena's intemperate[16] attempts to impose herself as love choice upon an unwilling Demetrius or for her treachery to Hermia. While Helena makes no claim to state or cultural power, she betrays Hermia to state and culture by informing Demetrius of Hermia's flight. At the same time, by way of her relationship to Demetrius, Helena serves to erase her own consciousness and subjectivity. In contrast, Demetrius--

[16] Again, as noted in the introduction, I realize that there are those who would argue that in my very criticism of Helena, she serves as a perfect example of the patriarchal state having co-opted its victim, a victim who has eventually identified with and become one with external cultural assumptions. While this may be true, I argue that Shakespeare also dramatizes magnificently the wide poles of representation between characters who succumb to external impositions and those who retain internal perception and integrity. Helena, if drawn in a different manner by Shakespeare, might well display the power to retain her own perception, rather than locating her own perception in Demetrius' eyes as she does. Isabella could never be identified as the "spaniel" of either Vincentio or Angelo; in contrast, Helena is represented as choosing to view herself as Demetrius's "spaniel" (2.1.203). This is a vision Helena chooses, and one that is directly resisted by Demetrius: "I do not, nor I cannot love you" (2.1.201). Nor, in Shakespeare's canon, is Helena bound to betray Hermia. In the moment of decision in *Measure for Measure*, for example, Isabella does not betray Mariana; rather, she chooses to act in unison with the wronged Mariana.

who might be viewed as more connected to patriarchal power than Helena in that Egeus and Theseus favor his suit rather than Lysander's—attempts to avoid Helena's attentions. Therefore, I focus here more on choices made in the context of individual characters following internal perception and will or resisting those of others, rather than on choices made from the perspective of gender.

In a related vein, I should note that René Girard takes issue with the mode of erotic love that dominates *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> The first couple's happiness appears threatened from the outside, but the second couple, even from the start, insist on being unhappy by themselves, always falling in love with the wrong person. We soon realize that Shakespeare is more interested in this systematically self-defeating type of passion than in the initial theme of "true love," something unconquerable by definition and always in need of villainous enemies if it is to provide any semblance of dramatic plot. (Harari 189)

Girard's focuses upon *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* latent violence. Yet his insistence that "the first couple's happiness" only "*appears* threatened from the outside," his transmutation of Puck into a blocking father-figure--"In the absence of the father figures, the role is entrusted to Puck, who keeps pouring his love juice into the "wrong" eyes" (Harari 190)--and his subsequent dismissal of not only Puck but also Egeus and Theseus—external blocks--as irrelevant to *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* courtly

conflict marks the place where this study diverges from Girard and others who place Egeus in a purely functional or extraneous role in this play. [17]

While there is no doubt that the lovers display an always-close-to-the- surface level of violence, the primary, initiating violence is to be found elsewhere. This is the latent aggression that arrogates to itself the power and ostensible right to determine the perception of another, whether this perception be focused upon love choice or elsewhere. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus, Theseus, Demetrius, and to a lesser degree, Helena display such inclinations. Therefore, although the plot revolves around erotic love choice, the issue that resonates below the text goes beyond mere preoccupation with erotic associations. Other aspects of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* plot, including the stylized, almost ritualized, forest madness and action in Fairy Land parody this dynamic, specifically in the sense of being easily applied to erotic love choice, but also, in a broader sense of being applied to a desire to control perception in other areas as well.[18]

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To foreground the cycles of compulsion and entreaty played out in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*--the tragic or potentially tragic forms of imposition which imbue the play--throughout this chapter I juxtapose Athens and Fairy Land, the play's culturally condoned courtly violence as used to usurp perception in the mortal world, and the other-

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[17] Girard places both sets of lovers under the same umbrella--"It quickly turns out that self-defeating passion dominates the relationship of not just one but both couples, involving them in a fourway merry-go-round that never seems to allow any reciprocity even though partners are continually exchanged" (190)--and minimizes the dynamic of one character's perception being forced upon another : "Although the theme of outside interference is not forgotten, it becomes even more flimsy" (190) See René Girard's, "Myth and Ritual in Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Josue V. Harari, *Textual Strategies: Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 189-212.

[18] Some might argue that everything always returns to patriarchal control of marriage, including the Titania-Oberon quarrel in that Titania has abandoned Oberon for the child and perhaps originally for the child's mother as well. However, I prefer to contextualize this issue as an example of an attempt to corrupt freedom of perception that could occur in any number of areas. The desire to mandate a marriage partner is an obvious manifestation, but others exist as well, as Shakespeare's portrayals of Iago and Maria suggest.

worldly intimations, simulations, and parodies of similar violence to be found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* fairy world.

As Robert W. Dent observes, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* considers the mysterious way love develops or does not develop in the human heart. The play explores the ambiguous, difficult to capture the element of irrational, although no less complex, element of personal election inherent in the process of choosing a beloved:

> From the start of the play, the mystery of love's choices (including the attendant male inconstancies) is stressed. Egeus, at least metaphorically, thinks Hermia "witched", and all Elizabethans would be reminded of disputes on whether love could be caused by witchcraft, or by philtres and charms, whether naturally or supernaturally administered. (118)

Ironically, love choice in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* rarely involves *free choice* on the part of a given character. Rather, various characters, fathers--husbands, rulers and lovers--fill their roles in this play by attempting to erase subjectivity in efforts to manipulate and determine the love choices of others. As models for fictional representation of this nature, we know that Shakespeare did not have far to look. Lawrence Stone and others attest that *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* fictional representation is not outlandish for the time. Parental domination and manipulation of love choice was not by any means a rarity in Elizabethan England:

> Marriage among the property-owning classes in sixteenth-century England was, therefore, a collective decision for family and kin, not

> an individual one. Past lineage associations, political patronage, extension of lineage connections and property preservation and accumulation were the principal considerations. (70)

Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage* is filled with specific details and concrete situations, any of which (had Shakespeare been aware of the details) might have served as a catalyst for his fictional representation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Once again, however, my project does not center upon *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as it reflects the historical situation or Early Modern cultural practices. Rather, I focus upon the subtle attempts to usurp perception and will represented in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in conjunction with the eye imagery so prevalent in the play.

In 1.1, Hermia's eyes become battle sites as Egeus and Theseus demand that she abandon internal vision and perception: Hermia is to view love not with her own eyes, but with her father's. Egeus' expressed desire to see his daughter dead before his eyes (1.1.44) rather than permit Hermia to choose love with hers (1.1.157) resonates throughout this play, especially in the subplots. This is a representation of the desire to control not only behavior, but also perception, subjectivity, the essence of identity.[19]

Hermia's defense before the court foregrounds this subtext of identity erasure and the metaphor of the eyes as battle sites in the struggle to retain identity. Attempting to maintain the integrity of an internally-based vision, Hermia voices resistance to having her perception co-opted: "I would my father look'd but with

[19] Abandonment of internal vision is a necessary pre-requisite for Hermia to comply with Egeus's will in the way he demands she comply.

my eyes" (1.1.56). Patriarchal political structures take precedence over personal choice in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, as Theseus brings the power of the state to bear against Hermia: "Rather your eyes must with his judgement look" (1.1.57).[20] In this sense, Athenian society as represented by Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opposes internal vision--vision rooted in the perspective of the subject--even as it glorifies the right of a powerful father to impose his vision upon his daughter and erase her subjectivity and her life if necessary to do so.

Although he provides Hermia with another option, Theseus outdoes Egeus. While Egeus expresses matters simply and brutally--"As she is mine, I may dispose of her" (1.1.42)—Theseus embeds the old man's demands within the context of a sophisticated philosophical rationale:

> To you your father should be as a god:
>
> One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one

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[20] See Roger W. Dent, "Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15, No. 2 (Spring 1964): 115-129**.** While Dent makes similar points to those made here, he takes his argument in an entirely different direction. For example, Dent makes use of themes similar to those addressed here in this way:

> "Thus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the origin of love never lies in reason. Love may be consistent with reason--e. g., Lysander is undoubtedly "a worthy gentleman"—and a healthy imagination, although influenced by love, will not glaringly rebel against reason. But as Hermia initially indicates, her choice is dictated not by her judgment but by her "eyes", by the vision of Lysander as her love-dictated imagination reports it. As Helena says at the close of this same introductory scene, love sees with that part of the mind that has no taste of judgment. Essentially this is as true for Hermia as for the others, although her choice conflicts with parental authority rather than with sound evaluation of her beloved's merits. Despite Egeus's initial disapproval, nevertheless, her choice is eventually confirmed. She is not compelled to "choose love by another's eyes,' (I. i.140), to see with her father's judgment (as Theseus first demanded; I. i. 57), nor even to convert her love to one directed by her own judgment. Her love at the end is what it was at the beginning, with the obstacles removed." (117)

To whom you are but as a form in wax

By him imprinted, and within his power

To leave the figure, or disfigure it. (1.1.47-51)

Lines such as these, imbued with creator/created imagery and the assumption that humans retain the power and the right to "imprint," and "leave the figure, or disfigure it," display an unquestioning acceptance of Egeus's right to impose. The attitudinal violence is of course effaced by the invocation of "a form in wax," upon which the institution of law[21] confers the power and the right to destroy subjectivity and inner vision.

On occasion while speaking to Hermia, Theseus expresses awareness that the choices that he and Egeus offer her are in fact theirs, not hers. Implicit in Theseus' words at these moments is the demand that Hermia abandon her own will and accept her father's: "if you yield not to your *father's choice*" (1.1.69); "For disobedience to your *father's will*" (1.1.87). Yet on other occasions, Theseus elides the imposition dynamic, implying that the alternatives provided to Hermia reflect her perception as it is, not as they command it should be: "question *your* desires, / Know of *your* youth, examine well *your* blood" (1.1.67-8). In the forest, Theseus again implies that the choice is Hermia's to make as he, ironically, addresses her father: "But speak; Egeus, is not this the day / That Hermia should give answer of *her choice*?" (4.1.134-5). In this manner, Egeus and Theseus imply that the choices they provide are in fact Hermia's choices as acting subject. In actuality, Theseus and Egeus provide Hermia with very little room to make a choice that might be called "her choice." Hermia's "choices"--death or Theseus' other very creative alternative--"To live a barren sister all your life, / Chanting faint hymns to

[21] Law, I argue in Chapter Four on *Measure for Measure,* might be understood as a form of collective social imposition.

the cold fruitless moon" (1.1.72-73)—are obviously intended to force compliance with Egeus' will; moreover, these alternatives are intended to super-impose Egeus' perception and vision upon Hermia's own.

Hermia's words to Lysander in 1.1--"O hell! to choose love by another's eyes" (140)—indicate awareness of the subtle pressure being brought to bear upon her subjectivity. Refusal to submit to an attack of this nature on her right to hold autonomous vision permits Hermia only one course: "And thence from Athens [to] turn away our eyes / To seek new friends, and stranger companies" (1.1.218-219).

Interestingly, while Hermia is delivered from the destiny held forth by her father and Theseus, as well as from the exile she chooses for herself, her re-integration into Athenian society occurs only after a similar attempt to derail vision and usurp perception is successfully played out in Fairy Land; her reprieve comes only after the Queen of Fairy Land does in fact "choose love by another's eyes." Thus, courtly attempts to usurp Hermia's sight and erase her perception of love object choice are made explicit, even literal, in the metaphor of Oberon's love juice. Although efforts to corrupt Hermia's perception are destined to fail, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* represents Titania as in fact being "imprinted" (1.1.50) by the Fairy King.

In what I read as a parody of the main plot, Titania's perception is distorted to the point that it is all but lost, causing her to abandon an internally-determined love choice---the changeling child--as prelude to full compliance with the Fairy King's will. Yet the limitations of the strategy advanced by Theseus and Egeus (ultimately revealed as futile by Hermia in the play's court and elopement scenes) are both exposed and parodied in

the Oberon-Puck imposition upon Titania: "And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes, /And make her full of hateful fantasies" (2.1.257-8).

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Oberon's threat, "And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes / And make her full of hateful fantasies" (2.1.257-8), conflates plot and subplot to foreground the play's latent concerns. At the same time, the incident serves as a comic parody of the action taking place in courtly Athens. Metaphorically, Titania's consciousness of her own love object choice, the changeling child, is erased, only to be replaced with a new love object choice, Bottom (and so Oberon), imposed upon her from the outside. In spite of her resistance-- and despite the comic nature of the interlude--Oberon's superior power insures that Titania's internal vision will be corrupted and her ability to retain her own subjectivity destroyed.

Because Oberon and Puck impose distorted love upon the Fairy Queen by way of her vision, Titania's eyes serve as recurrent metaphorical references in the Fairy Land encounters of 2.1 and 2.2. Throughout these scenes, the would-be-imposers conjure images of sight and vision as they proceed to enact their will: "the liquor of it in her eyes" (2.1.177); "the next thing then she waking looks upon" (2.1.178); "And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes" (2.1.257); "What thou seest when thou dost wake"(2.2.26); "In thy eye that shall appear" (2.2.31). In this sense, *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* eye imagery, in conjunction with the Fairy Land plot itself— the assaults leveled against Titania's right to her own perception and her own desire—mirror in comic form the assaults leveled at Hermia's autonomy of perception.

In contrast to the subtle, understated portrayals which characterize *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* main plot, Fairy Land machinations to co-opt vision are represented quite blatantly. Oberon's machinations and the underlying assumptions are so explicit that Fairy Land action can only be said to provide a parodic exposé of courtly imposition:

> I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
> And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:
> The next thing then she waking looks upon
> (Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
> Or meddling monkey, or on busy ape)
> She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
>
> . . .
>
> And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
> And make her full of hateful fantasies. (2.1.177-82; 257-8)

As Oberon plays at the violence of displacing internal perception and replacing it with external, he represents--in an interlude at once less sinister but more successful--Egeus' attempts to make similar moves against Hermia. The comic device of Oberon's love potion thus concretizes Egeus' real life efforts, via death threats, to *see* that Hermia's vision becomes no more than an extension of his own.

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Because Hermia's eyes and sight cannot be magically altered the way Titania's seemingly can, Egeus chooses to have the full power and violence of the law applied to her; once again, the Fairy Land plot manifests this quite

clearly. Titania's reference to the "brawls" (2.1.87) which have "disturbed our sport" (2.1.87) and her reference to nature's chaotic[22] resistance, testifies to the dangerous nature of the imposition dynamic that Egeus plays out in the court of Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* main plot. Similarly, Oberon's lines, "Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove / Till I torment thee for this injury" (2.1.146-47), serve as referents to Egeus' earlier lines:

> As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
> Which shall be either to this gentleman,
> Or to her death, according to our law. (1.1.42-44)

Oberon's threats of "torment" (2.1.147), his retaliation in the face of Titania's resistance, echo Egeus of Athens, who threatens his daughter with death.

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Oberon's "hateful fantasies" (2.1.258) figure prominently in the courtly world of Athens in another context as well. While Titania, under the influence of the love potion, is in

[22] My bringing the concept of imposition to bear upon Titania's allusion to natural disorder is not intended to discount critical views which locate Titania's lines in a range of sources and contexts, from Greek plays (Bullough), to contemporary views which see the reference in terms of the problematic weather and social conditions to be found in England at the time of Shakespeare's writing. As Annabel Patterson, following on Leinwand, observes in "Bottom's Up: Festive Theory in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ," "This passage has situated the *Dream* in 1595-1596, a season notorious for its bad weather and bad harvests" (25). I rather add another interpretation, one which I follow through to Chapter Five and *The Tempest*, where I argue that nature itself revolts against tragic or potentially tragic forms of imposition in that play to facilitate comic closure. This is radically different from the situation in *Othello*, wherein nature is initially seems benevolent, but later concurs with the tragic action. See Annabel Patterson, "Bottom's Up: Festive Theory in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Renaissance Papers* (1988): 25-39; Theodore B. Leinwand, "'I Believe We Must Leave the Killing Out'": Deference and Accommodation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Renaissance Papers* (1986): 11-30; and Richard Wilson, "The Kindly Ones: The Death of the Author in Shakespearean Athens," *Essays and Studies* 46 (1993): 1-24.

effect bewitched, in the main plot, Egeus bewitches a duke. Egeus utilizes this very word--"bewitch'd" (1.1.27)—to demonize Lysander and impose his will upon the Duke. As such, he imposes his own vision (slander) of "hateful fantasies" (2.1.258) upon the Duke, the court of Athens, and Hermia for her choice of beloved:

> This hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child.
> Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
> And interchang'd love-tokens with my child:
> Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
> With faining voice verses of feigning love,
> And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
> With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,
> Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats (messengers
> Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth) :
> With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
> Turn'd her obedience (which is due to me)
> To stubborn harshness. (1.1.27-38)

Egeus mixes verbs denoting actions of a criminal nature from religious and legal perspectives ("bewitch'd," "stol'n," "filch'd") with accusations regarding one who in "faining voice" delivers 'feigning love" and changes filial duty into "stubborn harshness." Such are the "hateful fantasies," the slanderous attacks which Egeus levels against Lysander in the court of Athens.

Another element of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* main plot reflected in the Oberon-Puck subplot involves the specificity of love choice. Once Oberon's charm has been removed, Titania sees the consequences of her momentarily warped vision: "O how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!" (4.1.78). On the surface, the Oberon-Puck love object choice for Titania—Bottom--seemingly differs radically from Egeus's love object choice, Demetrius, Yet to Hermia's eyes, Demetrius may as well be Bottom. Despite Egeus's demands, she cannot love Demetrius unless, she, too, like Titania, is to be deprived of inner subjectivity and freedom of perception.

Thus, despite the sensational, magical nature of the imposition upon Titania, deep structural affinities with the main plot surface in *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Oberon-Puck imposition. In this context, I note Bertrand Evans, who argues with regard to Puck's mistaken imposition upon Lysander:

> Puck errs because Oberon erred in directing him, and this, though the ultimate cause is the magical juice of the little western flower, the immediate cause of the comic action involving the lovers is a blunder made because immortal intelligence has fallen, for once, a little short of omniscience. (36)

"Puck errs," I argue, because as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggests, both on the level of plot and on the level of subplot, attempts to mandate love externally must always err. Oberon errs in directing,[23] as Puck errs in implementing.

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[23] Oberon ultimately orders Puck to make sure that the expressed wishes and internal vision of Hermia and Lysander—as well as of Helena—are respected (3.2.88-91; 345-6; 366-73). Hence, the subplot moves beyond its representation of external love imposition to a more complex, nuanced and respectful vision of

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After imposing a false vision of love upon Titania, the Fairy King succeeds in achieving his ends. Interestingly, however, Oberon successfully takes possession of the changeling child only after Titania has internalized the vision of Bottom that Oberon imposes upon her and made it her own:

> Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
>
> So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
>
> And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
>
> On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. (3.1.133-136)

Helena, to whom I now turn, practices a similarly "enthralled" version of love:

> Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
>
> And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind;
>
> Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste:
>
> Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste. (1.1.234-237)

Notwithstanding Helena's disclaimer,[24] in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the eyes seem to represent the perception which gives rise to love. Indeed, as Titania does while parodying (and exposing the futile nature of) external attempts to coerce love object choice, Helena locates her eyes, her perception and her identity--to the extent that all become one, long "tangled chain"--in Demetrius' eyes, perception and identity. .

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love choice, a movement which will find its ultimate plot manifestation in Theseus' reversal of course in Act 4.

[24] Despite the prevailing wisdom ostensibly encoded in such a view, I don't think we are intended to believe a word Helena says in this play. She has proved herself untrustworthy with Hermia and in her efforts to bribe Demetrius, with him as well.

Characters such as Egeus and Theseus, trading upon access to social and political power, show themselves quite willing to compel to achieve their ends. In addition to compulsion, however, another mode of imposition drives the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This mode is reflected in Helena's words to Hermia--*"*O, teach me how you look, and with what art / You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart" (1.1.192-93)—even as its inadequate nature as a means to inculcate love is also voiced by Helena: "O that my prayers could such affection move!"(1.1.197); "The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace" (2.2.88).

While at first glance the entreaty mode displayed by characters such as Helena who lack access to traditional venues of power stands in stark contrast to the mode of compulsion, a number of similarities are easily discerned. In this play attempts to impose love by way of entreaty prove to be just as ineffective as attempts to impose love by way of compulsion. More importantly, Helena's trajectory as a character suggests that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* foregrounds the mode of excessive entreaty as doing violence not only to those caught in its net--as Demetrius finds himself in the forest--but also to the perception and identity of the entreating character. Thus, Shakespeare's representation of the futility and inadequacy of the mode of inordinate entreaty to ender love is never far below the surface in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As Dent observes:

> When, thanks to Dian's bud, Lysander returns to Hermia, his "true love", the return marks a release from dotage but no return to reason as such, any more than does Demetrius' return to Helena by the pansy juice. Love's choices remain inexplicable, and the eventual

> pairings are determined only by the constancy of Helena and Hermia in their initial inexplicable choices. (116)

Despite the fact that Demetrius suddenly returns Helena's love, the play's silence as to exactly how and why this has occurred suggests that Helena's entreaties have been ineffective. In fact, the change in Demetrius comes about only after Helena concedes (3.2.306-317; 319) the futility of seeking love in this manner:

> O weary night, O long and tedious night,
> Abate thy hours! Shine, comforts, from the east,
> That I may back to Athens by daylight.
> From these that my poor company detest. (3.2.431-434)

While I argue that Lysander's return to Hermia does mark a "return to reason"—the reason Lysander has always shown until his moments of madness in the forest--Dent's point captures the essence of the relationship of Demetrius and Helena, wherein reason is lacking in any and all dimensions of the representation. Indeed, Helena herself is more surprised than anyone by Demetrius' change of heart: "And I have found Demetrius like a jewel, / Mine own and not mine own" (4.1.190-91).

The violence which Helena[25] inflicts upon others as she entreats Demetrius to love her is likewise readily apparent in her betrayal of Hermia in an effort to

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[25] Others take a more positive view of Helena than I do. For example, in his introduction to the Arden, when comparing Helena to Hermia, Brooks says of Helena: "Helena is much more the lady: very feminine, and very aware of it" (cxi). Yet he also notes that, "In *Hippolytus*, Seneca's Phaedra resolves to follow at all costs the man that she hopelessly loves" (19). In "Transposing Helena to Form and Dignity," Lisa J. Moore, speaking about the complexities of her role as Helena, makes the following observations: "Helena's sense of her own beauty exists within her and had once been independent of Demetrius' admirations. . . Helena's journey through the play takes her from this adolescent ordering of the universe to woman hood, where other people's perceptions of her do not determine her value. . . She has faith that if she can hit upon the key to the problem, she will regain Demetrius' love. . ." (Kehler 459).

bribe Demetrius. Helena's soliloquy in 1.1 reveals a conscious decision to inform Demetrius of Hermia's flight (1.1.246) as a means to bribe love.[26] Helena's entreaties, rooted in the violence of betrayal, are in effect attempts to coerce:

> And for this intelligence
> If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
> But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
> To have his sight thither and back again. (1.1.248-51)

While her betrayal is intended to buy back Demetrius' "sight," as opposed to fulfilling Helena's fantasized expectations, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes care to depict the opposite outcome. Helena's expectations are in fact never realized. Demetrius' "thanks" fail to materialize in the way she expects; his "sight" fails to return to her as she assumes it must given her "dear expense." For her pains, Helena receives only Demetrius' threats. Once again the play's latent subtext regarding the violence which underpins inordinate entreaty emerges.

Helena does as much or more violence to her own character as she does to others. Coppèlia Kahn observes in *Man's Estate*: "The awareness of being a man or a woman—gender identity—coexists with the awareness of being a separate individual" (9). Helena as she is portrayed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to reflect only minimal "awareness of being a separate individual," at least where Demetrius is concerned. In fact, if Kahn's formula is to stand, Helena must be

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[26] Other of Shakespeare's characters treated in this study attempt to bribe love, but not all stoop to Helena's level. Titania, for example, entices Bottom with the wonders of Fairy land, while *Twelfth Night's* Olivia entices with pearls and jewels. Yet neither of these involves betrayal or Helena's from of high-pressure harassment.

exempted from its limiting strictures. From one perspective, of course, Helena's lack of separate identity in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* quite possibly reflects the wider social context:

> With one vital exception, all forms of public and domestic authority in Elizabethan England were vested in men: in fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates, lords. (Montrose 68)

On the other hand, I argue that the play represents Helena—and Helena alone—as consistently denying her own humanity, autonomy and integrity of self. Helena displaces her own vision and abandons her role as acting subject to elevate Demetrius by demoting herself to the level of "spaniel" (2.1.203). Most ironically, by her own observations in 1.1--"The more I love, the more he hateth me" (199)--and in 2.2--"The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace" (88)--Helena foregrounds *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* suffusing subtext regarding the inefficacy of entreaty as a means to impose love.

To dismiss Demetrius' resistance, Helena promotes a view of love that might be termed "enthralled" (3.1.134), or, to paraphrase her own words in 2.1, enchained-love:

> You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant--
> But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
> Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
> And I shall have no power to follow you. (195-98)

Helena speaks of love's "power to draw," asserting a lack of free choice and excusing her excesses by suggesting that the constancy of a heart "true as steel" validates her

continued pursuit of Demetrius, despite his protests. The only result of all of this is that Helena's entreaties are transformed into absurd cries lacking in dignity:

> I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
>
> The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.
>
> Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
>
> Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
>
> Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
>
> What worser place can I beg in your love
>
> And yet a place of high respect with me--
>
> Than to be used as you use your dog? (2.1.203-210)

As Helena asks to be Demetrius' "spaniel," as she pleads "to be used" as Demetrius might use a hound, as she suggests that a "strike" may move her to "fawn," Helena loses not only her autonomy but also her humanity, at least the dimension of the human individual which strives for freedom. Helena's frantic pleas replete with their animal imagery foreground the Ovidian text to which *A Midsummer Night's Dream* owes its mythic framework. In the Ovidian tales, figures who resist love to the point of pursuit may be transformed. In contrast, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Helena, the pursuer, loses selfhood to dog-hood.[27]

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[27] And Puck waits in the wings to enact still other transformations. In contrast to Helena, Hermia's attempts to educate the fathers, Dukes, and non-elected lovers of her world extend beyond her efforts in the court of Athens to her own beloved Lysander. Hermia resists Lysander as well, and in this, she resists Cupid as Imposition. Andrew Leggatt observes in *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love*:

> The forest might have been a place of unbridled eroticism, but it is not: Lysander and Hermia are very careful about their sleeping arrangements, and Demetrius warns Helena to keep away from his so as not to endanger her virginity. (110)

However, the forest of Athens does more than serve as a setting in which "unbridled eroticism" does not occur. Indeed, that this does not occur is in large part due to the fact that the forest serves as a site for Hermia's continued resistance in the arena of love choice. In the forest in Act 2, Hermia refuses to allow Lysander to super-impose his perception upon hers. This effort, taking shape in the mode of entreaty as Lysander exerts pressure with regard to their forest sleeping arrangements, is a

In *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare*, Marianne Novy links stage and life, actor and audience:

> If actor/audience relations are something like the social relations between the sexes, social relations between the sexes, in turn, are often like the theater in another way--because society patterns appropriate behavior for each gender in roles that are imitated, learned and played somewhat as are theatrical roles. (20)

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significant one. Despite Lysander's loving protestations--"One turf shall serve as pillow for us both; / One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth"(2.2.40-41); "O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence" (2.2.44);"Then by your side no bed-room me deny"(2.2.50)—Hermia resists. Although she risks all for Lysander by fleeing, she enjoins her beloved, "Lie further off yet; do not lie so near"(2.2.43). Her final response to Lysander's protests that such separation is unnecessary strongly asserts her subjectivity: vision as she experiences it and identity as she understands it:

> Lysander riddles very prettily.
> Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
> If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied!
> But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy,
> Lie further off, in human modesty;
> Such separation as may well be said
> Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
> So far be distant; and good night, sweet friend:
> Thy love ne'er alter till they sweet life end! (2.2.52-60)

Rather than accusing Lysander, Hermia instead holds to her own internal perception regarding what "Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid"(2.2.58).

Whether or not from our modern perspective we view Hermia's position in this matter as quaint, the fact is that Hermia displays the power to resist her beloved. We might object that in displaying such a stance, Hermia is no more than the embodiment of inculcated Renaissance visions of chastity as found in *The Mothers Counsell*:

> First, my Daughter understand, that Chastity is the beautie of the soule, and puritie of life, which refuseth the corrupt pleasures of the flesh; only possessed of those who keep cleane and undefiled; and it consisteth either in sincere viriginitie, or in faithful Matrimony.
> . .. .
> Chastity is the Seal of Grace, the staffe of devotion, the marke of the Just, the crowne of viriginity, the glory of life, and a comfort in Martyrdome. (Travitsky 66)

By displaying the ability to resist Lysander's entreaties when they conflict with her own internal perceptual mandates, Hermia foregrounds resistance to imposition in the mode of love entreaty. As such, she displays subjectivity in a way that Helena never does and so serves as a foil to Helena and her entreaty mode of seeking love.

The contrast between Hermia and Helena in this matter of exerting subjectivity and resisting compulsion and entreaty is especially noticeable in Helena's response to Demetrius' demands in the forest that she leave him. As Helena insists upon following Demetrius, despite his warnings (2.1.211; 214-19; 237), her response seems to indicate that she considers her own safety but lightly.

There are gender roles, and there are gender roles. As noted above, a gap exists between two lines of Shakespeare's women, with regard to the vulnerability of their perception to being distorted against their best interests Certain of Shakespeare's comic heroines display one set of characteristics—Portia, Rosalind, Beatrice, Olivia, and Isabella, for example--while others display another--*Much Ado About Nothing's* Hero and *All's Well That Ends Well's* Helen. A similar distinction might be drawn between *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Hermia and Helena. While Hermia guards subjectivity and the right to act in accordance with her own internal vision, Helena displaces both in her efforts to win Demetrius' love. Thus, with the exception of the forest madness[28]--during which time the four lovers do become interchangeable--Helena's role in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* differs radically from Hermia's.[29] While Hermia is Shakespeare's prelude to such characters as Rosalind and Olivia, Helena resembles *All's Well That Ends Well's* Helen and *Measure for Measure's* Mariana.

Shakespeare's representation of imposition and gender in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is indeed a nuanced one. The comedy portrays members of the more powerful gender (Egeus and Theseus) imposing their will upon members of the weaker gender (Hermia). Yet *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also portrays a member of the weaker gender (Helena) attempting to impose herself, if somewhat ineffectively, upon the more powerful gender (Demetrius). Thus, Shakespeare, in addition to representing women who triumph over threats, slander, and attempts to erase their internal subjectivity, also represents characters such as Helena who by

[28] This seemingly madcap, chaotic, and even amusing interlude also testifies to the futility of attempting to mandate lover externally as Oberon and Puck do.
[29] As Lysander's role in this play differs radically from Demetrius.

their own efforts erase their own subjectivity.[30] By permitting, if not assisting, outside influences to usurp their perception and distort their internal vision, they co-opt their own identity. In short, patriarchal structures, although an issue, are not the only issue represented in this play. Otherwise, it seems to me that Hermia truly would be interchangeable with Helena, and Shakespeare could never have drawn Beatrice, Rosalind, Portia, or Isabella.

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Helena's "idolatry" of Demetrius--"And she, sweet lady, dotes, / Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry" (1.1.108-109)--is mirrored in Fairy Land in Titania's elevation of Bottom: "My mistress with a monster is in love" (3.2.6). Bruce Thomas Boehrer, who observes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that "all of the play's romantic couplings are in an important sense zoophilic" (129), discusses the Titania-Bottom interlude and other aspects of the romantic/sexual dimensions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with cultural and ideological perspectives in mind:

> Bottom's own personality remains outstandingly unimpaired throughout his interlude with Titania; indeed, a large part of his comic incongruity derives from the fact that his desires as beast—for headscratching, belly-cheer, and deferential service—remain so perfectly faithful to his human character. It is Titania, on the other hand, whose humanity is more fundamentally impeached by the entire exchange, for she—not Bottom—clearly cannot distinguish a bestial love-object from a human one. In this sense, at least,

[30] Othello, with Iago's help, eventually does this, and I would argue that Desdemona, with Othello's help, eventually does this as well..

> Bottom's transformation happens more to Titania than to Bottom himself. The result is an ideological identity of interest between locally dissimilar animal transformations, all of which offer roughly the same moral: turning a woman into an animal degrades the woman, and turning a man into an animal also degrades the woman. (Miller 128-29)

Once again, the issue is individual choice rather than historical-cultural context or political dynamics. In contrast to Titania, who is represented as obviously a victim of Oberon's external machinations, Helena's consciousness has not been breached by any outside agency, political or otherwise. While Titania does not choose her deluded vision, Helena does. Once deluded, however, Titania resembles Helena, or, rather, Helena's externally-derived form of identity is parodied to the point of excess by Titania. It is this upon this representation which I now focus.

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Because Puck openly boasts of his ability to insert himself into the consciousness of others, it is not surprising that the prelude to Titania's encounter with Bottom highlights an instance of transformed perception: "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated!" (3.1.114). While we may question how Titania could mistake Bottom, the fact is, she does, despite the strange head affixed to his shoulders. While Oberon no doubt deludes Titania, the issue upon which I focus here is rather the nature of Titania's excessive devotion:

> I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
> Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note.

> So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
>
> And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
>
> On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. (3.1.132-36)

As the Queen's excesses--excesses which constitute Bottom as "wise" and "beautiful" (3.1.142)--pervade the scene, they cleverly foreground another area of excess--Helena's expressions of inordinate devotion to Demetrius. The Fairy Queen's unbridled and unwarranted adoration—"so is mine eye enthralled to thy shape"—reflects the mortal Helena who "dotes in idolatry," and seeks to be a "spaniel."

Louis Montrose, with an eye always to Elizabeth, considers Titania from the point of doting, smothering mother:

> Titania treats Bottom as if he were both her child and her lover. And she herself is ambivalently nurturing and threatening, imperious and enthralled. She dotes upon Bottom and indulges in him all those desires to be fed, scratched and coddled that make Bottoms 's dream into a parodic fantasy of infantile narcissism and dependency. (68)

What a description of Helena! In that the play's portrait of Titania's relationship to Bottom seems to both mirror and parody Helena's[31] relationship to Demetrius, I suggest that Montrose's apt characterization of Titania and Bottom might be extended to Helena as well. Indeed, Titania's changed perception most

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[31] For another view, see Bruce Thomas Boehrer's, "Bestial Buggery in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*" in *The Production of English Renaissance Culture*, ed. David Lee Miller et al, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 130, who reflects both Helena and Titania in a quite different lens than my own. Boehrer's analysis of Helena, who turns herself into a "spaniel" is focused--as is his analysis of Titania and Bottom--upon the bestial-erotic nature of the relationships. In contrast, I view Helena's self-degradation as destructive of autonomy, subjectivity, and freedom of perception rather than as indicative of Boehrer's sexually-charged perspective, and Titania's as a parody of the same.

significantly impacts the arc of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* if viewed in all its excesses as a lens to refract Helena's relationship to Demetrius. Titania foregrounds the absurd behavior of the Helena, who "dotes in idolatry" upon Demetrius. Furthermore, the Fairy Queen's encounter with Bottom suggests the permeable nature of the boundary between compulsion and entreaty. To invoke Girard once again, then, it is indeed obvious that a level of violence lurks behind the pleasant scene of dalliance. Yet violence also lurks below the surface of Helena's betrayal in the court and pursuit in the woods as well; the incidents reflect and reinforce each other. Excessive entreaty is therefore represented here as a veiled and also potentially violent way to impose control.

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Along with parodying Helena's "idolatry," the Titania-Bottom interlude highlights the main plot's interest in entreaty and bribery-based efforts to elicit love. Bottom's response to the Fairy Queen reflects Demetrius' response to Helena. Titania fails to move Bottom, other than to sleep, even as Helena's entreaties fail to move Demetrius for most of the play.[32] Despite the fact that other interpretations may be overlaid upon these lines, I argue that rather than responding to Titania's overtures,[33] Bottom seemingly displays more interest in other aspects of Fairy Land—being scratched (4.1.31); "a peck of provender" (4.1.31); "good dry oats" (4.1.32); "a bottle of hay"

[32] Despite Boehrer's comment, "Moreover, bestiality arguably encompasses a large part of the play's overt eroticism; the spectacle of Titania and Bottom embracing and sleeping together comes as close to enacted sexual intercourse as any scene in Shakespearean comedy," ("Bestial Buggery," in Miller, 132), I do not think that convincing evidence can be found in the text to indicate that the encounter went beyond sleep.

[33] Despite his rhapsody in the style of Corinthians in 4.1, Bottom seemingly displays little interest in the moment.

(4.1.32); “a handful or two of dried peas” (4.1.36), and finally, in “an exposition of sleep” (2.3.38)--than in Titania’s efforts to seduce him.

In that Titania is herself a victim of Oberon’s efforts to compel her to act against her will, it is ironic that she alternates between the modes of compulsion and entreaty as she attempts to impose herself upon Bottom as a love choice. Yet Titania does not hesitate to indulge in Oberon’s method of compulsion through force: “Out of this wood do not desire to go; / Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no” (3.1.145-46); “Tie up my love’s tongue, bring him silently” (3.1.194). As Louis Montrose notes, “The sinister side of Titania’s possessiveness is manifested in her binding up of Bottom’s tongue” (68-9).

Compulsion is not Titania’s only mode, however. At other times the Fairy Queen favors a style of entreaty/bribery that might be likened more to Olivia’s than to Helena’s in that Titania displays more poise in bribery than does Helena: “I am a spirit of no common rate” (3.1.147); “Be kind and courteous to this gentleman” (3.1.157); ”Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies” (3.1.167). As she alternates between compulsion and entreaty, Titania foregrounds the permeable boundary between the two. And while permeable boundaries and patterns of this nature may be integral components of courtship, once again *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* seems to suggest that excessive entreaty is no more effective than compulsion as a means of inducing love.

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The “Bottom” half of the Titania-Bottom interlude foregrounds the main plot in one final way. As noted above, Egeus’ demonization of Lysander is made literal in the

Titania-Botton imposition by the "translated" (3.1.114) Bottom. The Mechanical is turned into a "monster" (3.2.6) by Puck, who, with seeming relish, imposes his own version of Oberon's orders upon the foolish creatures he encounters. As a monster, Bottom hearkens back to the main plot in that his transformation parodies a demonization effected by Egeus in the courtly world of Athens, wherein a father turns a young suitor into a monster in the public forum.

As Bottom is transformed into more of an "ass" than he already is by Puck's machinations, so Egeus demonizes Lysander in his attempts to render the youth a totally inappropriate love choice for Hermia. More than merely rejecting Lysander as Hermia's choice, Egeus paints Lysander as evil before Theseus and the court. According to Egeus, Lysander is "feigning" and "cunning," he has "stol'en" and "filch'd," and finally, he has usurped Egeus' place (now we get to it) in that he has taken that which "is due to" Egeus, Hermia's "obedience" (1.1.30-38). In light of the slurs Egeus hurls at Lysander, it seems safe to suggest that Lysander has been metaphorically made into a monster in much the same way that Bottom is made into a monster in Fairy Land. The fact that law in the person of Theseus extends a way out to a young woman that her father refuses to extend does not change the significance of dramatic representation: Egeus portrays Lysander as a monster for no apparent reason, despite the youth's earnest attempts to proclaim his own worthiness of character (1.1.99-110).[34]

Nor does Theseus' offer of an alternative to Hermia preclude another dramatic representation to be found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Duke, seemingly the Law of Athens, initially accepts Egeus' perceptual imposition and

[34] Only in the forest, under explicitly external influences, does Lysander turn momentarily into a monster. Ironically, this occurs after Hermia has resisted his sexual advances.

agrees to conform to the old man's view of the right of a father to impose death upon his daughter. As such, Bottom and Lysander are similarly represented in an important way: each has been turned into something less than human by another character.

Once again in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* hiding, latent, beneath the fairy tale exterior of English folklore and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we see that the most far-reaching transformations are transformations wrought by humans—by fathers who demonize daughter's and their beloveds; by young women who abandon their own internal perception and identity as acting subjects. Neither the gods and their mulberry trees nor magic and fairies can compete with this.

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"One sees more devils than vast hell can hold" (5.1.9)

"My [master] with a monster is in love" (3.2.6)

Although Theseus[35] delivers fewer lines on *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* stage than a number of other characters in the play, at one particular moment in the forest *A Midsummer Night's Dream* becomes Theseus' play. At this moment in the Green World, the Duke of Athens responds to Hermia's father "in another key" (1.1.18),[36] a "key" differing from the one in which he initially responds in 1.1.57 during the court scene. Indeed, Theseus' final decision--"Egeus, I will overbear your will; / For in the temple, by and by, with us, / These couples shall eternally be knit" (4.1.178-80)--radically reverses his earlier stance. Because Theseus' forest response signals a radical departure from his earlier position in Act 1, and because no reason for the change appears at first glance, I conclude this chapter with an inquiry into this radical divergence in the text's representation.

While we understand the *dramatic value* of Theseus reversing his Act 1 position and granting the lovers freedom to choose love in Act 4—the play closes as comedy--the question remains: What, if anything, in the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might be identified as the catalyst for such reversal?

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[35] For another perspective on Theseus than the one taken here and a survey of his recurrent appearances in myth and literature, see D'Orsay Pearson's "'Unkinde' Theseus: A Study in Renaissance Mythography," *English Literary Renaissance* 42 (1974): 276-98 and Louis A. Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture, R*epresentations* 2 (Spring 1983): 61-94. Douglas Freake emphasizes the dark aspects of the Theseus story as well: "Although patriarchal power is explored and defended in many of Shakespeare's tragedies, its arbitrariness is nowhere more explicit than in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play is a *comic* version of the Theseus story, not because it parodies the myth, nor because it transforms the minotaur into a beneficent image of the divine or archetypal child, although both of these arguments can reasonably be made. Rather, Shakespeare's playful yet haunted play of Duke Theseus is a comedy because the comic mode best allows its underlying social theme, that of women's subjection to men in marriage, to pass like a dream—a dream founded on the starkest reality" (Kehler 272). See Douglas Freake, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a Comic Version of the Theseus Myth, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Bibliographic Survey of the Criticism,* ed. Dorothea Kehler (New York: Garland, 1998). For a more positive view, see Mary Ellen Lamb, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 21 (1979): 478-91.

[36] As such, Theseus honors the promise he makes to Hippolyta in 1.1.16-19.

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Perhaps no one answer to the question of Theseus' change of heart will satisfy all perspectives, but a variety of tentative explanations present themselves. These include ideas as far flung and diverse as the possibility that Theseus' growing relationship with Hippolyta gives rise to his sudden transformation[37] and /or to the possibility that Oberon's machinations in fairy and mortal realms serve as catalysts for, and courtly mirror of the transformation. Northrop Frye's forest "Green World" may also play a role in the sudden reversal, while the generic approach adds yet another perspective to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: comedy routinely requires transformations of this nature to occur in its main players, and Theseus is a main player.

In addition to these possible explanations, the concept of perceptual imposition may illuminate Theseus' radical departure from his own earlier position. Theseus' realization of the "concord" displayed by the sleeping lovers in the forest brings him to another revelation, an epiphany of sorts. This recognition accounts for crucial movement on his part and therefore, for the comic resolution of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

A comment made in Fairy Land--"My mistress with a monster is in love" (3.2.6)--originally applied by Puck to Titania, might, if "translated," apply to Theseus. If, with the substitution of one word, Puck's line is applied to courtly Athens, it would read--"My *master* with a monster is in love." Written this way, the comment might apply to Theseus. While Theseus' sudden recognition of his

[37] Brooks notes in his introduction to the Arden that "Hippolyta is downcast at a prospect so out of keeping with the happiness Theseus has been promising in the celebration of their own marriage. . ." (xcvii). Director Michael Hoffman, in his 1999 film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, among others, takes a similar approach.

own usurped perception as he sees the lover and hears Egeus occurs in the Green World of 4.1, is only verbalized later in 5.1. Still, it is the basis for Theseus' resistance to imposition of a potentially tragic nature directed at him by an external source.[38]

In 5.1, in conversation with Hippolyta not long after he has lent his support to the lovers in 4.1, Theseus pairs various forms of vision with specific categories of human beings--lovers, madmen and poets. At the same time, he links the three groups--diverse as they are--together. To hear Theseus tell it in 5.1, "the madman" (10) is not terribly different from the poet or the lover. Because *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play steeped in references to the act of seeing and the organ of sight, such a pairing of sight and human nature is not out of place. Yet I believe that there is another reason for the linkage. The essence of Theseus' forest journey involves recognition of his own usurped consciousness. Even as Theseus' forest vision permits him to see in the lovers, "That hatred is so far from jealousy" (4.1.143), and to perceive "gentle concord in the world" (4.1.142), it allows him to perceive another dimension in Egeus.

Egeus' demand that the law of Athens impose his vision and his will upon his daughter plays itself out differently in the forest than it does in *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* earlier court scene. In Act 1, Egeus, seeking Theseus' help to mount a state-backed attack, sues for a hearing. His tone and phrasing are more reflective of supplication than demand: "And my gracious Duke. . . ." (1.1.26). In Act 4, in contrast, Egeus attempts to impose his perception and will upon *Theseus*

[38] On the level of plot, the action Theseus takes is based upon a willingness to rely upon his own perception of the lovers' "concord" in the forest to enact the justice of Athens, rather than upon Egeus' desires and views.

without waiting for him to speak. It is not Theseus who responds, "Enough, enough, I have heard enough." Instead, Egeus responds for him. While Egeus seemingly utters a plea--"I beg the law, the law upon his head!"—in the context of the scene, the supposed plea comes across more as a demand than as a request. Despite his use of the word "beg," then, Egeus in effect demands that his vision be superimposed upon the Duke's own.

In contrast, Theseus, who formulates his own response to the scene, is more interested in the sentiments which inform the "gentle concord" than he is in the law of Athens at the moment:

> I know you two are rival enemies:
> How comes this gentle concord in the world,
> That hatred is so far from jealousy
> To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity? (1.1.141-144)

Although the lord of Athens may or may not initially intend to reward "gentle concord," Egeus precludes any response on Theseus' part as he co-opts the moment, framing the scene as of interest only to himself and to the lover he has picked for his daughter. In the process, he continues to exclude[39] Theseus:

> They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,
> Thereby to have defeated you and me:
> You of your wife, and me of my consent,
> Of my consent that she should be your wife. (4.1.154-158)

In the forest, in opposition to the vision of "gentle concord" that he finds in the lovers, Theseus suddenly sees Egeus as one who deals not in love, nor even in poetry, but rather,

[39] As Egeus of course continues to exclude Hermia and her perception, wishes, and will.

in "hateful fantasies" (2.1.258), one who turns men into "devils" (5.1.9). In the forest, Theseus sees Egeus--who has previously imposed his vision of Hermia's life and death upon him--in full clarity for what he is--a "madman" (5.1.10).

To return to the conversation with Hippolyta in 5.1, Theseus yokes the three groups together as he judges the "shaping fantasies" of their perception:[40]

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact:
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> That is the madman: The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven?
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> . . . (5.1.4-22)

[40] For another perspective, see Louis Montrose, who views Theseus' words in the context of a ruler's use of power: "For Theseus, no less than the Elizabethan Privy Council, the ruler's task is to comprehend—to understand and to contain—the energies and motives, the diverse, unstable and potentially seditious apprehensions of the ruled" (72). See "A Kingdom of Shadows," *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theater, and Politics in London 1576-1649,e*ds. David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). 68-86.

As critics as diverse as David Young, Harold Brooks and Penny Williams note, Hippolyta's famous lines immediately contradict[41] those of Theseus (5.1.23-27). More importantly, Oberon, Titania (5.1.377-408) and Puck (5.1.373-76) also speak for lovers as the play closes, while poets speak their own last word of defense in the Mechanicals' production of "Pyramus and Thisby" and Puck's epilogue: "If we shadows have offended, / Think but this, and all is mended. . ." (5.1.409-422). The play itself therefore exempts two of the three categories yoked together by Theseus from his blanket condemnation; only one, the "madman," remains condemned. From this perspective, I argue that the entire play, not just Hippolyta, undermines the blanket condemnation.

I argue that the subtextual or veiled target of Theseus' speech is not the lover, nor even the poet, but rather, the madman. Egeus is more dangerous to Athens than any "lover" (or any four lovers); the old man is more dangerous than most poets as well. While Theseus fails to recognize this in the court scene, during his forest epiphany, he comes to see with clarity of perception, with *insight*. In the forest, in a flash of recognition, Theseus sees "How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear" (5.1.22), when another intends "a bush suppos'd a bear." In the light filtering through the trees, Theseus sees

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[41] In *Something of Great Constancy*, David Young, while positing the "concentric circles" which for him delineate "the spectrum of awareness formed by the character in the play" (91), assigns to Hippolyta in her circle with Theseus, "the further station, on the basis of her conversation with Theseus at the beginning of the fifth act" (92). See David Young, *Something of Great Constancy*: *The Art of* "A Midsummer Night's Dream," (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). In his Introduction to the Arden, Harold Brooks observes, "Theseus' skepticism is immediately countered by Hippolyta" (cxli), while Penny Williams notes in her chapter, "Social Tensions Contained" on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Poltics in London, 1576-1649*, that Theseus' "great speech on imagination at the start of Act 5 is undermined by Hippolyta" (65). My point here, however, differs from these: Hippolyta does indeed speak for the lovers in her famous lines of 5.1.23-27. Yet Oberon, Titania (5.1.377-408) and Puck (5.1.373-76) also speak for lovers as the play closes, while poets speak their own last words of defense through the Mechanicals' production of "Pyramus and Thisby" and by way of Puck's epilogue: "If we shadows have offended, / Think but this, and all is mended. . ." (5.1.409-422). I believe therefore that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ultimately exempts two of the three categories yoked together by Theseus from his blanket condemnation, and that only one, the "madman" remains condemned. From this perspective, I argue that the entire play, not just Hippolyta, undermines the blanket condemnation.

one who has successfully superimposed his perception upon Theseus's own. In this ethereal world, Theseus comprehends one whose vision is tuned to "more devils than vast hell can hold," rather than to life, and he chooses to speak for life.

Fortunately for the ends of comedy, before *A Midsummer Night's Dream* draws to a close Theseus undergoes a metamorphosis of his own. The Duke of Athens resists powerful external pressure and retains his own perception; it is this internal perception which informs his final judgment upon the lovers, not that of Egeus. Even as *Measure for Measure's* Vincentio will, in the later play, make a conscious decision to resist a corrupt angel by way of a journey underground, with eyes wide open Theseus resists a "madman" who turns men into "monsters" and "devils,"

"Lovers. . . "have such seething brains"—it is true--but so do "madmen." And the "seething brains" of madmen are more dangerous than those of lovers. History tells us that madmen can be imposers of a most deadly kind. From Shakespeare's history plays, we know that the dramatist was an astute observer of history. By myth and story an old imposer himself, Theseus (suddenly aware as Shakespeare represents him) changes the legends of the past and redeems the future of a young woman to close *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in comedy.

CHAPTER TWO

"Mine eye too great a flatterer for my mind" (1.5.313):
Comic Imposition and Tragic Seeming in *Twelfth Night*:

> Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune
> So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
> That I am ready to distrust mine eyes,
> And wrangle with my reason that persuades me
> To any other trust but that I am mad. . .
>
> (*Twelfth Night* 4.3.11-15)

Twelfth Night privileges the courtship of a wide variety of potential lovers. A duke courts a countess; the countess simultaneously courts a shipwrecked woman disguised as a page, *and* an amazed newcomer, the page's secret twin. Deepening the levels of complexity, the page gently courts her master, the duke, while at the same time accepting his "barful strife" (1.4.41)[1] and courting the countess in his name.[2] Raucous

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1975). This and all other citations of *Twelfth Night* are to the Arden.

[2] On occasion, I refer to Viola in her role as Orsino's page as Viola-Cesario or Cesario; however, for the most part I refer to her assumed role in the feminine. I take this stance at the risk of doing exactly what is that Marjorie Garber says we should resist doing--"turn away from a close encounter with the transvestite, and [to want] instead to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders" (9). I take this approach because Viola the *character*—as opposed to the boy actor playing her part on the Renaissance stage or the role she assumes as page after the shipwreck--is indeed a woman as she makes quite clear on

knights, devious chamber maids and deluded stewards overwhelm *Twelfth Night's* underplot with love machinations as well. Upon examination, however, most of the courtship attempts which pervade *Twelfth Night* reveal themselves to be unwanted impositions as often as they are willingly received overtures of love and marriage.

Twelfth Night's plot thus privileges acts of love imposition in the style of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, including entreaties (Orsino and Olivia); threats (Orsino does this when it suits his fancy, as do Toby and Andrew); material enticements in the style of Titania (Olivia); and corruption of vision (Toby and Maria distort Andrew's, Malvolio's, and Olivia's perception,[3] while Viola's gender disguise bends everyone's vision). Ironically, Orsino manages to distort his own vision as he, while refusing to hear Olivia's repeated rejections of his suit, indulges himself in Petrarchan follies. As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, then, acts of perceptual imposition structure *Twelfth Night's* plot and give rise to its many complications, while acts of resistance, shape the play's comic resolution.

In contrast to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'s blatant representation of an imposition of false vision--the Oberon-Puck distortion of Titania's sight, an almost farcical interlude in the earlier play--*Twelfth Night* taps the tragic potential inherent in

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various occasions, including in 3.1.160. See Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York and London: Routlege, 1992). For other views on this issue, see Stephen.Greenblatt ("Fiction and Friction," *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 66-93; Jean Howard, "Cross-Dressing, the Theatre and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988): 418-29, and *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Lisa Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London: Routledge, 1996), and *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983); Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boy for Women," *South Atlantic Quarterly* (1989): 7-29; Phyllis Rackin, "Androgeny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 120-30.

[3] By this, I mean that the imposers delude Olivia with regard to the sanity (or lack thereof) of her steward, whose most significant crime involves his efforts to carry out Olivia's own wishes. Malvolio remains committed to Olivia's commands even after Maria has been co-opted by a desire to pursue Toby at any cost, including that of lost loyalty to her mistress.

actions designed to impose false vision by way of two interludes. The first is played out in the horror of a small, dark closet, while the other is played out in the presence of a young man who has just taken marriage vows and the duke who has not. Thus, although *Twelfth Night* closes with the requisite multiple marriages so dear to comedy, it is not before the possibilities of madness, chaotic revenge and "a savage jealousy / That sometimes savours nobly" (5.1. l17-18) break through the fabric of this play, a comic prelude to the tragic themes orchestrated in *Othello*.[4]

As opposed to the play's underplot, wherein resistance is limited or non-existent, characters dominating *Twelfth Night's* main plot exist in a state of perpetual resistance. The countess avoids the duke's suit from the outset (and does so prior to the play's opening); the duke, in turn, ignores his page's timid overtures of love and, more dangerously, the countess' rejection of his own; the twins, unbeknownst to each other, resist the countess's offers of love. In a move to comic resolution in the play, the duke finally confronts and resists the latent violence lurking behind his own Petrarchan rhetoric. Through character work, then, rather than merely by way of comic conventions, *Twelfth Night* transcends love imposition, elevates resistance, and emerges on the other side of comedy.

Because characters in *Twelfth Night* who attempt to impose false visions upon others often do so by way of disguise, I treat the convention--found in two forms in this play--as a mode of imposition in its own right. The most obvious form of disguise to appear in the play, the physical disguise which transforms Viola into the page Cesario, is

[4] The destruction of character resulting from an externally-imposed and internally-accepted distortion of perception, found in *Twelfth Night* in nascent form, is a constitutive element of tragedy; this dynamic is the focus of my next chapter on *Othello*.

contrasted throughout *Twelfth Night* with a more covert form of disguise, the false seeming displayed by Toby, Maria and, to a lesser degree, by Orsino as well.[5]

The style of disguise in *Twelfth Night* most conducive to the generic confines of tragedy involves the subtle, covert and yet pervasive strain of false friendship and/or false seeming that is never far from the surface of this play. Through the ruse of false friendship, Toby distorts Andrew's vision, so that he may "ride" (3.4.296) the foolish knight. Likewise, by way of a forged letter, Maria distorts Malvolio's vision--not only to discredit the steward in Olivia's eyes, but also to displace Andrew from the center of Toby's world and to position herself at that center as an erotic love choice. It goes without saying that in the process, Maria distorts Toby's clarity of perception as well; although Olivia's drunken kinsman senses the trap, he, too, in a manner reminiscent of other Shakespearean characters, takes the bait. Hence, for a character to avoid being ensnared by the metaphorical disguise of false seeming, *Twelfth Night* seems to suggest, only one remedy exists: to "check at every feather / That comes before his eye" (3.1.65-66). This latent subtext, a theme that rises to the surface in *Othello* and dominates that play, emerges at other moments in *Twelfth Night* as well, especially in Olivia's lines in 1.5 (312-315) and Sebastian's soliloquy in 4.3 (1-21).

Orsino, the chief imposer in *Twelfth Night's* main plot, does not literally employ the hollow promise of false friendship to impose love choice. Given that Olivia has repeatedly rejected his overtures of love in the past, however, Orsino's persistent and unheeding demands for marriage suggest that the Duke seeks to distort Olivia's

[5] Potentially tragic imposition in *Twelfth Night* is therefore bound up with false seeming or non-material disguise, while comic imposition in this play is associated with physical, including gender, disguise.

perception if necessary to enthrone himself in her heart as supreme beloved. Indeed, Orsino's main role in the play is dictated by his aspiring to this end:

> O, she that hath a heart of that fine frame
> To pay this debt of love but to a brother,
> How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
> Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else
> That live in her; when liver, brain, and heart,
> These sovereign thrones, are all supplied, and fill'd
> Her sweet perfections with one self king! (1.1.33-39)

Despite the fact that Orsino has no more malice in mind than accomplishing the comic end of marriage, as *Twelfth Night* progresses it becomes apparent that his efforts have crossed the line. Ironically, Orsino's attempts to change Olivia's perception become a delusion of sorts, one which soon clouds Orsino's own perception.[6] As such, Orsino reveals another *persona* lying latent beneath the one through which he is seen in Illyria and, perhaps more importantly, beneath the one through which he views himself.

For Orsino, Petrarchan rhetoric veils dangerous excesses at the same time it allows the Duke to delude himself that Olivia will soon return his love. Thus, as Orsino seeks to become the sole focus of Olivia's erotic intentions, his efforts assume literary life as Petrarchan love rhetoric: "O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first, / Methought she purg'd the air of pestilence" (1.1.19-20). Flawed by the latent violence which underpins it--"And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds, / E'er since pursue me" (1.1.22-23)—this rhetoric allows Orsino to refuse to acknowledge Olivia's clear rejection of his suit.

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[6] In contrast, I believe that Olivia's vision is quite unclouded from the play's opening to its close, with the exception of her failure to discern Viola's disguise.

Hence, Orsino's "fell and cruel hounds" in fact pursue Olivia with more violence than they pursue Orsino himself: as both Olivia and Viola discover in Act 5, the Duke's rhetoric easily escalates into threats of overt violence when his self-indulgent overtures fail to achieve their desired ends.

The other form of disguise which shapes *Twelfth Night's* plot and assumes metaphoric importance in the play, Viola's gender disguise, likewise conjures false visions in the play's key characters.[7] Although Viola says of herself, "I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth" (3.1.160), the page disguise she assumes by its very nature imposes gender-distorted vision, especially upon Olivia and Orsino, but also upon Olivia's household hangers-on as well. With gender-bender distortions of this nature, complications are certain to run amuck, and they do. Even as Olivia seeks love from Orsino's supposed page--"Even so quickly, may one catch the plague" (1.5.299)--Orsino repeatedly ignores the same page's gentle expressions of devotion. In addition to confusing Orsino and Olivia, Viola's disguise misleads Toby and Andrew. Their

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[7] Feste may be an exception to this. For the historical, social, cultural and political dimensions of fools and their folly, see Heather Arden, *Fools' Plays: A Study of Satire in the Sottie (* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); R. H. Goldsmith, *Wise Fools in Shakespeare* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1955); John Southworth, *Fools And Jesters At The English Court* (London: Sutton Publishing, 1998); Bente A. Videbaek, *The Stage Clown In Shakespeare's Theatre, Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies* No. 69 (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1996); Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935); Siegfried Wenzel, "The Wisdom of the Fool," in *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. Larry. D. Benson & Siegfried Wenzel, *Medieval Institute Publications* (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1982); David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); William Willeford, *The Fool and His Scepter: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1969); V. A. Williams, ed., *The Fool and The Trickster: Studies in Honour of Enid Welsford (* Cambridge and New Jersey: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Anton C. Zijderveld, *Reality In A Looking Glass*: *Rationality Through an Analysis of Traditional Folly* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

attempts to elevate Andrew lead to threats against the disguised Viola, and the duel Toby engineers raises the specter of tragic imposition that is so pervasive in *Twelfth Night*.

Despite the hints of tragedy which underpin the play's plot, more often than not in *Twelfth Night*, the gender confusion stemming from Viola's disguise translates into imposition and resistance of a comic nature--Olivia's misdirected courtship, for example, or the duke's ironical conversations with his page and total lack of awareness with regard to the nature of the disguised Viola's devotion. Yet other aspects of the play, including Toby's desire to entrap the supposed page into a duel with Andrew, Orsino's anger in 5.1, and Sebastian's exasperation after dealing with the carousers and Olivia's emissary Feste--"Are all the people mad?" (4.1.26)--foreground the permeable border which shifts constantly in *Twelfth Night* (as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) between potentially comic and potentially tragic outcomes.

Twelfth Night seems to say that in contrast to the disguises worn by Toby and Maria to gull Andrew and Malvolio--and, I argue, to knowingly subvert Olivia's rule--the type of disguise worn by Viola and the false vision to which it gives rise are not potentially tragic forms of perceptual imposition in the way that metaphoric (spiritual) disguise is. Indeed, despite all the confusion that it generates, Viola's gender disguise does not require that Olivia and Orsino--)--"check at every feather" (3.1.65) as Malvolio, Andrew, Othello, and so many of Shakespeare's other characters must--to preserve the conventions of comedy.

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While key characters in *Twelfth Nigh* are victimized by imposition from without and so become the objects of attacks meant to corrupt the integrity of their perception, a

number of these same characters also choose to assume the role of imposer in their own right.[8] Malvolio, for example, functions as both imposed-upon victim and imposer in *Twelfth Night*. Olivia's steward is as deluded by the false visions others choose to impose upon him as any character in *Twelfth Night,* perhaps more so. Malvolio's words in 2.5--"I do not now fool myself to let imagination jade me; for every reason excites to this" (164-65)--embody the essence of the protagonists of Shakespeare's tragedies. The steward allows others in *Twelfth Night* to distort his perception in a manner similar to the way characters in the tragedies—as, for example, Roderigo--permit the Iago's of the stage to "jade" them, to certain downfall. The delusion that Malvolio accepts--the externally-encouraged suggestion that Olivia loves him and that she is who the letter represents[9] her to be—transforms the steward from victim to would-be imposer in a way that can only alienate Olivia.

Like Malvolio, Olivia, too, functions not only as imposed-upon victim in *Twelfth Night* but also as an imposer in her own right. Despite the fact that she resists Orsino's unwanted attention vigorously from the outset, Olivia is quickly drawn into the fray to become a budding imposer herself. Her command-plea to Viola-Cesario in 3.1--"I would you were as I would have you be" (144)--circumscribes this role of hers. Although Olivia is a victim of the false vision imposed upon her by Viola's disguise, her words capture the essence of the desire to impose perception and will upon another in the way

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[8] Karen Grief, makes a somewhat similar (although certainly with different emphasis) observation in "Plays and Playing in '*Twelfth Night*": "Virtually every character in *Twelfth Night* is either an agent or a victim of illusion, and often a player will assume both these roles: as Viola is an imposter but also a prisoner of her own disguise, or as Sir Toby loses control of the deception he has contrived when he mistakes Sebastian for his twin" (121). See Karen Grief, "Plays and Playing in '*Twelfth Night*,'" *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespearean Study and Production* 34, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 121-130.

[9] The letter actually represents an *Anti-Olivia*, not the true Olivia. Malvolio's downfall is that he does not see this.

of love choice as succinctly as any lines in the play. Olivia's actions, however, never approach those of a tragic imposer, and her course is always consonant with the ends of comedy.[10]

Characters other than Malvolio and Olivia impose throughout the play as well, often with greater force and stronger potential for tragic outcome. As noted above, Orsino's entire role in *Twelfth Night* is predicated upon a series of efforts to impose himself as love choice upon Olivia through Petrarchan rhetoric, the latent violence of which is exposed by the fifth act of the play. Moreover, *Twelfth Night's* subplot portrays interaction of this nature as well: Toby imposes himself upon Andrew, while the pawn Andrew attempts to impose himself upon Olivia. But the consummate imposer, the imposer behind all others in *Twelfth Night*, is Maria.[11]

As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, eye imagery, in its familiar linkage with the development of erotic love and as a signifier of perception, is prevalent in *Twelfth Night*,. Orsino, for example, opens *Twelfth Night* reflecting upon an inadvertent imposition, one seemingly centered in the eyes (1.1.19-20). Olivia muses in a similar manner upon Cesario after her first meeting with the page:

> Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
>
> With an invisible and subtle stealth
>
> To creep in at mine eyes. Well, let it be. (1.5.300-2)

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[10] Therefore, despite Olivia's role as imposer with regard to Cesario and Sebastian, the position taken ultimately in this chapter is that first and foremost, Olvia's role in *Twelfth Night* is one of *resistance* to imposition. Perhaps more importantly, Olivia's efforts as imposer are ultimately comic--as seen in her words to Viola in 1.5, "You might do much. / What is your parentage?" (280-281)—rather than potentially tragic in their implications.

[11] From the perspective of Maria's efforts to ensnare him, Toby too is not only an imposer, but also a victim who ranks with Malvolio and Andrew in having been turned into a "contemplative idiot" (2.5.19-20). Indeed, Toby is caught.

While Olivia accepts the razor-thin ice upon which she treads—"Well, let it be" (1.5.302)--she voices awareness of the danger in a way that Malvolio, Toby, and Andrew never do: "I do I know not what, and fear to find / Mine eye too great a flatter for my mind" (1.5.312-313). In this sense, resistance to imposition, a powerful current in the main plot of *Twelfth Night* from the comedy's early scenes, gives rise to Orsino's definitive movement as the play closes: "One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons! / A natural perspective, that is, and is not!" (5.1.214-5).

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Twentieth century critical analysis[12] contextualizes *Twelfth Night* with regard to the play's circumstances and time of composition (Hotson), and the traditions of Misrule, Saturnalia and Renaissance Folly (Barber, Welsford, Hotson, among others). Other early critics, including Charlton, Summers, and Salingar, consider *Twelfth Night* from the perspective of the comedy's generic conventions, position, and structure. From a more thematic perspective in the 70's, Alexander Leggatt cites the sea and "benevolent fate" (249) as the play's resolving factors and the basis of *Twelfth Night's* dramatic unity, while Anne Barton notes the "essentially implausible world" (Bradbury 176) that closes

[12] See C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Anne Barton, "*As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*: Shakespeare's Sense of an Ending," *Shakespearean Comedy*. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, eds. *Stratford -upon-Avon Studies* 14 (London, 1972): 160-80; H.B. Charlton, *Shakespearean Comedy* (London and New York: McMillan, 1938); Christopher R. Hassel, Jr., *Faith and Folly in Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); John Hollander, "*Twelfth Night* and the Morality of Indulgence," Sewanee Review 67 (1959): 220-38; Leslie Hotson, *The First Night of* Twelfth Night (New York: Macmillan,1955); Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Methuen, 1974); L. G. Salingar, "The Design of *Twelfth Night,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 9 (1958): 117-39, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), and more recently, *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobeans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Joseph H. Summers, "The Masks of *Twelfth Night*," in Palmer, *Casebook*, 86-97; Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935).

the play. Barton argues that Malvolio is "a figure of violence and leaves unreconciled, meditating a futile revenge" (Bradbury 177), and explores the implications that the steward's departure holds for Shakespeare's comic closure.

Diverse views characterize more current[13] critical literature on *Twelfth Night* as well. Stephen Booth observes, "If one wanted to draw a lesson from *Twelfth Night* the one to draw would be the one Viola and Sebastian—and only Viola and Sebastian—seem to learn in the course of the play: do not let overpowering evidence overpower you" (Erickson 166), while Barbara Freedman suggests that "we might read the characters in *Twelfth Night* according to their strategies for coping with loss and disillusionment" (194). Camille Slights argues that, "Not even Viola, then, can discover a way out of the tangled personal relationships that make up the plot of *Twelfth Night*. Beneficent fortune, not human wit, creates the happy endings" (545). While I find Slight's essay extremely insightful, I argue that *human choice*, if not "human wit," creates the happy endings" as much as "fortune."

Karen Grief sees in *Twelfth Night's* Illyria, "a world of deceptive surfaces, where appearances constantly fluctuate between what is real and what is illusory" (122), a place wherein, "The same ambiguity that is characteristic of words pervades almost every aspect of human experience in *Twelfth Night*" (122). William Carroll, who explores the tradition of metamorphosis in the play, makes the following observation:

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[13]See Stephen Booth, *"Twelfth Night* 1.1: The Audience As Malvolio," *Shakespeare's 'Rough Magic': Renaissance Essays in Honor of C. L. Barber,* ed. Peter Erickson and Coppèlia Kahn (Newark: University of Delaware,1985): 149-67; Barbara Freedman, "Naming Loss: Mourning and Representation in *Twelfth Night*," *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991); Karen Grief, "Plays and Playing in '*Twelfth Night*,'" *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespearean Study and Production* 34, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 121-130; Camille Slights, "The Principle of Recompense in *Twelfth Night*," *Modern Language Review* 77, no.3 (July, 1982): 537-546.

> Both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* nevertheless offer alternative versions of the *Isola Encantada* or magical forest. Ephesus and Illyria represent, in varying degrees, removed spaces where anything might happen because boundaries are breached and identities are fluid. So, rejecting overt nymph-to-tree or man-to-stag metamorphoses, Shakespeare manipulates alternative modes—doubling, disguise, and mistaken identity—to do double duty. These conventions function in the normal way, as devices of intrigue [plots], but also work simultaneously as new and subtle versions of transformation. The result is a sustained revelation of what it means to be and not to be, when a single identity splits into two, and two fuse back into one. (64)

Yet matters are more stable and less in flux than sometimes thought in this play. Rather than pursuing the identity split vision of *Twelfth Night's* "*Isola Encantada*," then, this study might explores the play's representation of characters who hold to the integrity of their own internal perception and those who do not.

Other critics, including, Kahn, Krieger, Malcomson, and Nevo,[14] consider *Twelfth Night* from the perspective of the play's inherent assumptions regarding the nature of gender relationships; psycho-social development, and political and economic

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[14] Coppèlia Kahn, "The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family," *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981); Elliot Krieger, "*Twelfth Night*," *A Marxist Study of Shakespeare's Comedies* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979): 97-130; Ruth Nevo, "Nature's Bias," *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1980): 200-15; Christina Malcolmson, "'What You Will': Social Mobility and Gender in *Twelfth Night*," *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991): 29-57.

stances. In this regard, Coppèlia Kahn notes that despite the fact that Olivia, Orsino and Viola each express desire, "they all, in different ways, defend against eros as a threat to the integrity and stability of the self" (207). Elliot Krieger, who views the play's festive closing more as a triumph achieved through restoration of the traditional hierarchical order than anything else, suggests that "a ruling-class ideology operates within the play" (123). According to Krieger, this ideology is made manifest in *Twelfth Night* in the negative response accorded to Malvolio as he attempts to fashion "his own antithetic second world" (123). Arguing that "Barber, like Hollander, deftly sidesteps the issue of social class in his discussion of festive release in *Twelfth Night*" (100), Krieger points out that Orsino's version of egoism is accorded quite a different response by the Duke's courtly hangers-on (122) than is Malvolio's narcissism.

In contrast to Krieger's position, Christina Macolmson observes in "'What You Will': Gender and Social Mobility in *Twelfth Night,*" that the play "dramatizes the issue of social mobility through women who, though servants, are as capable as their male masters, and who rise out of this role as servants to become their master's mistresses" (Wayne 31). In another approach, Stephen Greenblatt[15] focuses upon issues of individuation and gender identity in *Twelfth Night*:

> Though Shakespeare characteristically represents his women characters—Rosalind, Portia, Viola—as realizing their identities through cross-dressing, this whole conception of individuation seems to me bound up with Renaissance conceptions of the emergence of male identity. . . . If a crucial step in male

[15] See "Fiction and Friction," in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 66-93.

> individuation is separation from the female, this separation is enacted inversely in the rites of cross-dressing; characters like Viola and Rosalind pass through the state of being men in order to become women. Shakespearean women are in this sense the representation of Shakespearean men, the projected mirror images of masculine self-differentiation. (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 92)

Along with Lisa Jardine, Jean Howard and others, Greenblatt emphasizes issues of gender, transvestitism, and the boy actor's place on the Renaissance stage. While the argument I wish to pursue in this chapter does not deny the significance of the play's social and gender experiments**,** my focus remains centered on the dynamics of perceptual imposition and resistance. To this end, I am more interested in exploring explicit patterns by which individual characters seek to persuade each other about the nature of what is desirable in love and love choice than I am in exploring sexual or gender patterns directly.

In comedy, imposition more often involves manipulating love object choice, rather than destroying it, an outcome more prevalent when love choice is the issue in tragedy. As characters in *Twelfth Night* reveal selves possessing complexity and depth, fundamental questions are generated. As with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, such questions might include the following: Does courtship by its very nature compromise the ability of a subject to act freely? Does *Twelfth Night* define love as the process during which another's entreaties to be an ultimate love choice are accepted freely by an acting subject? If so, which characters seem to do that in this play? Finally*,* is the resistance to courtship which is discernible in *Twelfth Night* meant to question Shakespearean

comedy's more typical triumphal acceptance of courtship? These questions and others must be considered in any exploration of the play from the perspective of perceptual imposition.

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Because Toby and Maria resist Malvolio's attempts to impose household thriftiness and sobriety upon them, commentators often designate knight and chambermaid as upholders of joy and festivity in Illyria, and Malvolio as the sour apple[16] spoiling the rest. However, if this theory is placed under the lens of the concept of perceptual imposition, it fails to hold up. It is true that Toby and Maria refuse to accept the guilt Malvolio attempts to impose upon Olivia's household, and that they criticize the steward at every opportunity: "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (2.3.114-5). Yet the question must be asked: For whom does Malvolio speak and act? For himself? Or for someone else?

Early on, Olivia sends Maria and then Malvolio to restrain the "caterwauling" (2.3.73). As the parasites escalate their rowdiness in full view of Olivia--"By mine honour, half drunk" (1.5.117)--and as demands for "cakes and ale" (2.3.115) increase, Olivia retreats, leaving Malvolio poised alone upon the precipice of fast-fading household decorum. Indeed, at the moment when he solidifies Maria's undying hatred against himself, Malvolio attempts only to impose the will of a mistress who herself has no problems with the concept of hospitality, generosity, or "cakes and ale." Rather, Olivia seeks only to address Toby's out-of-control behavior--"Cousin, cousin, how have you

[16] For example, see C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*; John Hollander, "The Morality of Indulgence;" and Paul N Siegel, "Malvolio: Comic Puritan Automaton," in *Shakespearean Comedy* 5-6, ed. Maurice Charney (New York: *New York Literary Forum*, 1980). Critics taking exception to this view include Krieger, who explores the play's concern with class and social hierarchy as impacting Malvolio's fate. See Elliot Krieger, *A Marxist Study of Shakespeare's Comedies* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979): 97-130.

come so early by this lethargy?" (1.5.124-25)--behavior to which Maria herself alludes in 1.3. Thus, Malvolio does not cite his own authority as he censures the revelers; instead, the steward insists that he speaks for Olvia[17] when confronting Toby in 2.3:

> Sir Toby, I must be round with you. My lady bade me tell you, that though she harbours you as her kinsman, she's nothing allied to your disorders. If you can separate yourself and your misdemeanours, you are welcome to the house: if not, and it would please you to take leave of her, she is very willing to bid you farewell. (95-101)

Toby's sing-song response--"'Farewell, dear heart, since I must needs be gone'" (2.3.102)—is in effect a tipsy refusal to abide by Olivia's wishes rather than an apology or a promise to change his ways in the future. As he dismisses her steward, Toby effectively dismisses Olivia's authority and her right to exercise that authority in her own household. In this way, Toby begins his move from the margins of *Twelfth Night* to its periphery.

In defiance of Olivia's orders, Maria sides with Toby. Undercutting the steward, Maria offers what must be viewed as an apology of sorts to Toby: "Nay, good Sir Toby . . . Sweet Sir Toby, be patient for tonight" (2.3.103, 132). Maria's condoning of the knights' revelry is so obvious that Malvolio, admittedly not the most perceptive creature

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[17] Whether Malvolio himself has a problem with Olivia's idea of household largesse is not the issue. In this sense, I agree with Goddard, who, among others, makes this point regarding Malvolio's sense of duty in carrying out Olivia's wishes. Goddard observes, "In their dislike of Malvolio they forget that he is merely carrying out Olivia's orders, in however annoying a manner" (296). However, in contrast to Goddard, I suggest that Toby and Maria do not "forget" at all. Rather, they know exactly whose orders Malvolio attempts to carry out, exactly whose orders they flaunt. Indeed, the carousers are quite willing to defy Olivia to achieve their own ends. Goddard also notes Maria's interest in Toby (298) and her utter indifference as to Malvolio's state of mind (298) in *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951): 294-306, a study which I found quite helpful, although I move to other conclusions.

in Illyria, censures the chambermaid for violating Olivia's orders: "Mistress Mary, if you prized my lady's favour at anything more than contempt, you would not give means for this uncivil rule; she shall know of it, by this hand" (2.3.120-3). Maria's consequent verbal dismissal of Malvolio--"Go shake your ears" (2.3.124)--must be read not as an attack on Malvolio the man, but rather as an attack on Malvolio the steward, on business for his mistress: . By failing to support Malvolio and siding with the drunken parasites, Maria solidifies her drive to impose Toby upon the household and herself upon Toby. In this not-so-subtle way, then, Maria embarks[18] upon a course to undermine Olivia.[19]

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To placate Toby and further her vendetta against Malvolio, Maria exploits the folly she knows is close to the surfaces in the steward who, unbeknownst to Olivia, is now her only ally[20] in the household. By indulging and encouraging Malvolio's fantasy that Olivia might be an attainable love object—"Maria once told me she did affect me" (2.5.23-4)--Maria corrupts Malvolio's perception and clouds his vision. This permits the chambermaid not only to discredit and humiliate

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[18] More precisely, perhaps I should say that Maria *continues upon* a course she has already chosen.

[19] Although a resistor with regard to blatant acts of imposition, Olivia admittedly does not "check at every feather" in her own home. Therefore, Maria's movement to consolidate Toby's rule over the household (and hence, her own) proceeds on course. Not until late in the play, as she--perhaps warned by Feste--rushes to prevent the duel Toby has orchestrated, are Olivia's eyes opened to the danger Toby poses, kinsman or not:

> Will it ever be thus? Ungracious wretch,
> Fit for the mountains and the barbarous caves,
> Where manners ne'er were preach'd! Out of *my sight*!
> . . .
> Rudesby, be gone (4.1.46-8; 50)

Until 4.1, then, Olivia's gracious hospitality blocks her "sight" to the point where she is at risk of becoming alienated her in her own household. Even after Olivia reaches clarity of vision, however, Sebastian's physical abilities--abilities which allow Viola's twin to impose of a sense of place upon the carousers—are necessary to bring about comic closure in this play.

[20] As the action develops, Maria looks increasingly to Toby for orders and favors rather than to Olivia.

Malvolio, but, also, to further isolate Olivia in her own household, "a matter in which Toby has no small stake" (Nevo 205).

Malvolio internalizes[21] Maria's imposition and allows his sight to be corrupted to the degree that his deluded perception is written not only in his actions, but also in his smile and upon his face:

> He does obey every point of the letter that I dropped to betray him: he does smile his face into more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies: you have not seen such a thing as 'tis. I can hardly forbear hurling things at him. I know my lady will strike him: if she do, he'll smile and take't for a great favour. (3.2.74-80)

Maria warps Malvolio's sight and distorts his perception to the point that the steward's words might be interchanged for those of Roderigo or even of Othello: "I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me; for every reason excites to this" (2.5.164-65).

Maria's mantra is, "Now, sir, thought is free" (1.3.68), but by way of her ability to manipulate and control Toby and Malvolio, Shakespeare's representation of Olivia's

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[21] Rather than exercising his own vision--and with hopes to "please the eye of one" (3.4.21)--Malvolio assumes a role foreign to his own nature. Andrew's vision is, like Malvolio's, similarly clouded, despite the fact that in 3.2, Andrew confidently affirms the validity of his eyesight: "As plain as I see you now" (8). Notwithstanding his brave words, Andrew allows Toby to distort his perception regarding the possibility of marriage to Olivia, a desired but seemingly impossible-to-acquire love choice: "Send for money, knight; if thou hast her not i' th' end, call me cut" (2.3.186-87). Indeed, for most of the play, Toby is content to "ride" (3.4.296) Andrew. Not until 5.1, as *Twelfth Night* closes is Toby's contempt for Andrew exposed as he rebuffs Andrew's offers of fellowship and unity in injury: "Will you help? An ass-head, and a coxcomb, and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull?" (5.1.204-205). Obviously, Andrew, too, fails to "check at every feather / That comes before his eye " (3.1.65-66); as such, the foolish knight serves as an embodiment of Shakespeare's treatment of the appearance vs. reality theme.

chambermaid[22] in *Twelfth Night* suggests that "thought" is not always "free." From this perspective, Fabian captures the essence of Malvolio's lack of insight and inability to retain the clarity of his own perception when faced with an adversary with the skill of Maria: "Ay, and you had any eye behind you, you might see more detraction at your heels than fortune before you" (2.5.136-138).

Because Malvolio speaks for Olivia, Toby and Maria's continued defiance must ultimately be seen not as harmless breaches of household decorum in the interest of

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[22] Not just a powerless character entrapping similarly powerless characters—for example, a steward in his own folly for the amusement of parasitic knights—in actuality, Maria's ability to impose herself upon others' perceptions and usurp their identity extends to Olivia as well. Although Olivia invites this to a degree in the veil game she plays with Maria in Act 3 as Viola makes a first appearance for Orsino, the chambermaid displays striking ability in her own right to impose herself upon others' perception--an ability which goes far beyond a guessing game based upon double veiling. In a concrete manifestation of her ability, Maria boasts of being able to imitate Olivia's writing (2.3.160-2). This imitative action serves as a literal manifestation of Maria's power to see into her mistress emotionally and psychologically, to know Olivia well enough to become her. It is only because Maria (like Iago) possesses this power to almost *become* Olivia that she knows exactly the way to set Malvolio up to insure that the Countess will view him as mad.

In *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), William C. Carroll observes of the steward: "One of Malvolio's least attractive traits is his maniacal resistance to transformation, his refusal to allow boundaries to give way (unless the ones between him and Olivia), especially the social boundaries which supposedly divide him from Toby Belch and set him apart from the rest of mankind. The more strongly he resists change, the more rigid his stance, the more certain it is to happen. . ." (88). Commentators often emphasize the fact that Maria's plot surfaces or elicits Malvolio's latent folly: as Paul Siegel observes, "Malvolio, whose name connotes ill will, is the Puritan spoilsport in the midst of gaiety" (Charney 217); "The letter makes him act as in his daydream, but this is only an exaggeration of the way he has already behaved in sternly admonishing Sir Toby and speaking sourly to Feste. . ." (Charney 221). Yet Maria's plan to entrap Malvolio reveals as much knowledge of Olivia's taste as of Malvolio's folly. The vision upon which Maria expounds in the letter is, in fact, an *Anti-Olivia,* in that Maria incorporates detailed awareness of Olivia's dislikes in the area of fashion and color in the snare she offers Malvolio:

> If you will then see the fruits of the sport, mark his first approach before my lady: he will come to her in yellow stockings, and 'tis a colour *she abhors*, and cross-gartered, a fashion *she detests*: and he will smile upon her, which will now be so *unsuitable to her disposition*, being addicted to a melancholy as she is, that it cannot but turn him into a notable contempt. (2.5.197-204)

The steward fails to recognize that the missive perpetrates a vision which is an *Anti-Olivia*, rather than one reflective of his mistress. Malvolio's limited perspective—perception shaped by his desire to impose himself upon Olivia as a love object—causes him to be fair game for a letter that conveys a vision of Olivia that is not Olivia. In this sense, Malvolio deludes himself as much as he is deluded by Maria and the others. However, from the perspective of imposition, Malvolio is a victim.

festivity, but, rather, as threats to Olivia's authority.[23] Thus, I suggest that the imposing agent in *Twelfth Night's* subplot is not the steward Malvolio. Nor is the issue Malvolio's crusade against festivity; rather, the agents of imposition are Toby and Maria. Toby and Maria pose a threat to Olivia, as Malvolio himself realizes: "Do ye make an ale-house of my lady's house, that ye squeak out your coziers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice?" (2.3.89-92). Moreover, after it becomes apparent that Malvolio's vision is being distorted almost to the point of madness, Maria proves indifferent in a way that Iago is indifferent: "The house will be the quieter" (3.4.135).[24] Olivia does not want this version of a "quieter" house any more than Malvolio does, but it is in Maria's interests to make it so.

. For Maria, the question is not one of valuing "my lady's favour" (2.3.120), to use Malvolio's words. Aware that any desire on Olivia's part for household decorum must ultimately lose out to her generosity and/or withdrawn presence, Maria plays the court both ways. She knows, as Toby knows, that the "buttery bar" (1.3.69) will not go dry, and she also knows the way to neutralize Malvolio. Bereft of protective brother and steward, Olivia may complain about knightly carryings on, but enforcing "modest limits of order" (1.3.9) will not be easy, as the steward who attempts to do so suddenly learns.

Imposition in *Twelfth Night's* underplot thus returns full circle to where it began in the main plot, that is, to Olivia. If Olivia marries Orsino, Maria is still a chamber-

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[23] Once again, Goddard makes this point, one among many helpful insights, in *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951): 294-306, a study which, I found quite helpful, although I follow the ideas to different conclusions.

[24] In this sense, Maria's efforts to corrupt perception are more deadly than Oberon's. Because the chambermaid's mode of imposing false vision involves the use of covert action and therefore also differs from Egeus' more open mode of domination, I agree with Goddard, who observes that, "There is a vague premonition of the Iago-Cassio theme here. . . Her sport must always bear immediate fruit that others can see and feel. In this case to show off her talents before Sir Toby is as strong a motive as to humiliate Malvolio. She tickles and catches her trout. . ." (298).

maid. On the other hand, if Andrew becomes Olivia's husband and Maria becomes Toby's wife, Toby would control Olivia's fortune, and Maria might well become her mistress' mistress. As the action in *Twelfth Night* develops, Olivia's hangers-on are in a position to assume more and more control of the household as they flaunt her orders and reduce her steward to a state of vulnerability.[25] Hence, the usurpation theme of Shakespeare's tragedies might well play itself out for the first time in *Twelfth Night* with a woman (Olivia)[26] if generic constraints were not in place.

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In 5.1, having undertaken the ultimate act of resistance to Orsino's advances by marrying another man, the newly-wedded Olivia urges Orsino's page Cesario (whom she believes to be the person she has just married) to assume his rightful place at her side:

> Fear not, Cesario, take thy fortunes up,
> Be that thou know'st thou art, and then thou art
> As great as that thou fear'st. (5.1.146-8)

For similar actions and views, the Duchess of Malfi dies.[27] (5.1.207-9).

In addition to the love barrages directed at Olivia from within her own household, she is under siege from an external source as well; indeed, my labeling of Olivia role's role in *Twelfth Night* as one of resistance is a function of her response to the

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[25] I say *vulnerabilit*y because Malvolio refuses to go mad. The steward counters the attacks leveled against his perception with resistance of a sort and so clings to his sanity during the time he is bound in the dark and harassed. For example, see Goddard: "That Malvolio keeps his head during his confinement in darkness and does not lose his dignity when he charges his mistress with having done him notorious wrong is further proof of a kind of moral solidity in the man" (299).

[26] Toby obviously controls Andrew, and Maria, as Toby suggests, intends to control Toby: "Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck?" (2.5.188); "Shall I play my freedom at tray-trip, and become thy bond-slave?" (2.5.190-1). Once again, Goddard addresses these points in a most insightful manner (298). I argue that Olivia is fast becoming marginalized in her own household; she is in the process of being displaced by her kinsman as Sebastian's apologetic explanation in 5.1 (207-9), after he is forced to draw to protect himself, reveals.

[27] John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. John Russell Brown (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990).

Duke of Illyria's suit, rather than a function of her response to Toby or Andrew, or even to Maria. Indeed, throughout the course of *Twelfth Night,* as often as Orsino attempts to impose himself upon Olivia as a love object, Olivia resists. Speaking to the disguised Viola, for example, Olivia leaves no doubt as to the intrinsic, entrenched nature of her resistance:

> Your lord does know my mind, I cannot love him.
> Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,
> Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;
> In voices well divulg'd, free, learn'd and valiant,
> And in dimension, and the shape of nature,
> A gracious person. But yet I cannot love him:
> He might have took his answer long ago. (1.5.261-7)

Olivia opens *Twelfth Night* in this key, and she moves to close it in a similarly direct manner--"What would my lord have, but that he may not have, / Wherein Olivia may seem serviceable?" (5.1.99-100)--with regard to Orsino's attentions as he seeks to force those attentions upon her.

Orsino's emissaries prior to Cesario, too, have repeatedly been informed of Olivia's refusal to admit his suit: "The element itself, till seven years' heat, / Shall not behold her face at ample view" (1.1.26-7). Therefore, the fact that Cesario is given the same story almost immediately upon assuming the position of Orsino's go-between as well as in encounters thereafter--"Get you to your lord: / I cannot love him: let him send no more" (1.5.283-4); "For him, I think not on him: for his thoughts, / Would they were

blanks, rather than fill'd with me" (3.1.105-6)—should come as no surprise.[28] When Orsino decides to stop sending emissaries and appear himself, Olivia tells the Duke, again in forthright terms, of her view of his suit:

> If it be aught to the old tune, my lord,
>
> It is as fat and fulsome to mine ear
>
> As howling after music. (5.1.106-8)

Olivia states her view as to what Orsino may do with his suit even more emphatically six lines later as she responds to Orsino's self-indulgent lament, "What shall I do?" (5.1.113), with cool detachment: "Even what it please my lord that shall become him" (5.1.114).

Ultimately, *Twelfth Night's* audience is never privileged to learn exactly why Olivia cannot love Orsino. Ruth Nevo argues that "Orsino is a touch effeminate" (209), while "Olivia is masterful" (209), and that the lack of attraction

[28] Despite this easily-discerned representation in *Twelfth Night*, commentators persist in accusing Olivia of any number of strange maladies. At the mid-century mark, for example, Harold Goddard makes this observation with regard to Olivia: "Orsino and Olivia are both victims of their emotions. . . Olivia, with her inordinate grief for her brother, at first looks like Orsino's twin. But when we get a glimpse behind her veil we see that her emotionalism is of another brand. Her carefully announced, absurdly long period of mourning, with its withdrawal from society, is evidently a pretext, however unconscious, for singling herself out, making herself interesting, as black does its wearer in a crowd of bright costumes" (300). In a more current view, Krieger observes that Olivia's "ritual mourning does not acknowledge death, but by making the future entirely predictable and controlled, her mourning protects against loss and decay, refuses to mourn. Olivia perverts rather than rejects the communality of care by directing it toward one no longer in the world. . ." (103). Similarly, Karen Grief argues that Olivia displays "willful insistence" (122), and that she, like Orsino, is "foolish" (122), due to the fact that "the roles of unrequited lover and grief-stricken lady they have chosen for themselves spring more from romantic conceits than from deep feeling or necessity" (122). I argue that view such as these fail to address the larger picture of imposition, or of Olivia's chaotic situation. Although we differ in our emphases upon this issue, I generally concur with Ruth Nevo: "Fatherless and brotherless, Olivia is the sole mistress of her household. She is its source of authority, and her unruly house guests are there to show that she is able to take command, though the turbulence below stairs under Sir Toby's aegis indicates that her control is not impregnable. She leans upon her steward in her lonely eminence, and not only to ward off a suit from the count. . ." (204). I argue that the usurpation theme of the tragedies surfaces in the underplot of *Twelfth Night* and that attempts to usurp Malvolio's sanity are reflections of attempts to usurp Olivia's authority.

stems from the inherent conflict which must arise between two such personalities. Nevo argues that this conflict is neutralized by the appearance of Cesario:

> The touch of reckless forthrightness, the spirit, the candour, the imaginative panache with which the willow cabin fantasy is described. . . these are surely precisely the self-assertive, masculine qualities which have been lacking in Orsino and which promptly bring out the womanly Olivia, a "bringing out" in which discretion becomes impetuosity and composure disintegrates in distracted doting upon the Duke's peevish messenger. (207)

From another point of view—Toby's—*Twelfth Night's* dramatic audience is informed along with Andrew that, "She'll none o' th' Count; she'll not match above her degree, neither in estate, years, nor wit; I have heard her swear't" (1.3.106-8). Toby's words may be less than reliable, given his desire to impose his man Andrew upon Olivia as a love choice; furthermore, I think the portrayal is more complex than Toby asserts or Nevo argues (on this point). Still, Shakespeare's representation of Olivia conveys the fragile, elusive and intrinsic nature of erotic love development, and of the perceptual operations which gives rise to this love.

Like her face in 1.5, Olivia's reasons for being unable to love Orsino remain veiled. Shakespeare explores a similar question by way of Hermia's dilemma in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the earlier play, too, fails to provide a satisfactory answer as to why Hermia is unable to love the individual her father selects for her and deems so worthy. Interestingly, the earlier play also fails to provide a satisfactory reason

as to *why Hermia should be pressured to do so*; in fact, the opposite is true. Olivia resembles *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Hermia in that, like Hermia, she chooses not to love one individual totally worthy in the eyes of the world, but to love another instead. As Hermia acknowledges the worthiness of Demetrius so insisted upon by Egeus, Olivia acknowledges the worthiness of Orsino, so insisted upon by the Duke himself. Olivia readily praises Orsino's "well divulg'd" (1.5.264) name, his "free" (1.5.264) and "valiant" (1.5.264) temperament, acknowledging him "in dimension, and the shape of nature, / A gracious person" (1.5.264-5). Although Olivia does not seem to admit Orsino as a love choice, she easily identifies his attractive qualities

Still, even as Hermia recognizes that, if granted power as a freely-choosing subject, she will choose Lysander over Demetrius, Olivia recognizes that she must love someone other than Orsino. In a manner similar to Hermia's--although without open death threats hanging over her head--Olivia informs Orsino's page, the world of Illyria, and *Twelfth Night's* dramatic audience that while Orsino is many wonderful things, she cannot love him. Olivia's power and poise in *Twelfth Night* are such that she never doubts it is within the scope of her power to choose her own beloved. Rather, she presumes this right, as her response to Orsino's Petrarchan challenge, "Still so cruel?" (5.1.109) indicates: "Still so constant, lord" (5.1.109).

Ultimately, Olivia's reasons for not choosing to love Orsino are not pertinent to my premise here. Orsino behaves foolishly throughout most of the play; his role is rooted not so much in "romantic conceits" (Grief 122) but in the urge to dominate (Krieger 105; Slights 544) in a realm wherein--Shakespeare seems to say--the mode of domination can

never truly rule. In contrast, Olivia's role, rather than being self-indulgent, is rooted in the necessity that critics refuse to grant to her. To condemn Olivia for resisting Orsino's unrelenting attempts to impose himself upon her as beloved when she makes it clear that he is not her choice is to indulge in the worst form of sexism, a fallacy similar to asserting that *Measure for Measure's* Isabella must accept Angelo's manipulative power play to be a loving sister and/or sexually healthy person. It is to assume that a woman has no right to choose another if the love object in question is acceptable from an (admittedly) valid social perspective, even if it is in direct conflict with her own will and desire.

As noted above, I argue that Olivia's position should come as no surprise. Throughout the play, she consistently displays the desire to make her own choices as acting subject with regard to love. *Twelfth Night's* Olivia is above all, then, a "resistor," in the tradition of Hermia, of Portia, of Beatrice, all of whom rebel against the imposition of love in one way or another. Rather than seeing Olivia as narcissistic (Krieger 98-101), as being filled with "self-indulgence almost too big to be encompassed by Orsino's [own]" (Hollander 224), as characterized by "complacent self-absorption" (Slights 537), or even as being caught up in excessive mourning (Summers 25-7), I argue that Olivia's scenes of resistance in *Twelfth Night* portray her rather as a character of depth, intelligence, balance, and above all, as one in need of protection (Nevo 214).

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Despite the fact the she spends most of the play resisting Orsino's overtures of love, with a style distinctively her own, Olivia takes up the role of imposer in *Twelfth Night,* directing her efforts to the disguised Viola. In her *persona* as imposer, Olivia

searches for ways to make herself the love choice of Viola (and later, unknowingly, of the confused Sebastian). Olivia's musings--"How shall I feast him? What bestow of him? / For youth is bought more oft than begg'd or borrow'd" (3.4.2-3)--reveal the primary mode of imposition (bribery) through which she hopes to ensconce herself in Viola-Cesario's eyes. Therefore, much of *Twelfth Night's* comic value is derived from Olivia's efforts to impose love.[29]

As an imposer, Olivia turns the cold Petrarchan mistress mode she plays so well with Orsino upside down in wild devotion to the page: "A fiend like thee might bear my soul to hell" (3.4.219). While some might term such sudden falling in love with a page precipitous and rash, it should be noted that Olivia questions her own infatuation, and that on occasion, she attempts to resist it. Thus, in contrast to *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Helena (who displays awareness of the futility of her role as entreater-imposer only as she decides to leave the forest late in the play), Olivia displays the ability to reflect on more than one occasion, as she cautions herself--"Not too fast: soft! soft! / Unless the

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[29] Olivia's reflections upon her reasons for falling in love with Orsino's page distinguish her from *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* feminine imposers Helena and Titania. First, Olivia displays ability to assess character that both Helena and Titania lack:

> 'Above my fortunes, yet my state is well;
> I am a gentleman.' I'll be sworn thou art:
> Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit
> Do give thee five-fold blazon. Not too fast: soft! soft!
> Unless the master were the man. How now?
> Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
> Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
> With an invisible and subtle stealth
> To creep in at mine eyes. Well, let it be. (1.5.294-302)

Olivia takes Cesario's veiled explanation of gracious parentage seriously, noting that the page's assertions are indelibly stamped upon "tongue, face, limbs, actions and spirit." In contrast, although Olivia is deluded as to gender, Helena and Titania are more radically deluded in that they both fail to see themselves or their lovers with any clarity of vision. Helena does not recognize the side of Demetrius to which Lysander alludes as he defends himself in the court of Athens before Theseus. I include Titania here, despite the fact that in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, her delusion is represented as an external one, one not of her choosing. I do this because the outcome is the same: Titania fails to recognize Bottom for what he is due to the distorted vision under which she labors, and she idolizes him. Olivia, on the other hand, recognizes Cesario in all dimensions except one--admittedly an important one.

master were the man" (1.5.297-8)—and seeks to understand the perilous ground upon which she suddenly finds herself: "Even so quickly may one catch the plague?" (1.5.299). Yet despite her awareness of the danger and her desire to resist, Olivia accepts circumstances as they are:

> I have said too much unto a heart of stone,
> And laid mine honour too unchary out:
> There's something in me reproves my fault:
> But such a headstrong potent fault it is,
> That it but mocks reproof. (3.4.203-7)

Language of this nature, as Harold Bloom asserts, foregrounds Shakespeare's ability to nuance character.[30] In *Twelfth Night*, Olivia may have a "fault," recognize it, reflect upon it, and yet portray a character consonant with the ends of comedy. While Shakespearean tragedy does not grant the happy grace, Shakespeare's comedy permits Olivia (and Viola and even Orsino) to reflect in this way to effective ends.

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Rather than speculate—Why does Olivia not love Orsino? Why does Olivia suddenly decide to love Cesario?—I focus instead upon Olivia's unveiling scene as a representation of consciously-chosen, freely-entered-into, erotic love.

In 1.5, Olivia unveils herself as the quintessential Petrarchan mistress to the disguised Viola:

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[30] See Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Hum*an (New York: Riverhead, 1998): "In Shakespeare, characters develop rather than unfold, and they develop because they reconceive themselves. Sometimes this comes about because they *overhear* themselves talking, whether to themselves or to others. Self-overhearing is their royal road to individuation, and no other writer, before or since Shakespeare, has accomplished so well the virtual miracle of creating utterly different self-consistent voices for his more than one hundred major characters and many hundreds of highly distinctive minor personages" (xvii).

> O, sir, I will not be so hard-hearted: I will give out divers schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried, and every particle and utensil labelled to my will. As, item, two lips, indifferent red**;** item, two grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one neck, one chin, and so forth. Were you sent hither to praise me? (1.5.244-50)

Yet Olivia unveils more than pride in the tradition of a Petrarchan mistress--'Tis in grain, sir, 'twill endure wind and weather" (240-41) in1.5. I suggest that Olivia's resistance to the love imposers who haunt her court is manifested in her refusal to see and to be seen.[31] "A Penelope, badgered by suitors" (Nevo 214), for Olivia, veiling is resistance to love imposition; conversely, unveiling is a sign that an imposition of another nature has occurred. As such, Olivia's unveiling[32] is a blazon to, a heralding of, the freely-chosen (but also, *inexplicably-chosen*, Shakespeare seems to say) erotic love development now in process.

Because she does not have access to protective caskets left by a careful father, Olivia devises her own protection: "eye-offending brine" (1.1.30), a "veiled walk" (1.1.28), the role of a "cloistress" (1.1.28). Under siege, as Nevo has argued, for Olivia, veiling is resistance to unwanted love imposition; unveiling, her commitment to choosing to merge her perception with that of another in love. In this sense, Olivia's resistance to forced love is metaphorized in *Twelfth Night* by

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[31] For example, Olivia has no interaction with Andrew that we see. We might suspect that she has no knowledge of his presence, if it were not for Maria's words to Toby in 1.3.14-17.

[32] Krieger is especially insightful on this point: "Her love for Cesario breaks her out of the privacy of her retreat—she lifts her veil--and returns her abruptly, against her will, to a community, the world of love and care, which everyday time controls and dominates" (103). In contrast to Krieger's view of Olivia's lack of control, however, I would argue that Olivia's decision to lift her veil reflects a conscious decision to re-enter the world rather than having it happen "against her will."

her veil, the outward signification of her refusal to see or be seen by suitors demanding favors.

By choosing to unveil before Cesario, Olivia indicates openness to love, willingness to enter as a freely-choosing subject. Although she initially attacks Viola in her role as page and love imposer--"Have you any commission from your lord to negotiate with my face?" (1.5.234-235); "You are now out of your text" (1.5.235-236)—Olivia quickly changes course in what can only be described as Shakespeare's representation of a conscious choice made to open the self to eros: "but we will draw the curtain, and show you the picture. Look you, sir, such a one I was this present. Is't not well done?" (1.5.236-238). Olivia's decision to unveil before Cesario is a necessary first step if she is to enter into freely-chosen love, one which culminates in her marriage to Sebastian later in the play.

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"Sooth, but you must" (*Twelfth Night* 2.4.89)

Viola assumes a variety of roles, both as imposer and resister in *Twelfth Night*, yet only one of these roles is a course the authentic Viola (as she expresses herself in asides) would choose; the others are complications arising from her gender disguise.

As Orsino's love emissary and go-between, the disguised Viola attempts to inculcate love for Orsino in Olivia: "Madam, I come to whet your gentle thoughts / On his behalf" (3.1.107-108). So conscientiously does Viola assume her role as love imposer that in her first audience with Olivia, she departs from a text found originally "in Orsino's bosom" (1.5.227), to use one of her own, the "willow cabin tale" (1.5.272-279). Yet in

her role as page, Viola ultimately speaks on behalf of Olivia's right to refuse Orsino. Perhaps most importantly, Viola resists using the page disguise to impose herself as a love choice upon Orsino by betraying Olivia. As such, despite the constraints of her disguise, Viola as a character might be said to resist love imposition in principle. Thus, while Viola's resistance is more subtle and less obvious than that displayed by her brother and the Countess, it forms a crucial part of the play's comic resolution.

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Viola's most authentic[33] role in *Twelfth Night*, however, is not that of resistor. It is her role as love imposer—not as imposer of Orsino's love upon Olivia, but rather of her own love upon Orsino, most notably through the *persona* of absent, heartbroken sister. When she is not pestering Olivia with unsolicited "heresy" (1.5.231) from "Orsino's bosom" (1.5.227), then, Viola is both resistor and imposer in *Twelfth Night*. Although at a crucial juncture she fails to openly confront Orsino's threats and instead seemingly acquiesces[34] to his violence—"And I, most jocund, apt, and willingly, / To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die" (5.1.130-131)—on other occasions, she resists him, both on her own behalf and on behalf of Olivia. In contrast to the false seemers and seeming friends who overrun *Twelfth Night's* underplot, Viola's various reflections, including her lament, "Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness" (2.2.26), spoken as she

[33] By this I mean that it comes from Viola the woman's heart, and not as a complication of her gender disguise. .

[34] While this might seem to put Viola with characters such as Helen, Helena, and Hero, rather than in the line of resistors such as Hermia, Rosalind, Portia, and Olivia, I would argue that Viola's response here does not so relegate her. First and most importantly, as Viola prepares to follow Orsino off-stage, she can play her trump card and reveal herself to Orsino as a woman; indeed, now is a good time to do so, as Olivia has just made it quite clear that she will never marry Orsino. In fact, Viola might express elation as she moves to follow Orsino off stage. She is no longer required to function in the role of love emissary--that is for sure.

muses upon her own inadvertent effect upon Olivia, are verbal testimonies to her desire to avoid corrupting the perceptions of others, despite the fact that this is a role the page disguise by its very nature thrusts upon her.

Viola resists love imposition as she challenges the presumptuous Orsino in a way that proves crucial to plot resolution in *Twelfth Night*. The Duke bestows upon his page the privilege of serving as an audience for his Petrarchan protestations of eternal love:

> For boy, however we do praise ourselves,
> Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
> More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn
> Than women's are. (2.4.32-35)

As Orsino rambles in this vein--"There is no woman's sides. . ." (2.4.94-104)—Viola recognizes the self hidden below the rhetoric and goes beyond merely defending the constancy of women: "In faith, they are as true of heart as we" (2.4.107). Discerning the desire to force love behind Orsino's Petrarchan rhetoric, Viola challenges Orsino on behalf of Olivia. Her question, "But if she cannot love you, sir?" (2.4.88) is in itself an articulation of resistance to the Duke.[35] Moreover, as Orsino answers his page's query with yet another self-indulgent Petrarchan excess--"I cannot be so answer'd" (2.4.89)--Viola responds with surprising firmness: "Sooth, but you must" (2.4.89). I say "surprising firmness" in that, for one whose "state is desperate for [her] master's love" (2.2.36), Viola presents the

[35] Camille Slights observes that at this point in the play, Orsino "reveals his noble passion to be, at least in part, a determination to dominate and an egoist's conviction that reality must conform to his will" (544). I found Slight's analysis insightful in that it looks beyond Orsino's self-indulgent moodiness to another level. Given that this has been my approach to Orsino throughout, however, my interest in 2.4 revolves around Viola's role in the scene as it is an articulation of the desire to resist attempts to externally impose love.

views of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Lysander, who also voices the futility of external imposition as a means to impose love: "Thy threats have no more power / Than her weak prayers."

From another perspective, it should be noted that Viola resists using her disguise to betray Olivia and ingratiate herself with Orsino. Indeed, upon realizing that the Countess has sent her a ring--"I left no ring with her: what means this lady? / Fortune forbid my outside not have charm'd her!" (2.2.16-17)--Viola expresses pity for both Olivia and Orsino (2.2.16-40). In contrast to Helena who betrays her friend, Viola expresses as much concern for Olivia's situation as she does for her own--"How easy is it for the proper false / In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!" (2.2.28-29). She decries the particular role she plays in distorting Olivia's perception by way of her disguise: "Poor lady, she were better love a dream" (2.2. 25). In this way, Viola contrasts with Maria, Toby, and other of Shakespeare's characters who impose for potentially tragic ends.

Viola's most authentic role in *Twelfth Night*, however, is that of gentle imposer of herself as beloved, a role which she assumes occasionally in the presence of Orsino. Superimposing a new fictive *persona* upon her already fictionalized self as Cesario, Viola makes Orsino the mirror image--"Of your complexion" (2.4.26), and "About your years, my lord" (2.4.28)—of a fictionalized, long-lost love. The tale of "Patience on a monument" (2.4.106-125) allows Viola to continue sending gentle love overtures in Orsino's direction through yet another fictive *persona*, although seemingly to little avail. Not until a twin from the sea, an-already married countess, and a surge of anger bordering

upon violence in Orsino, all merge in one scene will the Duke come to hear and accept freely-offered love: "Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times / Thou never should'st love woman like to me" (5.1.265-266). Because Orsino takes the first step in this direction even before he sees Viola actualized as a woman--"Give me thy hand, / And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds" (5.1.270-271)—I believe his movement is significant. As such, perhaps the seemingly fragile ending of this comedy is not so fragile after all.

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Set in the context of a play like *Othello*, Olivia's secret marriage to Viola's double and masculine counterpart, Sebastian, would be precipitous and rash. In *Twelfth Night,* in contrast, Sebastian takes up his role as Olivia's protector: "nature to her bias drew in that" (5.1.258). Viola-Cesario initially prepares the way by faithfully serving Orsino, but it is Sebastian the active, not Sebastian the reflective, who rescues Olivia.

While Sebastian imposes decorum upon Toby and Andrew by way of his masculine strength (Nevo 214), his apology to Olivia--"I am sorry, madam, I have hurt your kinsman: / But had it been the brother of my blood, / I must have done no less with wit and safety" (5.1.207-9)--suggests that utilizing an aggressive mode of this nature is not his preferred style. Despite periodic forays into the role of imposer, then, Sebastian, like Viola and Olivia, often plays the role of resistor in this play.

Sebastian resists the impositions of the sea captain Antonio,[36] but when a new model of love imposition is presented to him by Olivia, he quickly assents.

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[36] See Joseph Pequigney, "The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*," *ELR* 221992: 201-21. While we many never know why Antonio's desire and loyalty are not rewarded and Cesario's ardor and devotion are, the pattern repeats a variation on the theme of the sonnets.

While the dynamics of Sebastian's resistance to Antonio consume a great deal of ink in contemporary criticism,[37] I argue that Sebastian's most striking role as resistor is to be found in the consternation he expresses at finding himself on the receiving end of Olivia's seemingly mad protestations of love. Although he eventually marries Olivia, Viola's twin provides a model in this play of rational, critical, and contemplative resistance to external love imposition--Olivia's version--and of the capacity to make choices freely.

Indeed, through a series of powerful images, Sebastian's soliloquy, "This is the air, that is the glorious sun" (4.3.1-21), addresses the nature of rational resistance and the power of the individual to act as a freely-choosing subject in the face of external attempts to impose love. Sebastian's declaration, "And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus, / Yet 'tis not madness" (4.3.3-4) serves as the centerpiece, the focal point, for resistance in *Twelfth Night*. Finding himself, as he explains, "ready to distrust mine eyes, / And wrangle with my reason that persuades me" (4.3.13-14), Sebastian resists Olivia's courtship by distancing the evidence of his "eyes" and his "reason" so as to see with clarity. Despite the fact that he dismisses his misgivings regarding Olivia during the course of the soliloquy, Sebastian's reflections in 4.3 reveal a progression of rational analysis leading to his taking vows with Olivia. By juxtaposing willingness to enter into sudden love with the contradictory desire to resist perceptual distortion and the possibility of erotic

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[37] For other studies of homoeroticism and related issues, see Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982); Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992); Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of sexuality in Shakespearean drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Susan Zimmerman, ed., *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance stage* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

love as well, if this love should be bound up in perceptual distortion, Sebastian attempts to clarify his vision on the matter of Olivia's seemingly mad entreaties:

> This is the air, that is the glorious sun,
> This pearl she gave me, I do feel't and see't,
> And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,
> Yet 'tis not madness. . . .
> . . .
> For though my soul disputes well with my sense
> That this may be some error, but no madness,
> Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune
> So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
> That I am ready to distrust mine eyes,
> And wrangle with my reason that persuades me
> To any other trust but that I am mad,
> Or else the lady's mad; yet if 'twere so,
> She could not sway her house, command her followers,
> Take and give back affairs and their dispatch,
> With such a smooth, discreet, and stable bearing
> As I perceive she does. There's something in't
> That is deceivable. But here the lady comes. (4.3.1-21)

Sebastian notes the "deceivable" elements of the situation in which he finds himself and other aspects of the Illyrian situation as well. Seeking a mooring in his senses and in his understanding of his own experience, the young man considers nature ("air" and "sun"),

cultural objects (the "pearl' bestowed upon him by Olivia), and his awareness of Olivia with regard to her social setting, her ability to "command her followers" and manage her household. As he does so, he echoes similar concerns to those expressed by Olivia with regard to Cesario (1.5.293-302). All three characters, Viola, Sebastian, and Olivia, then, exhibit the ability to reflect upon their own courses of action, to question their own perceptions, and to resist in a way that Malvolio and Andrew never do.

Sebastian plays a crucial role in *Twelfth Night* in another context as well. By imposing himself in a physical way upon Toby and Andrew, Viola's twin restores a sense of degree and decorum to Olivia's household. He foils the attempts of Maria and Toby to erode Olivia's authority in her own household (a dimension of the play, I argue, that is not taken seriously enough). By throttling the parasites, Sebastian not only rescues Olivia, he moves *Twelfth Night* in a direction other than the intimations of tragedy which the Andrew-as-Roderigo theme seems to intimate:

> The entrance of Sebastian is 'what we will.' It is the most dramatic moment of the play. The confrontation of Sebastian and Cesario-Viola, those identical images, concludes the formal plot and provides the means for the discarding of all the lover's masks. (Summers 30)

Sebastian is *Twelfth Night's* knight in shining armor, Hassel's "resolving figure par excellence since his mere entrance at the right time disposes of all confusions at a stroke" (292). More than this, Sebastian, like Viola and Olivia (and ultimately Orsino), serves as a character whose representation, with the exception of his miraculous delivery from the

sea,[38] foregrounds throughout *Twelfth Night* the power of conscious choice in love by circumscribing resistance to imposition, and enacting it front and center stage.

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Orsino's famous musings in *Twelfth Night's* opening scene serve as a metaphoric prelude to the play's representation of the Duke's desire to impose himself upon a woman as her exclusive love choice.[39] His seemingly entreaty-based courtship of Olivia—in actuality, a courtship whose five acts of entreaty eventually culminate in a short-lived threat of violence--forms a major strand in *Twelfth Night's* plot, despite the fact that Orsino keeps a lower profile than characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, such as Demetrius, who similarly wish to impose love upon resistant others. Yet although Orsino seemingly lacks the backing of law, on occasion he resembles characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* including Egeus and Demetrius, both of whom repeatedly refuse to acknowledge others' wishes in matters of love as they attempt to determine others' love choices.

Even as Hermia and Lysander cannot fully resolve the quandaries of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on their own, and Theseus must grant forgiveness, Olivia, Viola, and Sebastian cannot completely resolve *Twelfth Night* by their own efforts. If Toby and Maria impose warped vision upon Malvolio and Andrew, the play still closes as comedy. Sebastian is powerful and sober in a way that these two are not; furthermore, he is miraculously present to counter their intrusive and invasive ways. But in *Twelfth*

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[38] The same could be said with regard to Viola. Her sea delivery remains outside the model of perceptual choice.

[39] Once again, Krieger is insightful: "Orsino's ability to deprive others of their autonomy converts people into objects, and, as a phase within a narcissistic process, it does more: it transforms the objects into aspects of Orsino's subjectivity. By making himself the only subject in the world, Orsino has both withdrawn from and circumscribed the world: he has withdrawn his ego from the world but, but depriving others of their autonomy, he has then drawn the world *into* his ego" (105).

Night, the Duke of Illyria represents power of a significant order. Orsino, like Theseus, must sanction internal vision if Olivia is to choose love with her own eyes, and if Viola is to be known and loved for who she is.

In 5.1, Orsino draws back from the violence he has threatened moments earlier to issue a lesser threat:

> O thou dissembling cub! What wilt thou be
> When time hath sow'd a grizzle on thy case?
> Or will not else thy craft so quickly grow
> That thine own trip shall be thine overthrow?
> Farewell, and take her, but direct thy feet
> Where thou and I henceforth may never meet. (162-167)

Whether Orsino intends banishment and exile—comedy can contain these—or whether he intends to take his desire to impose his will to another level is never clarified. Instead, the entrance of Sebastian, "the male figure that the play, one of Shakespeare's subtlest dramatizations of the battles of the sexes, needs" (Nevo 213), radically alters Orsino's closing trajectory.

Orsino's lines moments earlier in 5.1, however, suggest one who would impose, not only his own vision and love choice upon an unwilling other, but also, revenge if his desire is not satisfied:

> Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,
> Like to th' Egyptian thief at point of death,
> Kill what I love? --a savage jealousy
> That sometimes savours nobly. But hear me this:

Since you to non-regardance cast my faith,
And that I partly know the instrument
That screws me from my true place in your favour,
Live you the marble-breasted tyrant still;
But this your minion, whom I know you love,
And whom, by heaven, I swear I tender dearly,
Him will I tear out of that cruel eye
Where he sits crowned in his master's spite.
Come, boy, with me; my thoughts are ripe in mischief:
I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love,
To spite a raven's heart within a dove. (115-129)

I am most interested in Orsino's threat, "Him will I tear out of that cruel eye / Where he sits crowned in his master's spite" (125-126), wherein the Duke assumes the role of one who intends to impose, not only love choice and/or revenge, but, more crucially, perception. Orsino must erase his own realization that Cesario "sits crowned in his master's spite" in Olivia's "cruel eye" because the Duke's self-imposed Petrarchan rhetoric has caught him up in its delusive power: Osino assumes that he may determine who or what is or is not in Olivia's eye--that he may determine not only her love, but more radically, her perception.

Later in Act 5, not long after he hints of possibly tragic outcomes--"I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love, / To spite a raven's heart within a dove" (128-129)—Orsino suddenly recognizes that which his desire to impose himself upon Olivia in spite of her protests has previously hidden from him. He tells his former

page, who is suddenly not his page--"Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times / Thou never should'st love woman like to me" (5.1.265-266). As such, Orsino removes the blinders he has been wearing. Of course, there is the little matter of Sebastian and, "A natural perspective, that is, and is not!" (5.1.215) helping to resolve the comedy.

Twelfth Night's close builds upon the play's earlier portrayals of Orsino's characterization in yet another way. In 2.4, Feste scolds the Duke for his fast-paced changes of emotional barometer:

> Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal. I would have men of such constancy put to sea, that their business might be everything, and their intent everywhere, for that's it that always makes a good voyage of nothing. Farewell. (73-79)

Between 5.1.115-129, when Orsino threatens Viola with violence, and 5.1.162-167, when he threatens banishment only, Shakespeare portrays Orsino as choosing to resist his own desire to impose, and "like Arion on the dolphin's back" (1.2.15), to utilize his power as acting subject to serve the ends of comedy. Because Orsino moves from threats of violence to threats of banishment (implying some level of acceptance) even prior to the moment when he knows that Viola's "maiden weeds" (5.1.253) are to be had, I think a case could be made for reading Orsino as one development in a line of characters which includes Theseus, Vincentio, and Prospero.

As *Twelfth Night* draws to a close, Olivia, aptly titled "Penelope" by Nevo, appears to be on her way to achieving lasting freedom from parasitic hangers-on. Viola

initiates this freedom by refusing to betray Olivia and resisting Orsino's presumptuous arrogance and empty rhetoric, and challenging him on both. Olivia's perceptual integrity and determination to choose her own beloved is reinforced by Sebastian as he bests the parasites, administering to each "a bloody coxcomb" (5.1.188), and sees to it that the days of "caterwauling" (2.3.73) in Illyria come to an abrupt end. Finally, Orsino resists the inordinate desire to impose his will that is characteristic of tragedy and frees the woman he loves rather than attempting to make her perception his own at any cost.

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Shakespeare will return to aspects of *Twelfth Night's* social outline in *Othello*. The character who gulls Malvolio, colludes in Toby's gulling of Andrew, gulls Toby on another level, and knows Olivia well enough to become her, the character who is *Twelfth Night's* consummate consciousness imposer, "the little villain" (2.5.13) Maria, walks from the script of *Twelfth Night* to become *Othello's* Iago. Like Toby, Andrew, and Malvolio, and unlike Feste, Viola, Olivia, and Sebastian, Othello tragically fails to "check at every feather" (3.1.65), with regard to the influences he allows to shape his perception.

CHAPTER THREE

"Wear Your Eyes Thus":
Corrupted Vision and the Limitation of Resistance
In Shakespeare's *Othello*

> Iago is fully aware of himself as an improviser and revels in his ability to manipulate his victims, to lead them by the nose like asses, to possess their labor without their ever being capable of grasping the relation in which they are enmeshed. Such is the relation Iago establishes with virtually every character in the play, from Othello and Desdemona to such minor figures as Montano and Bianca.
>
> --Stephen Greenblatt[1]

Throughout *Othello,* almost to the point of Iago's closing line--"From this time forth, I never will speak word" (5.2.301)[2]--Coleridge's character of seemingly "motive-

[1] *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*: *From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980), 233. As noted in the introduction to this study, I am indebted throughout my dissertation and especially in this chapter on *Othello* to Stephen Greenblatt's view of early modern "improvisation" (234-8), as detailed in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. While his analysis of early modern religious diatribes against sexuality (249-51) is most insightful, my study moves to conclusions other than Greenblatt's own, including the author's views regarding "the deep current of sexual anxiety in Othello" (250); "Iago's improvisation on the religious sexual doctrine in which Othello believes" (251); and his view of Othello's motivation: "It is almost as if Othello had found in a necrophilic fantasy the secret solution to the intolerable demands of the rigorist sexual ethic. . ." (252). Regarding Iago's point of entry into Othello's psyche, for example, Greenblatt observes:

> We are at last in a position to locate the precise nature of the symbolic structure into which Iago inserts himself in his brilliant improvisation: this structure is the centuries-old

less Malignity,"[3] the enigmatic ensign, preys upon and consumes the inherent stability of various identities functioning in the closed parochial worlds of Venice and Cyprus. Attacking at the site of love, Iago distorts identity's essence—Brabantio's, Roderigo's, Cassio's, Othello's—twisting perception into instability and imposing a radically different construct of his own devising upon each of the significant male[4] characters in *Othello*. This newly constructed, Iago-elevating identity preys upon and eventually consumes the individual's former self and original beloved.[5]

By imposing distorted visions of exclusionary love, Iago forges twisted identities and insures that the players on the stage around him are enslaved, bound in a net from

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> Christian doctrine of sexuality, policed socially and psychically, as we have already seen, by confession…… the orthodox doctrine that governs Othello's sexual attitudes—his simultaneous idealization and mistrust of women. (246)

In contrast, my exploration of *Othello* leads elsewhere. We know that Othello is a fictional character. Whether in the process of conversion to Christianity such a character might or night not have internalized not only the tenets of Christianity but also the taboos of Christian sexual tradition must remain outside the play. Apart from this, Greenblatt's citation of "the centuries old Christian doctrine of sexuality" seems to lack something in the way of comprehensiveness: Iago displays the ability not only to access Othello's psyche with its possible racial and sexual ambivalencies, but also the ability to access other characters' psyches as well. These characters, too, permit Iago to twist the deepest cores of their identities. While the ensign cloaks his efforts in sexual and racial camouflage—easily exploited camouflage, to be sure—I argue that another mode of exploitation might have worked as well; as such, I view Iago's attacks as radical breaches upon individual perception and the subjectivity necessary to exercise free will. In other words, race and sex are tools to control those who would be controlled. In this, Roderigo the Italian is no different from Othello the Moor. Therefore, I use Greenblatt's analysis as noted in the epigraph to this chapter—"Iago. . . revels in his ability to manipulator his victims, to lead them by the nose like asses. . ."--as a springboard for my own analysis. It is Iago's ability to control others by deputizing them as avengers of corruption--sexual or otherwise—in other words, by tapping into and eliciting latent hatred —that I emphasize.

[2] All citations of *Othello* are to the Arden edition, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1999).

[3] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2 vols (1987), 2.315.

[4] In *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays*, Carol Thomas Neely explores this distinction between the relatively high level of vulnerability to Iago's machinations displayed by the male characters in *Othello*, and the less susceptible natures of the women: "The men's vanity and rivalry, their preoccupation with rank and reputation, and their cowardice render them as incapable of friendship as they are of love. The women, in contrast, are indifferent to reputation, and partially free of vanity, jealousy, and competitiveness" (122). Although Emilia allows Iago to impose his own construct of identity—that of thief—upon her, because she displays ultimate loyalty to Desdemona in the play's final moments, I do not emphasize her entrapment the way I emphasize Roderigo's and Othello's own. See Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985).

[5] Cassio plays the least harmful role in all of this by stated intention, but Othello's lieutenant, too, accepts Iago's construct—derelict drunkard and absconder of duty—and therefore allows himself, although unwittingly, to be used by Iago to tragic ends.

which there is no escape. This net is woven not of Desdemona's goodness as the ensign claims in 2.3:

> So will I turn her virtue into pitch
> And out of her own goodness make the net
> That shall enmesh them all. (355-357)

Rather, it is woven of the devious and deadly attacks Iago mounts against any and all identities in the world of Venice and Cyprus whose constitutive desires exclude the ensign or relegate his presence to the edge of love, and so, by extension, to the edge of the stage. From the play's opening in 1.1 during which Iago toys with Brabantio's heart, to the on-going series of attacks the ensign levels at the psyche of the vulnerable Roderigo, to his entrapment of Othello's soul, Iago clouds perception and destroys internal subjectivity as a prelude to engendering physical and spiritual disintegration in his victims.

Iago's definitive refrain and the subtext of each of his dramatically-staged interludes is not the oft-cited "I am not what I am" (1.1.64); rather, Iago's refrain is *You are not what you are,* or "Wear your eyes thus" (3.3.201). Indeed, the interludes which serve as vehicles for Iago's incursions into his fellow character's minds are directed to usurping identities and destroying love choices rather than to imposing new or alternative love choices. Iago specializes in identity-usurpation, a condition which seems to insure psychic enslavement and love-object choice destruction. In this sense, Shakespeare's representation of perceptual imposition in *Othello* differs from representations found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and

Twelfth Night, wherein acts of imposition are most often directed to the ends of acquiring or bestowing love object choices rather than to destroying these choices.[6]

By embedding the idea of perceptual imposition within the context of tragic usurpation in this chapter, I foreground the play's striking representation of characters who routinely abdicate to Iago perceptual integrity that they should retain for themselves. These characters abandon confidence in previously held world-views and notions of their own individual identity and those of others'. Rather than retaining internal vision, one by one, characters in *Othello* defer to and assume as their own Iago's view of their world and distorted constructs of character. Othello and Roderigo especially permit their purposes and designs to become nothing more than Iago's purposes and designs for them: Roderigo, the ardent lover, becomes an assassin, and Othello, the noble general, a murderer. Needless to say, in this tragedy, resistance is always limited, ineffective, or both.

In that Iago targets characters that exclude him and/or fail to make him the sole recipient of their love, the mode of imposition which structures the plot of *Othello* might be likened to what Mark Rose, drawing upon Kenneth Burke, terms a "series of thefts."[7] In "Othello's Occupation: Shakespeare and the Romance of Chivalry," Rose makes the following observation:

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[6] The Malvolio subplot in *Twelfth Night* is a notable exception to this, as are the intentions stated by Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, even in the case of Egeus, his primary intention is to bestow Hermia as a love object rather than to destroy her for the sake of destroying her, as the representation of Iago seems to indicate.

[7] In this essay, Rose draws heavily upon the work of Kenneth Burke with regard to the enclosure acts and the relationship to "property" that defines Desdemona in his analysis. See Michael Rose, "Othello's Occupation: Shakespeare and the Romance of Chivalry," *English Literary Renaissance* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1985): 293-311; Kenneth Burke, "*Othello*: An Essay to Illustrate a Method," *The Hudson Review* 4 (1951): 165-203.

> Opening in Venice, the city of fabled commercial wealth, *Othello* is structured as a series of thefts. The first is a variant of the stock comic action of the stolen daughter that Shakespeare uses also in his other play set in Venice when Jessica escapes from Shylock's house laden with ducats and jewels. . . . The play's first movement is "The Abduction of Desdemona"; the second is "The Theft of Cassio's Name." Cassio supposes that he is wholly responsible for the loss of his reputation, but we know that Iago, plying his victim with wine, has robbed him. . . . When at the end of the temptation scene, Iago says that he belongs to Othello forever, we understand that he means the opposite of what he speaks: Othello is now his. (304-06)

More tragic than the theft which elicits Cassio's lament, "Reputation, reputation, reputation" (2.3.258), then, and more destructive than the question with regard to Desdemona of "whether the transfer from father to husband has been rightfully made, whether she has in fact been stolen from Brabantio or properly won" (Rose 304) are the "thefts" of perceptual clarity and freedom of will that occur at the site of love throughout this play.[8]

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Rather than seeking his ends directly, Iago's "motive-less Malignity" decrees that those characters choosing to exclude him from love (and the center of the stage) will self-destruct by way of their own love. Observing from a point downstage, Iago watches while his victims, exercising free will and internal

[8] Once again, Greenblatt's analysis of "Iago's narrative fashioning" (237) illuminates my exploration of this play.

subjectivity in love choice—at least, so they think--destroy themselves and those they love. Iago's success, as Greenblatt notes, is due to the ensign's ability to assume the minds of others:

> Above all, Iago is sensitive to habitual and self-limiting forms of discourse, to Cassio's reaction when he has had a drink or when someone mentions Bianca, to Othello's rhetorical extremism, to Desdemona's persistence and tone when she pleads for a friend; and, of course, he is demonically sensitive to the way individuals interpret discourse, to the signals they ignore and those to which they respond. (235)

Iago-usurped identities present as primary traits the qualities of being self-consuming and love-consuming. This is indeed the true "magic in the web" (3.4.71) of *Othello*, and demonic magic it is, when a dramatist's character wields power enough to cause other characters to abdicate clarity of perception and freedom of will (with no lack of verisimilitude); when a dramatist's character displays the inherent ability to usurp not only the minds of others but their souls as well (and readers, theater-goers, and critics can only guess at why). With regard to this particular marvel of Shakespeare's artistry, Michael Rose is again insightful:

> Iago's diabolism is of course only metaphorical. Shakespeare is exploring a secular equivalent to demonic possession, showing how a terrible misapprehension can take control of a normally rational mind. *Othello*, in which there are neither ghosts, soothsayers,

> witches, nor supernatural prodigies, is one of the most secular of Shakespeare's tragedies. (306)

In my chapter on *Othello*, then, *imposition* signifies not only the idea of usurpation of identity and Rose's "secular equivalent to demonic possession," as noted above. The term also signifies the idea of perceptual or psychic enslavement; as such, it foregrounds the fully-realized tragic potential inherent in *Othello* that *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with its structuring mode of alternating threats and entreaties (and tragedy-resisting flowers and Fairy Land), and *Twelfth Night*, with its structuring mode of unwelcome courtships (and tragedy-resisting disguises and miraculous rescues), both manage to avoid.

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To cloud perceptual clarity and impose self-consuming identities upon characters choosing to love elsewhere, Iago stages and/or directs[9] a series of vision-distorting, perception-usurping interludes. These interludes, designed to prey upon and exploit the spectator's fear (Brabantio's, Roderigo's, Othello's) of being excluded from righteous love by a form of sexually-corrupt love, provide the ensign with a site of entry into the

[9] Critical views of Iago, from A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth by A. C. Bradley*, London: Macmillan, 1905, who emphasizes the ensign's striking power as manipulator and director (222-32), to Rose's view of Iago as "an artist carefully maneuvering his characters into position to bring his tragedy to fulfillment" (300), foreground Iago's power to carefully orchestrate and cunningly manipulate the plot of *Othello.* In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning,* Stephen Greenblatt explores yet another dimension of Iago as premier manipulator:

> What is most disturbing in Iago's comically banal and fathomless expression. . .is that the imagined self-loss conceals its opposite: a ruthless displacement and absorption of the other. Empathy . . . may be a feeling of oneself into an object, but that object may have to be drained of its own substance before it will serve as an appropriate vessel. Certainly in *Othello*, where all relations are embedded in power and sexuality, there is no realm where the subject and object can merge in the unproblematic accord affirmed by the theorists of empathy. (236)

While I find much that is helpful here and elsewhere in "The Improvisation of Power," my emphasis throughout remains upon the nature and reception of the dramatic interludes with which Iago punctuates the play. These interludes are tools designed by one character to usurp the perception of others through the portrayal of the (intended spectator's) exclusion-from-love, rather than as dramatic conventions intrinsic to the play or as expressions of sexual anxiety.

very core of his victims' identities. During these self-scripted and self-directed plays,[10] Iago distorts his victims' perception to the point where the only response seemingly left to the naïve and befuddled spectator involves a course of action ultimately self-consuming, other-consuming, and love-consuming**.** Moreover, as he usurps identities and substitutes new ones programmed to self-destruct, Iago creates twisted triangles[11] built upon the images of distorted perception. These proliferating triangles--Iago, Roderigo, Desdemona; Iago, Cassio, Othello; Iago, Cassio, Desdemona; Iago, Othello, Desdemona; Iago, Cassio, Bianca; Iago, Desdemona, Emilia; Iago, Othello, Emilia--restore the ensign to center stage--the role he seeks--despite the face that this is the only role from which other characters in the play would exclude him. Ironically, none of these triangles can restore Iago to love, although one—the marriage bed-triangle of Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello (135), aptly noted by Carol Thomas Neely –delivers the ensign to torture and death.

Iago tailors his interludes to fit his spectators. Seeking to move Brabantio to attack Othello--the esteemed general he has previously welcomed into his home--Iago enlists Roderigo's help to steep Brabantio in the notion that Desdemona has betrayed her filial duty and excluded her father totally from her life by marrying Othello. To co-opt Roderigo's perception and claim the young man's internal subjectivity and freedom of will as his own, Iago blithely dismisses Desdemona's love for her husband. Re-staging

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[10] Iago charges the interludes he directs to three characters—Brabantio, Roderigo, and Othello himself—with negative racial casts; the scene played out for Cassio is laden with gender-based implications. Although elided here, these sexual and racial tensions, so pervasive in *Othello*, will be addressed in more detail later.

[11] Critics have long explored the various forms of triangulation inherent in *Othello*. In *Broken Nuptials*, for example, Neely notes the triangulation which defines the play's closing scene: "The play concludes, not with symmetrical pairings-off and a movement toward marriage beds, but with one final triangle: Emilia, Desdemona, and Othello dead on wedding sheets" (135). My emphasis is upon the triangles of distorted perception which occur as a result of Iago's interludes, all variations on the theme of "Wear Your Eyes Thus."

an encounter on the shore between Cassio and Desdemona for Roderigo's benefit, Iago twists the moment of Cassio's courtly greeting of Desdemona into a nightmare foregrounding Roderigo's own inability to win Desdemona.

In a brief but critical scene with regard to the play's outcome, Iago elevates the men of Cyprus to such importance that Cassio cannot bear being momentarily excluded from their carousing midst, despite the young Florentine's explicitly-expressed awareness of responsibilities and duties to Othello and the state elsewhere. In yet another crucial scene, Iago receives the poisonous fruit of the repeated assaults he has leveled against Emilia, fruit which he uses to finalize the corruption of Othello's vision and enslavement of his soul. To distort Othello's perception and usurp his identity, then, Iago devises a series of ever more complex interludes, one of which features the poisoned fruit noted above and all of which suggest Cassio's supposed power to displace Othello from Desdemona's heart.

Of course in *Othello,* as noted above, generic restrictions are in place. A lack of sustained, effective resistance characterizes the play, and the resistance which does surface is for the most part too little, too late, as perceptions are corrupted and wills destroyed.

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Much critical work of late on *Othello* has focused upon two dimensions of the play, its sexual[12] and racial[13] aspects. In our current Post-Colonialist world, the political,

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[12] For the play's sexual and gender dimensions, see W. A. Adamson, "Unpinned or Undone? Desdemona's Critics and the Problem of Sexual Innocence," *Shakespeare Studies* 13 (1980): 169-86; Lynda Boose, "Othello's Handkerchief: The Recognizance and Pledge of Love," *English Literary Renaissance* 5 (1975): 360-74; Ann Jennalie Cook, "The Design of Desdemona: Doubt Raised and Resolved*," Shakespeare Studies* 13 (1980): 187-96; Peter Erickson*, Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985); Shirley Nelson Garner, "Shakespeare's Desdemona*," Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976): 233-52; Gayle Greene, "'This that you call love': Sexual and Social Tragedy in *Othello*," *Journal of*

cultural, and moral ramifications of racism are evident, yet this play seems to anticipate our understanding. In an early exploration of the issue of race in *Othello*, G. K. Hunter (1967) situates the plays within an historical sketch of European racial prejudice against people of color from classical times through the Middle Ages and Renaissance and notes the effect (or lack thereof) of Christianity upon this European heritage: "The coming of Christianity made no break in the tradition. Indeed, Christian eschatology seems to have taken over the black man from the underworld with great speed and enthusiasm" (141). In a more current treatment of racism and racial attitudes as found in the play, "'Delicious traffick': racial and religious difference on early modern stages," Ania Loomba embeds the issue in a wider context:

Women's Studies in Literature 1 (1979): 16-32; Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, U of C Press, 1981); Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays*)New Haven: Yale UP, 1985); Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crimes in Renaissance Venice* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985); Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985); Edward Snow, "Sexual Anxiety and the Male Order of Things in *Othello*," *English Literary Renaissance* 10, no. 3 (1980): 385-411; Susan Snyder, *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979); Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1986), 123-42; Richard P. Wheeler, "'And My Loud Crying Still': The Sonnets, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello*," in *Shakespeare's Rough Magic: Renaissance Essays In Honor of C. L Barber*, ed. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1985).

[13] For race and related issues, including the early modern Arab-Muslim context, see Janet Adelman, "Iago's Alter Ego: Race as Projection in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997), 125-144; Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein & Day, 1972); G. K. Hunter, "*Othello* and Colour Prejudice," *The Proceedings of the British Academy* 53 (1967): 139-63; Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965); Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989); Michael Neill, "'Mulattos,' 'Blacks,' and 'Indian Moors': *Othello* and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1998): 361-74 and "Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 383-412; Karen Newman, "'And wash the Ethiop white': femininity and the monstrous in *Othello,*" *Shakespeare Reproduced: The text in history and ideology*, Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Conner, eds., (New York and London: Methuen, 1987); Martin Orkin, "Othello and the Plain Face of Racism," *Shakespeare Quarte*rly 38 (1987): 166-88, and *Shakespeare Against Apartheid* (South Africa: Craighall, 1987); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Elliot H. Tokson, *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama, 1550-1688* (Boston G. K. Hall, 1982); Daniel J. Vitkus, "Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 145-176.

> For at least the last two hundred years, 'race' has functioned as one of the most powerful and yet most fragile markers of social difference. It is one of the great ironies of imperial history that ideologies of racial difference have hardened as a direct response to racial and cultural crossovers; conversely, colonial enterprises have facilitated contact and exchange between people of different ethnicities, religions, and cultures. Notions of alterity or exchange thus derive their meaning from one another. (203)

Loomba[14] further explores "this mirror dance on the stages of Shakespeare's time" (203), arguing that it might "be characterized as either the last period in history where ethnic identities could be understood as fluid, or as the first moment of the emergence of modern notions of 'race'" (203). Moreover, in another essay, writing from a stance other than that of *First World* Feminist, Loomba considers "Othello's passage from an honorary white to a total outsider" [15]:

> Othello moves from being a colonised subject existing on the terms of White Venetian society and trying to internalise its ideology, towards being marginalised, outcast and alienated from it in every way, until he occupies his 'true' position as its other. (48)

In contrast to this approach, Camille Slights sets *Othello* in the context of early modern practices and views with regard to the growing slave trade, suggesting that: "*Othello* is a key text in this history not only because it mixes self-identity, race,

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[14] Ania Loomba, "'Delicious traffick': racial and religious differences on early modern stages," in *Shakespeare and Race*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).
[15] In Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, 48.

and slavery in an unstable and explosive combination, but also because they combine only occasionally" (385).[16] With regard to slavery as historical practice and institution in early modern England, Slights also observes:

> Slavery as a material practice, then, was well known. Nevertheless, England tended to see itself, however inaccurately, as a land without slaves. . . *Othello* provides a clear example of the simultaneous foregrounding and distancing of slavery and of viewing slaves with both pity and horrified contempt. (381-2)

I suggest that *Othello* critiques a project in its early stages at this point, the debasement, and destruction of the dark-skinned inhabitants of various colonial lands through the institution of slavery. Iago constructs Othello as a slave and an Outsider[17] by race and lineage, but the text unravels this construction as it re-fashions most characters in the play into perceptually-corrupted slaves of one sort or another, each of whom "will as tenderly be led by th' nose / As asses are" (1.3.400). Emilia becomes a thief; Cassio a drunken derelict; Roderigo becomes an assassin who desires nothing more than to punish what he has been told is sexual corruption; Brabantio's sight and life are fatally poisoned in his efforts to punish what he sees as the sexual corruption of his daughter; while Othello becomes a

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[16] See Camille Slights, "Slaves and Subjects in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1997): 377-390.

[17] In an interesting take on this, Ian Smith observes:

> The play forces a recognition of the indeterminate nature of the category of blackness since the attributes. . . are also the trademarks of the machiavel, a racially unmarked category. Iago, the white Venetian, is dramaturgically conceived from the beginning of the play as racially ambiguous. (180)

See Ian Smith, "Barbarian Errors: Performing Race in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1998): 168-186. For another view, see Michael Neil, who argues that "The play, however—and this is why it continues to torment us—refuses to align itself with either narrative, retreating instead into the obliquity of the taunting pleonasm with which Iago at once challenges and disables judgment: 'What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak word' (II. 300-301)" (374). Michael Neill, "'Mulattos,' 'Blacks,' and 'Indian Moors': *Othello* and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1998): 361-374.

murderer who sees himself presiding at a "sacrifice" (5.2.65). My point in not that in each instance the plot of *Othello* is manipulated in the precise way that Iago deems it should be manipulated. Rather, my point is that due to their weak and ineffective resistance, Iago is able to inscribe *slave* on others in this play, Moor and Italian alike.[18] (I return later in the chapter to the issue of slavery as it structures my understanding of *Othello*, a play in which Iago's acts of imposition are directed to imposing perceptual slavery upon any and all players, Moor and Italian, dark and light.)

Daniel J. Vitkus, in "Turning Turk in *Othello:* The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor," sets the play in the context of contemporary English sexual, racial, and religious notions regarding Venice, the Mediterranean, and the perceived Muslim-Turkish encroachment upon Europe. Vitkus notes that:

> *Othello*, like the culture that produced it, exhibits a conflation of various tropes of conversion—transformations from Christian to Turk, from virgin to whore, from good to evil, and from gracious virtue to black damnation. . . To the English audience this reliance on a Moorish renegade-type like Othello would have been almost as shocking as the elopement and miscegenation permitted by the Venetian senate. (145, 164)[19]

[18] I make this claim despite the fact that Iago's power to inscribe Cassio as slave is limited, terminated by the power granted to Casso by the state to "torment" (5.2.332) the ensign. Also, while Iago succeeds in distorting Cassio's perception with regard to the drinking episode, he fails to corrupt Othello's lieutenant's perception with regard to his devotion to Othello and Desdemona, despite his best efforts, efforts which *are* successful with Brabantio, Othello, and even Roderigo.

[19] Daniel J. Vitkus, "Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 145-176.

Vitkus argues that Othello's "fear of female sexual instability is linked in the play to racial and cultural anxieties about 'turning Turk'—the fear of a black planet that gripped Europeans in the early modern eras as they face the expansion of Ottoman power" (146).

In contrast to Vitkus' focus on early modern Europe with regard to the Ottomans and Slight's on the development of slave trafficking, Janet Adelman, who views the play from within a complex psychoanalytic framework, explores the possibility of the double:

> Iago calls forth a world. . . in which he can see his own darkness localized and reflected in Othello's blackness, or rather in what he makes—and teaches Othello to make—of Othello's blackness. (127)

I found Adelman's psychoanalytic treatment, with its emphasis upon Melanie Klein's theory of envy and Iago's need to project an internal sense of contamination into others, quite helpful due to the fact that Iago's ability to not only stage corruption in his interludes, but also to elicit the desire to punish this supposed corruption in his spectators, is crucial to my argument.

In addition to the New Historicist/Cultural Materialist focus on issues of race and class, slave and free, Europe, Africa and the East with regard to *Othello*, contemporary First World Feminist critics especially privilege the play's sexual and gender themes and subtexts. As Carol Thomas Neely observes in *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays*, a great deal of attention has been paid to the underlying sexual issues which break through the text of *Othello*:

> Relations between love, sexuality, and marriage are under scrutiny in Othello, as in the comedies, problem plays, and *Hamlet*. In more extreme form than in the problem plays, we see here the idealization and degradation of sexuality, the disintegration of male authority and the loss of female power, the isolation of men and women, and the association of sexual consummation with death. . . Whether the marriage is consummated, when it is consummated, and what the significance of this consummation is for Othello and Desdemona have all been important sources of debate about the play. (105)

Arguing from a somewhat different but related perspective in *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies*, Susan Snyder claims that "Iago is not just an envious spoiler; he is the symbolic enemy of love itself" (80). Snyder develops this view of Iago as the "enemy of love" by asserting that *Othello* foregrounds a view of the nature of love as intrinsically flawed:

> What I am suggesting is that the action of *Othello* moves us not only as a chain of events involving particular people as initiators and victims, but also as an acting out of the tragic implications in any love relationship. Iago is an envious, insecure human being who functions as a perverted magician-manipulator, cunningly altering reality for Othello. But he is also the catalyst who activates destructive forces not of his own creation, forces present in the love itself. . . "Hell and night," embodied in this demi-devil who works

> in the dark, will bring the monster forth, but it is the fruit of love itself. (84-85)

In another context, in an essay which centers upon Othello's expression of faith--(3.3.126)--to Iago in the temptation scene, Patricia Parker[20] explores the subtle relationship between:

> the function of the delator or informer as a secret accuser, associated both with spying and with bringing something "hid" before the eye; and . . . the language of uncovering, dilating, and opening the "privy" place of woman, in the quasi-pornographic discourse of anatomy and early modern gynecology that seeks to bring a hidden or secret place to light. (60)

For these and other contemporary critics, issues of sexuality and race are obviously crucial to readings.

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In light of current critical emphasis upon the sexual and racial aspects of *Othello*, a word regarding my own approach is in order. An underlying assumption of this chapter is that Iago does indeed serve Snyder's "symbolic enemy of love itself" in *Othello*. Moreover, it would be difficult to contest the decidedly racial cast with which Iago slants his perception-usurping interludes (as, for example, his attacks against Othello in 3.3, 4.1, and elsewhere) and with which he excuses his own venom. Indeed, the interludes Iago stages for three characters, Roderigo, Brabantio, and Othello, brim with racially-inflammatory language. As such, the

[20] See Patricia Parker, "*Othello* and *Hamlet*: Dilation, Spying, and the 'Secret Place' of Woman," *Representations* 44 (1993): 60-95.

plot of *Othello* is not only set in motion at least in part by racism, it is also propelled by this fuel. Despite all of this, for the most part in this chapter on *Othello*, I elide issues of race and sexuality.

I have chosen not to refract this chapter in the light of current critical preoccupations for a variety of reasons. With regard to the play's racial values, one might invoke and develop the sentiment expressed by Camille Slights: "I cannot claim here to contribute to the project of uncovering the roots of racism—the repugnance at physical difference inscribed in *Othello* is already well-documented" (385). While this is true, Iago's repugnance to Roderigo and Cassio as represented in this play is also "well-documented." From another perspective, one might cite Jean-Paul Sartre's classic assertion in *Anti-Semite and Jew*: "If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him" (13).[21] Now we are back to Coleridge's "motiveless malignity."

Rather than developing either of these lines of reasoning, fruitful as they are, I instead cite Jacques Derrida, whose essay on apartheid, "The Last Word of Racism,"[22] illuminates my approach to this chapter:

> At every point, like all racisms, it tends to pass segregation off as natural—and as the very law of the origin. Such is the monstrosity of this political idiom. Surely, an idiom should never incline toward racism. It often does, however, and this is not altogether fortuitous: there's no racism without a language. The point is not that acts of

[21] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker, New York: Grove Press, 1960.
[22] Jacques Derrida, "Racism's Last Word," trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 290-9. "Le Dernier Mot du racisme," Derrida's contribution to the catalog of the 1983 opening in Paris of the world-traveling exhibit, "Art contre/against Apartheid," is a wide-ranging, philosophical exploration of the subject.

> racial violence are only words but rather that they have to have a word. Even though it offers the excuse of blood, color, birth—or rather, *because* it uses this naturalist and sometimes creationist discourse—racism always betrays the perversion of a man, the "talking animal." It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes. A system of marks, it outlines space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders. It does not discern, it discriminates. (292)

I cite the passage to foreground Derrida's lines, "there's no racism without a language," and "racism always betrays the perversion of a man, the 'talking animal.'" It would be difficult to speak more insightfully with regard to the purpose of my project in this chapter than Derrida has in his catalog contribution. I suggest that *Othello* might be viewed as an early dramatic representation of these words, despite the fact that the play was written centuries earlier. As opposed to the play's seeming emphasis upon the eyes and "ocular proof" (3.3.362), I argue that on the subtextual level, successfully perpetrated acts of imposition with their tragic consequences in *Othello* are shown to be the fruit of language, ultimately dependent upon perceptions processed by the human ear--"the perversion of . . .man," "the 'talking animal.'" Thus, in an interesting departure for a play which otherwise often privileges eye imagery, a broken Brabantio informs the assembled court, "But words are words: I never yet did hear / That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear" (1.3.219-220).[23]

[23] I alter the Arden gloss on these lines slightly here.

Rather than focusing upon the racial and sexual issues inherent in the play, then, I argue that Iago destroys love of any kind, flawed or not, sexual or not, interracial or not. While Iago mounts his most savage attacks upon love and subjectivity against Othello--and while he embeds most of these attacks in racial and sexual contexts--other characters relying upon internal perception to project love, affection, or even admiration in directions other than Iago's own—as, for example, Brabantio and Bianca--become targets of the ensign's attacks as well; indeed, no character in the play is immune to Iago's all-consuming gaze.

As characters in *Othello* by virtue of their freedom choose to love outside Iago, to display desire for aught but Iago—whether Bianca for Cassio; Othello for Cassio and Desdemona; Roderigo for Desdemona—they become vulnerable, not only to Iago's gaze, but to his ability to distort perception, destroy internal subjectivity and integrity of will, and reconstruct identities in his own image. Iago's destructive impulses widen in scope as the play progresses until he threatens not only Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio, but all who touch these characters.

Iago's efforts grow increasingly destructive upon any failure to hold center stage with a particular character. It is Othello, guilty of the cardinal sins of choosing Cassio over Iago and, perhaps more importantly, of marrying Desdemona, who precipitates the tragedy, but Cassio, Roderigo, Bianca, Desdemona (and ultimately, Emilia) may all be cited as examples of characters who choose to love outside of Iago. From such a perspective, Iago's "motive-less Malignity" is not quite so motiveless: Iago is the stage embodiment of slave-maker and slave-master of hearts, determined to control others' love. As such, the physical bodies on the wedding sheets at the close of this play signify

the shells of burned-out perception and corrupted vision which constitute the play's psychic landscape.

As one who enjoins others, "Wear Your Eyes Thus," Iago's efforts are dedicated to eliciting, identifying, and even manufacturing corruption--whether this corruption exists only in his mind is beside the point—and then to eliciting in others the desire to punish the corruption he has seemingly uncovered. Othello and Roderigo especially attempt to destroy those whom Iago dramatizes as corrupt: Othello seeks to destroy Desdemona and Cassio, while Roderigo seeks to destroy Cassio. Hence, Othello and Roderigo battle not a demonic enemy, but rather, Iago's version of their inner selves. These three characters, all of whom seek to destroy sexual corruption, are therefore more similar than different.[24]

In that Iago targets similar points of entry in a number of characters in addition to Othello, I argue that the place where Iago gains access to Othello's psyche (and to the psyches of other characters as well) is deeper than the site of love's possible flaws; deeper than the site of sexual repression, suppression, or oppression; and deeper even than any site of cultural or racial oppression. While the ensign gains access to the psyches of others by tapping racial or sexual fears, on a far more elemental level he gains access to psyches through fears related to the exercise of free will in its most radical form. This site, mysterious in its essence, is that of the power to make free choices, the site of free will. As often as Iago compromises love or the nature of love, sexuality or the nature of sexuality, he compromises the desire to remain a separate entity, an acting subject. Eventually,

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[24] See Janet Adelman, "Iago's Alter Ego: Race as Projection in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 125-144.

Iago targets any and all expressions of individual subjectivity, free will, and separateness from himself.

Rather than attributing the tragic outcome of *Othello* to implications contained in "the fruit of love itself," then, I suggest that a more radical ambivalence—fear of freedom--underpins Iago's machinations, as well as character vulnerability to these machinations. The ensign preys upon love, erotic or otherwise, in so far as this love is an expression of internal subjectivity and the power to choose freely. Erotic love is Iago's special target in that love object choice, if free, constitutes a radical expression of subjectivity, freedom, the separate self, and the power of that self to choose. The exercise of freedom and subjectivity inherent in the choice of beloved or loved one is Iago's true target, more so than erotic love or even racial difference. From this perspective, *Othello* might be seen, apart from sexuality or race, as a representation of the desire to destroy those who make choices while relying upon inner subjectivity, for the very fact that they make such choices.[25]

The crux of the tragedy that is *Othello* might be formulated in this way: Why do the characters in this play fail to resist Iago until too late? Why do they permit him to

[25] From this perspective, Iago might even be seen as ultimately non-discriminatory in his hatred. When Othello elevates him, Iago almost seems caught up in pleasing Othello; conversely, when other characters exclude the ensign, he seems caught up in destroying those characters with the same venom he directs tp Othello. I argue, therefore, that for Iago, the will to destroy subjectivity, freedom of choice of relationship and perception, is not first and foremost about sexuality, nor is it first and foremost about Othello's racial or ethnic origin. The assumption here is that rather than particular hatred, Iago projects an overweening drive to control the objects of desire for any and all identities external to his own of, "I am not what I am" (1.1.64). Eventually, this desire to destroy extends even to Emilia, who chooses faithfulness to Desdemona over her relationship to Iago. Having said this, I hope I do not make myself a recipient of Ania Loomba's critique of First World Feminist Critics: "If Othello is treated as a prototype of universal man and his blackness is not even hinted at, we return to the paradigms of preferred readings" (40). Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*.

distort their perception and cripple their will?[26] What is so frightening about individual freedom that characters choose to abdicate it to other characters rather than to retain it for themselves?

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The arrogance of Brabantio, an elder of Venice, flows through the words he hurls down at two hecklers hiding in the darkened city street below his window: "What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice: / My house is not a grange" (1.1.104-5). Yet Gratiano tells another story, adding a postscript to Brabantio's easy Venetian arrogance, not long after in Cyprus. Gratiano's remark--"Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief/ Shore his old thread in twain" (5.2.203-4)—suggests the exploitation of an elderly father's displacement as his daughter's primary love choice.

Iago utilizes a specific point of entry to usurp Brabantio's consciousness, to "poison his delight" (1.1.67) and alienate him from his role as father. Finding in his own character both motive (animosity to freely-chosen, other-directed love), and means (that same love) to access Brabantio's psyche, the ensign imposes himself literally and figuratively upon Brabantio's need to control Desdemona by way of an interlude staged with Roderigo's help. By exploiting Desdemona's elopement—an act which by its very nature displaces a father from celebratory and ritualistic roles in what culture deems the most important transition of his daughter's life--Iago exacerbates Brabantio's fear of losing control.

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[26] Although I emphasize another perspective here, Greenblatt's formulation of the play's questions as detailed in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* is once again insightful, as are his answers: "If Iago then holds over others a possession that must constantly efface the signs of its own power, how can it be established, let alone maintained?" (234); "The question remains: why anyone would submit, even unconsciously, to Iago's narrative fashioning. Why would anyone submit to another's narrative at all?" (237).

To steep Brabantio in the horror of his own displacement, Roderigo, at Iago's behest, hurls phrases intended to outrage into the night sky of Venice. Functioning as Iago's mouthpiece in this scene, Roderigo dwells upon the fact that elopement by its very nature implies the lack of a father's permission with regard to marriage choice and by implication, denial of a father's rights. With accusations calculated to inflame, Roderigo highlights the self-determining nature inherent in such an act and laments Brabantio's loss of the veto power that, he implies, should be a father's prerogative to exercise: "If't be your pleasure and most wise consent" (1.1.119); "If this be known to you, and your allowance" (1.1.125); "But if you know not this" (1.1.127); "Your daughter, if you have not given her leave" (1.1.131). Rodergio and Iago suggest that *if* the marriage of which they bring tidings has occurred *with Brabantio's permission,* such a marriage is of course acceptable, despite the "Barbary horse" (1.1.110)[27] slur of moments earlier. The irony is apparent in the innuendoes and in the suggestion that Desdemona by her elopement has stolen from her father the power, right or privilege to extend or deny permission. Statements of this nature buttress the characterization of Desdemona's and Othello's marriage as "gross revolt" (1.1.132). Thus, in 1.1, even without the racial slurs, Iago dramatizes a willfully disobedient, rebellious Desdemona, one who has betrayed her father and his house.

It is interesting that Desdemona testifies to her father's love and care upon her entrance to the council chamber (1.3.180-4). As opposed to Egeus, who fails to use any words of endearment while speaking to Hermia during the court scene, Brabantio calls his daughter "gentle mistress" (1.3.177), and "jewel" (1.3.196). As early as 1.2, however,

[27] I am not unaware of the racial dimension of the Venetian street scene, but, as noted above, I focus upon other aspects of the scene.

it is obvious that Brabantio has internalized Iago's rhetoric of control (if indeed Brabantio ever needed the ensign's street scene to move in this direction). Although he never seeks to impose death upon his daughter as Egeus does, Brabantio informs the assembled court that Desdemona is not free to make her own choice, unless of course that choice is made in accordance with his wishes.

I argue that Brabantio, who in most readings is viewed as seemingly unable to forgive Othello for transgressing racial boundaries, actually refuses to accept or forgive his daughter for acting as a freely-choosing subject guided by internal vision. Brabantio thus serves as an easy target for Iago, clinging as he does to the hope that Othello has magically stolen Desdemona's freedom to arrange the marriage. The ensign who seeks to destroy freely-chosen love taps into that part of himself in Brabrantio and elicits the response he seeks. Yet in the process of imposing his own vision as a palimpsest upon Brabantio's, Iago usurps the elderly man's identity, usurpation which can only destroy Brabantio.

Thus, despite the stated worry that if this marriage choice is allowed to stand, "Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be" (1.2.99), I suggest that Brabantio's primary concern is to restore the previous relationship between himself and his daughter, a relationship which seems to have been quite exclusive: "she shunned/ The wealthy, curled darlings of our nation" (1.2.67-8). Brabantio's accusations--"foul thief" (1.2.62), "foul charms" (1.2.73), "drugs or minerals" (1.2.74); and other forms of demonic magic--"thou hast enchanted her" (1.2.63)--although aimed as attacks upon Othello's complexion and heritage, also allude to the fact that Desdemona's father would prefer to believe that his daughter lost freedom of choice while entering into the relationship which has

displaced him and elevated Othello in his place. Othello must have "enchanted" Desdemona; there can be no other answer for Brabantio's displacement.

As Brabantio takes the scene in 1.3 from accusations---"She is abused, stolen from me and corrupted / By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks" (1.3.61-2)--to assertions which purport to support his charges--"A maiden never bold, / Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion / Blushed at herself" (1.3.95-7)--to last chance pleas directed to Desdemona herself: "Come hither, gentle mistress" (1.3.178)--his accusations strike at Desdemona's freedom to choose as often as they undermine Othello's race and ancestry. Indeed, Brabantio closes his suit in the Venetian council chamber in 1.3 in pointed inquiry of Desdemona with regard to the freedom she experienced upon entering the marriage: "If she confess that she was half the wooer, / Destruction on my head if my bad blame / Light on the man" (1.3.176-8). And so it goes.

The progression in 1.3 thus exposes the core of the tragedy: Brabantio makes it clear that he will forgive his daughter anything if he can be assured that Desdemona lacked free will as she entered into marriage. If the marriage could not have occurred "Sans witchcraft" (1.3.65), Brabantio might yet claim exclusive rights to his daughter's love. The subtext played out in this early interaction between Desdemona and her father is crucial to the larger aspect of *Othello's* plot: Iago, too, insists upon being first in love; if not first, Iago deems love as corrupted, even as Brabantio does under his tutelage.

Brabantio's disowning of his daughter (1.3.192-9) heightens the play's exploration of the dynamic of perceptual control, especially of love object choice and freedom of will in such choice. Brabantio represents in diluted form that which Iago and Egeus (and Othello and Roderigo in their own way) display in pure, unbridled essence--

the desire to cut off, eradicate, or destroy relationships which displace one who would be another's primary love choice. Ironically, while Brabantio does not seek to destroy Desdemona, he does relinquish his perceptual integrity to Iago. This poisoned fruit--"Look to her Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee" (1.3.293-4)--precipitates not only Brabantio's own downfall but his daughter's as well as Iago re-stages Brabantio's corrupted vision later in a successful bid to cut Desdemona from Othello's heart: "Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank, / Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural" (3.3.236-7). But before Desdemona's "will most rank" can be destroyed, the master stager of the sexually corrupt and the slave master of those who would destroy that same corruption—"I am bound to thee forever" (3.3.217) watches from downstage on the Cyprus shore.

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Not long after Iago corrupts Brabantio's vison and imposes the *persona* of displaced, betrayed father upon him, the ensign usurps Roderigo's perceptual clarity to impose the *persona* of assassin upon him.[28] One outcome of identity usurpation at this level is death, as Roderigo learns in time to curse--"O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!" (5.1.62)—but not in time to save himself.

While the subtle, almost imperceptible nature of Iago's imposition allows Roderigo's fall from grace to pass almost unnoticed, such a fall does occur; for Roderigo, there is no escape. The distance between Roderigo identity and Iago's is

[28] He has perhaps also imposed adulterer and wife-stealer upon Roderigo as well. I say "perhaps" because it is impossible to know where Iago ends and Roderigo begins in the matter of Roderigo's clandestine pursuit of Desdemona. For example, in the lines from 1.1 cited above (1-3), Roderigo suggests that Iago has been tantalizing him with the possibility of winning Desdemona for a time. How much of Roderigo's doings are his own ideas, and how much are Iago's, the play never clarifies. However, it is safe to argue from the text that *assassin* is Iago's version of Roderigo's identity rather than Roderigo's own, at least initially.

so compressed that although the final co-opting of perception happens quickly, even quietly--"And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons" (5.1.9)—Roderigo's fall surfaces a powerful, if latent, representation found throughout *Othello*. By this I mean that Roderigo takes Iago's enslavement one step further as he internalizes the ensign's warped vision. Thus, as he prepares to murder Cassio, the now soul-less Roderigo muses, "'Tis but a man gone" (5.1.10). As Roderigo takes this final, fatal free-fall, his will for himself has become nothing more than Iago's will for him, his desires and purposes merely Iago's desires and purposes. Ironically, Iago is quite clear about his own purposes and desires even if Roderigo is not, and Roderigo dies as Iago wills that he should die:

> Now, whether he kill Cassio
> Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
> Every way makes my gain. (5.1.12-14.)

Freedom of will and the power of internal subjectivity, *Othello* seems to say, may be as easily corrupted as love.

Initially, Roderigo resists Iago's perceptual impositions, at least for a time. As the play opens, Roderigo's resistance to what he deems a betrayal on Iago's part indicates that the young man's ability to perceive with a certain amount of clarity is still intact:

> Tush, never tell me, I take it much unkindly
> That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
> As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this. (1.1.1-3)

On another occasion early in the play, Roderigo refuses to express the admiration Iago seeks after the ensign reveals the hypocritical nature of his relationship with

Othello. "I would not follow him then" (1.1.39), is Roderigo's response to the venomous hatred Iago reveals for Othello. Indeed, throughout *Othello* even as Roderigo is drawn deeper into Iago's net, the "young quat" (5.1.11) seems to retain a certain amount of independence as his self-indictment in 2.3 indicates:

> My money is almost spent, I have been tonight exceedingly well cudgelled, and I think the issue will be I shall have so much experience for my pains: and so, with no money at all, and a little more wit, return again to Venice. (359-364)

Roderigo demands honesty and reparation from Iago as late as 4.2 and displays a brief moment of subjectivity in his initial response to Iago's ultimate vision for his identity-- a vision to be actualized in the assassination plot against Cassio—when he initially questions the role of assassin that Iago would impose upon him: "How do you mean, removing of him?" (4.2.230). Yet *Othello* is a tragedy, and the genre by its very nature limits the nature of resistance: Roderigo's resistance is weak and easily dismissed by a master of Iago's skill; it cannot be a saving force in this play.[29]

Iago's orchestration of Roderigo's death foregrounds another interesting subtext in *Othello*. The ensign provides a clear explanation of his desire to destroy Othello as he seeks to enlist Roderigo to his cause--"I / hate the Moor" (1.3.366-7). Yet "the Moor," as we know, represents just the tip of the iceberg; indeed, bringing about Roderigo's downfall becomes a goal in itself for Iago, whose animosity

[29] Ultimately, this feeble resistance of Roderigo's might be characterized as no more than a series of ongoing laments, complaints and empty threats: "I do not find that thou deal'st justly with me." . . . "Every day thou doff'st me with some device" (4.2.175; 178).

appears early on in the sarcastic taunts and jibes he throws in Roderigo's direction and grows even more virulent after the other attempts one last time (4.2) to break with Iago.

Why the animosity? In 2.3, Iago reveals his awareness of the fact that Roderigo elevates a particular relationship—at least, the desire for a particular relationship--above his relationship to Iago. In that Roderigo desires to freely choose his own beloved—Desdemona--he excludes Iago. Iago makes it clear that such exclusion is not to his taste:

> Now my sick fool, Roderigo,
> Whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out,
> To Desdemona hath tonight caroused
> Potations pottle-deep… (2.3.48-51).

It is devotion to Desdemona that makes Roderigo a "sick fool;" that makes him one "Whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out." Indeed, even as early as 2.1, Iago, who calls Roderigo "this poor trash of Venice" (301) and further explains that he seeks to "trash" Roderigo because of "his quick hunting" (2.1.301-2), expresses similar reasons for his animosity to Roderigo.

As is the case with Othello, affection provides Iago with a point of entry into Roderigo's psyche for it is ostensibly affection that causes Roderigo to initially take up service with Iago. Yet Roderigo's service does not remain rooted in *affection* for long; he is soon convinced to take on the role of self-styled avenger against (what is dramatized as) sexual corruption. As Iago promises help in response to his desperate pleas--"Wilt thou be fast to my hopes if I depend / on the issue?" (1.3.363-4)—Roderigo is drawn

deeper into the net of perceptual corruption and identity distortion, until the moment when Iago imposes one final construct him, and Roderigo accepts the fatal vision. Thus, once again in *Othello*, exclusionary love functions in two roles. It is Iago's motive for murder even as it is the point of entry through which he launches his vision-corrupting interludes: Hence, Shakespeare's portrayal of the dimension of self that is free to choose as the dimension of self which surrenders its own autonomy and in the process brings about its own destruction is unified and nuanced throughout the play.

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Cassio serves as another case in point with regard to Iago's refusal to be excluded from love and center stage. In 2.1, the Cyprus shore serves as the setting for Iago's observation of Cassio's greeting of Desdemona. The intensity of this encounter excludes Iago and elicits his prophetic, "I will / gyve thee in thine own courtesies" (2.1.169-70). Iago will not be excluded as love object; presumably, while greeting Desdemona, Michael Cassio does just this. Not until well into the scene and then almost as an afterthought does Cassio acknowledge—"Good ancient, you are welcome" (2.1.95)--Iago's presence. After greeting Emilia, Cassio again acknowledges the ensign; in this second address, he alludes to Iago's resentment of his courtly greeting:

> Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
> That I extend my manners; 'tis my breeding
> That gives me this bold show of courtesy. (2.1.97-9)

While much is made of Iago's dismissal of Cassio's skill as a soldier in 1.1, here the reverse dynamic occurs. In 2.1, Cassio's courtesies to Desdemona and Emilia upstage

Iago's presence. Refusing to remain downstage, Iago imposes himself upon the scene by degrading his wife's character and bantering with Desdemona. As Cassio re-claims center stage, he again dismisses Iago, not this time by failing to acknowledge the ensign as had occured earlier, but rather, through a verbal dismissal directed to Desdemona: "He speaks home, madam, you may relish him / more in the soldier than in the scholar" (2.1.165-6). The dismissal is light and charming, but it is a dismissal all the same.

Seemingly struck by Cassio's charm and its power to exclude him, Iago inserts himself into the scene through the patterned use of several rhetorical forms; his comments alternate between observations, instructions, and commands. "He takes her by the palm" (2.1.167), an observation, for example, is immediately followed by another observation and then a sinister, secretive command: "ay, well said, / whisper" (2.1.167-8), and "Ay, smile upon her, do" (2.1.169). The ensign continues in this vein, sprinkling sarcastic observations--"Very good, well kissed, / and excellent courtesy: 'tis so, indeed!" (2.1.174-5)—with commands and instructions: "it had been better you had not / kissed your three fingers so oft" (2.1.172-3). Although Iago breaks off as Othello arrives upon the scene, he closes by way of the juxtaposition of observation and sinister command that has characterized his spying throughout: "Yet again, your / fingers to your lips? would they were clyster-pipes / for your sake!" (2.1.175-7).

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At various points in *Othello*, Iago finds new dramatic venues through which to stage his identity-usurpation interludes. In this particular encounter upon the Cyprus shore, it is Iago's ability to twist the sense of touch which Cassio displays at his courtier-best that permits him to claim Roderigo's perception as his own. Thus Iago's withdrawal

from the scene is not the end of this particular incident; the encounter will take on a life of its own as Iago re-stages it for Roderigo's benefit (2.1.212-283).

In the face of Roderigo's periodic resistance to his extortion efforts, Iago devises an interlude that is a distorted version of Cassio's and Desdemona's meeting. In this interlude, Iago portrays Roderigo as excluded from love, not by Desdemona's devotion to her husband but rather by her (supposedly) illicit love for Cassio. After informing Roderigo that Desdemona will soon lose interest in the Moor (1.3.335-362), Iago exploits Roderigo's desire to secure Desdemona by creating another sexually-corrupt villain, Cassio, who, Iago claims, will soon replace Othello in Desdemona's affections. Thus, Iago twists the supposed Cassio factor into the paramount obstacle barring Roderigo from sexual fulfillment and/or fulfillment in love: "Desdemona is directly in love with him" (2.1.217); "the knave is handsome, young, and hath all / those requisites in him that folly and green minds / look after" (2.1.243-5); "Didst thou not see / her paddle with the palm of his hand?" (2.1.251-2); "They met so near with their lips that their breaths / embraced together" (2.1.257-8). In this sense, the interchange between Cassio and Desdemona on the quay in Cyprus provides Iago with the opportunity to shape Roderigo's identity into that of assassin.

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In that, according to Iago, Cassio is "framed to make women false," Cassio claims membership in a group which seems to exclude Iago; as such, Iago seeks to corrupt this birthright of Cassio's: "As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad" (4.1.101).[30] In a manner

[30] The issue may also be about Cassio choosing to love outside of Iago: "That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it, / That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit" (2.1.284-5).

similar to imposition efforts directed against other characters, Iago works on Cassio until he, too, abandons his internal subjectivity at the precise moment in the tragedy when Cassio's loss of perceptual clarity can only become a fatal link in a fatal chain of events.

Initially, the young Florentine resists the bait Iago offers. In a stychiomathic interchange in 2.3, for example, Cassio refuses to countenance the sexual slander Iago sends in Desdemona's direction: "An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest" (2.3.23). In addition to resisting Iago's insinuations against Desdemona's character, Cassio briefly shakes off Iago's temptations to "a stoup of wine" (2.3.27) while charged with the responsibility of military duty. His first response to Iago in the face of the ensign's desire to impose upon him an identity that is not his own is confident, assured resistance:

> Not tonight, good Iago, I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking. I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment. (2.3.30-3)

While Cassio's response seems to reveal a certain amount of self-awareness, this initial response differs radically from his final, fatal assent: "I'll do't but it dislikes me" (2.3.44).

Iago, who provides the words necessary to corrupt Cassio's vision--"O, they are our friends. But one cup, I'll drink for you" (2.3.34-35); "What, man, 'tis a night of revels, the gallants desire it" (2.3.40-41)—stands between Cassio's initial response and his final one, and the divergent constructs of character which the two moments represent. Also positioned between the two responses is the distortion of identity about which Iago gloats:

> If I can fasten but one cup upon him,
>
> With that which he hath drunk tonight already,
>
> He'll be as full of quarrel and offence
>
> As my young mistress' dog. (2.3.45-48)

Cassio's assumption of Iago's vision, purpose and proposed identity, an assumption which flies in the face of all he asserts about himself and alcohol (2.3.30-33; 36-39), is fatal.[31] His choice to allow his perception to be corrupted at this point and willingness to accept a construct of his identity not of his own devising serves as the generic catalyst for the play's tragic outcome.

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In "'Othello's Occupation': Shakespeare and the Romance of Chivalry," Mark Rose makes the following point:

> When at the end of the temptation scene Iago says that he belongs to Othello forever we understand that he means the opposite of what he speaks: Othello is now his. Othello believes that Desdemona has been stolen from him but the truth is that he has been stolen from himself. The demi-devil Iago has taken possession of his soul. Soon, like a classic case of demonic possession, Othello will be thrashing on the ground, foaming and raving in a fit. (305-6).

Rose notes that Iago intends the exact opposite of his words, and his assertion that "Othello believes that Desdemona has been stolen from him but the truth is that he has been stolen from himself" is apt. Yet I question Rose in another context. I suggest that as long as

[31] While this fall from grace proves to be a temporary rather than a permanent one for Cassio--he is restored to power as the play closes, and he is ultimately not corruptible by intention as Roderigo is--the fall comprises a fatal link in the tragedy's plot.

Othello gives Iago primary access to his person, showers him with attention, and permits the ensign to lead him, Iago will indeed be Othello's "own forever"(3.3.482). Iago's interludes are directed to positioning Iago as both the love object *and* perception-shaper of Othello; as such, the ensign seeks to replicate an incestuous paradigm—to be both love object and lover simultaneously. This paradigm operates as well for each and every other character whose orbit intersects with Iago's own, male and female, Italian and Moor. Problems arise when characters choose otherwise, determining that Iago's role should be merely a secondary one, as characters in this play invariably seem to do.[32]

As relationships are self-limiting, Iago cannot remain one character's love object and identity-determiner for long without coming into conflict with other characters. If Iago is to be Othello's "own," for example, he comes into conflict not only with Desdemona and Cassio, but also with Othello's explicitly expressed desires. If he is to be Desdemona's "own," Iago comes into conflict with Brabantio, Othello, and Cassio; if he is to be Cassio's "own," he conflicts with Othello, Desdemona, and Bianca. Finally, if Iago aspires to be Roderigo's "own," the ensign must confront not Desdemona, but Roderigo's idealized notion of Desdemona.[33] Iago's response to these conflicts is to portray any and all love that is not directed to him as corrupt love.

Once again with Othello--as with Brabantio, Roderigo, and even Cassio—then, Iago's need to usurp and re-direct love and to re-claim center stage serves not only as a motivation for identity-theft, but also as the site of entry and means by which the ensign gains access to Othello's psyche to corrupt his vision. Thus, in addition to the various crimes that Iago attributes to Othello-- his refusal to be ruled by the "great ones" (1.1.7)

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[32] Emilia dies in the process of determining that Iago's role must take second place to Desdemona's.
[33] This series of escalating confrontations occurring as Roderigo also determines that Iago's role must be secondary to Desdemona's eventually leads to Roderigo's death.

of Venice when deciding to advance "a great arithmetician" (1.1.18), one "That never set a squadron in the field / Nor the division of a battle knows" (1.1.21-2), and his very identity, according to Iago as "an old black ram" (1.1.87) and "a Barbary horse" (1.1.110)--Othello commits yet another crime, one which Iago never acknowledges directly. By its very nature, Othello's love for Desdemona, culminating as it does in marriage--"And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona / A most dear husband" (2.1.288-9); "Our / general's wife is now the general" (2.3.300-310); "His soul is so enfettered to her love" (2.3.340)--is unacceptably exclusive. This crime may well be more egregious than even the fact that Othello loves Cassio enough to advance the Florentine over Iago.

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As with Brabantio and Roderigo, the ensign proves resourceful in devising interludes. In 3.3, the heart of the play, Iago utilizes a variety of verbal platforms, each of which features Othello's exclusion from love. Iago creatively suggests that he must exclude Othello from his thoughts to protect his General from the horrors contained therein. Feigned protests of wishing to exclude Othello to protect him—"It were not for you quiet nor your good / . . .To let you know my thoughts (3.3.155-7). . . . I am not bound to that all slaves are free to— / Utter my thoughts? (3.3.159) . . . You cannot, if my heart were in your hand, / Nor shall not whilst 'tis in my custody" (3.3.165-6)—neutralize Othello's resistance and affirm the supposed intimacy between Iago and the General, thereby setting the stage for accusations yet to come. In another segment of "the excluding world according to Iago," Iago insinuates that the women of Venice (generally, and by implication, Desdemona specifically) seek to keep their husbands from knowledge of their behavior, so corrupt is that behavior: "In Venice they do let God see the pranks /

They dare not show their husbands" (3.3.205-6). Because this is a group of men from which Othello is naturally excluded, Iago twists matters to allow Othello inclusion at a price--the price of having an unfaithful Venetian wife.

The bleakest moment in any of Iago's interludes is the moment in which he represents Othello as excluded from Desdemona's love by (in Iago's little drama) the horror that is Othello's own nature:

> Not to affect many proposed matches
> Of her own clime, complexion and degree,
> Whereto we see, in all things, nature tends—
> Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank,
> Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.
> But pardon me, I do not in position
> Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
> Her will, recoiling to her better judgement,
> May fall to match you with her country forms,
> And happily repent. (3.3.233-42)

By utilizing "clime, complexion, and degree" (3.3.234) as weapons, Iago usurps Othello's identity, leaving a void which he will soon fill with an identity that is and is not[34] Othello's own. Less obviously, Iago's racial slurs (slurs which Othello ultimately accepts) undermine the integrity and validity of Desdemona's free choice of Othello. By accepting Iago's insinuation that "one may smell in such a will most rank, / Foul

[34] I argue that this identity goes beyond that of "green-eyed monster" (3.3.168), and beyond even Greenblatt's "deep current of sexual anxiety" (250). It is an identity that Othello most fully reveals in the manner of his death and immediately prior to his death as he speaks of the "a malignant and a turbaned Turk" (5.2.351) who "Beat a Venetian and traduced the state" (5.2.352) However, there are intimations even prior to this, especially as Othello's desire to kill Desdemona is tempered by his desire to kill her in such a way so as to not cause the damnation of her soul as he understands that.

disproportion, thoughts unnatural" (3.3.236-7), Othello internalizes destructive views of both his own ability to function as a freely choosing subject and Desdemona's as well. Indeed, Othello's assent to Iago, "I am bound to thee forever" (3.3.217), constitutes an explicit denial of not only his own subjective identity, but also of Desdemona's. Ironically, at this point Othello provides Iago with that for which he labors and that for which he has labored throughout—an exclusive relationship with Othello himself and willingness to assume the identity Iago projects for him. Hence, Roderigo's words in 1.1, "Thou toldst me thou didst hold him in thy *hate*," reveal a hidden irony, one which resurfaces periodically in this play. Notwithstanding Iago's racial slurs, Shakespeare's character who would usurp others' identities and remake them in his own image is one who acts most decisively when displaced from center stage and/or from honor and affection. Although Othello believes he has been excluded from love--"She's gone, I am abused" (3.3.271); "That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites!" (3.3.273-4)—in actuality, Desdemona, and Cassio have been displaced as love objects, and Iago has imposed himself upon Othello's identity in the breach: "I am your own forever" (3.3.482).

The question must be asked: What is the nature of this identity which Iago seeks to impose upon others, not only upon Othello, but also upon Roderigo (successfully), Cassio (unsuccessfully), and others, including Emilia, and the visitors from Venice (for the most part, unsuccessfully). I suggest that Othello's flaw is not so much that he assumes the Iago-imposed identity of "green-eyed monster" (although he does), nor even that he assumes the Iago-imposed identity of "murderer" (although he does), but rather, that he assumes yet another identity that Iago proposes for him. What characterizes

Othello's identity as he carries out Iago's plan, if not "green-eyed monster" (3.3.168) and "murderer"? And how could such an identity be imposed upon others in the play as well? Although Iago seeks to enslave any and all characters refusing to make him the sole recipient of their love, Othello of course serves as his primary target; therefore, first to Othello. In the face of Othello's freely-made choice to advance Cassio--a choice which excludes Iago: "'I have already chose my officer'" (1.1.16)—and his marriage to Desdemona, the Moorish General's royal identity---

> 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. (1.2.21-4)--

clearly serves as an icon inviting destruction to Iago. But, if "green-eyed monster" (3.3.168) is not enough to destroy one of Othello's dignity, what might Iago substitute in place of Othello's "honourable" (5.2.300) nature and his identity as a valued military hero to destroy him? Ironically, the *persona* which Iago imposes upon Othello is one that might be viewed as a constitutive thread in Shakespeare's canon. It is the substitution of identity that Don John makes for Claudio's, and that Angelo attempts—unsuccessfully--to make for Vincentio's; it is also the substitution that Cassius makes for Brutus'—that is, punitive defender of the state's purity--what we might term corruption-avenger or enforcer.[35]

Thus, although Othello's proclamation of identity in 1.2 clearly marks him as other than a slave, Iago—as perhaps the state of Venice has done prior to Iago--

[35] "Corruption," as determined, manufactured, or elicited by the imposing agent who seeks to find a tool, is often sexual in nature, as in *Much Ado About Nothing, Othello*, and *Measure for Measure*, but it need not be, as in *Richard II* and other of Shakespeare's Histories.

proposes a slave's identity for Othello, and the Moor accepts the blueprint from Iago's hands as readily as does the Italian Roderigo. Iago's proposed (and internalized) identity for both men goes beyond the much-touted "green-eyed monster" (3.3.168). It goes beyond the identity Desdemona easily dismisses as ludicrous in conversation with Emilia (3.4.26-9), beyond the one so diametrically opposed to Othello's own that Lodovico comments upon it in horror in 4.1--"My lord, this would not be believed in Venice / Though I should swear I saw't" (241-2)—and beyond even the one upon which the shattered Othello himself comments in 5.2: "That's he that was Othello? here I am" (5.2.281).

In addition to *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare represents identity theft of a similar nature in the Histories. In *Richard II*, the representation surfaces as Exton explicitly verbalizes his intention in 5.4 to assume an identity Bullingbroke has previously proposed. Northumberland similarly assumes an externally-influenced identity. To this end, the soon-to-be-*executed* Richard's words to the "ladder wherewithal / The mounting Bullingbroke ascends" (*Richard II* 5.1.55-6)[36] might as easily apply to Othello or Roderigo as to Northumberland. It is the externally-proposed and internally accepted *persona* of self-righteous crusader and corruption-avenger identity which turns Roderigo into an assassin and Othello into one who can see nothing but the "sacrifice" (5.2.) he believes he must make. As Iago tells Othello, "Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed -- / even the bed she hath contaminated" (3.3.204-5), he encourages this dimension of the Moor, Venice's most powerful and honored Enforcer.

[36] All citations of *Richard II* are to *The Riverside*. On the other hand, this *persona* of self-righteous crusader and state executioner of the corrupt is one that *Measure for Measure's* Vincentio, the subject of my fourth chapter, successfully resists.

That Othello has these tendencies is obvious on any number of other occasions in the play, including the Moorish General's last words to the horrified visitors from Venice:

> And say besides that in Aleppo once,
> Where a malignant and a turbanned Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
> I took by th' throat the circumcised dog
> And smote him—thus! (5.2.350-4)

As he recollects the incident in which he "smote" the "turbanned Turk," Othello extols his role as defender of the "state" (5.2.300), punisher of the "malignant" and then kills himself (5.2.354) in punishment for a tragic mistake. Before killing himself, Othello levels the corruption-avenger *persona* against himself by seeking the spiritual damnation he refuses to impose upon Desdemona (5.2.31-2) as fitting retribution for one of his nature:

> When we shall meet at compt
> This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven
> And fiends will snatch at it
> . . .
> Whip me, ye devils,
> From the possession of this heavenly sight!
> Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
> Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire. (5.2.271-8)

Thus, while Othello admits to being overcome by jealousy on various occasions—for example, in 3.3.271-281; 3.3.341-46; 348-360; 5.2.341-349—and while he is obsessed

throughout with Iago's lurid representations of a supposedly unfaithful wife and lieutenant, the Moor also sees himself as "an honourable murderer." I suggest, then, that Iago's ultimate appeal to Othello—"Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on? / Behold her topped?" (3.3.399)--is to one who desires to serve society, one who functions as society 's tool—the instrument, the enforcer, the punisher of "the other" portrayed as somehow corrupt or dangerous.

Such is the latent power of Iago's ability to steal perceptual clarity and subjective identity from others. In place of Othello's perception, Iago substitutes his own as he inculcates in Othello the idea that it is his responsibility to Venice to turn his power as the state's corruption-avenger upon Desdemona. This usurpation, similar to the one which displaces Cassio from Othello's service, destroys Othello's relationship with his wife and replaces it with one based upon homage to "Honest Iago" (1.3.295).

In 3.3, when Othello momentarily resists Iago as he seeks to reassert his faith in Desdemona—"Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore, / Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof" (3.3.362-3); If thou dost slander her and torture me / Never pray more" (3.3.371-2)--Iago threatens Othello once more with exclusion from a crucial love relationship. Suddenly, however, the love relationship in question is no longer that of Othello and his wife**,** nor even that of Othello and his trusted lieutenant**.** The relationship from which Othello must now see to it that he is not excluded--the only important relationship left in his life, it seems--is his relationship to Iago. Iago threatens to withdraw from Othello as he laments an exclusion that is seemingly devastating to the ensign himself:

To be direct and honest is not safe.

I thank you for this profit, and from hence

I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence. (3.3.381-3)

Threatened in this way, Othello scales back his resistance and eventually assumes the *persona* of corruption avenger—to be precise, "sacrificer"--with a vengeance.

For his finale, Iago stages yet another displaced-from-love interlude, this time, a recounting of feigned dreams which exclude. Cassio's supposedly sleep-induced words--"'Let us be wary, let us hide our loves'" (3.3.422). . . "'Cursed fate / That gave thee to the Moor!'" (3.3.427-8)—suggest that Othello's exclusion from love is always in process. As Iago plays the scene of exclusion, Othello abandons perceptual clarity and subjective identity. He becomes--not only Iago's version of Othello—but also, Iago—the punisher of exclusive love, which is always deemed as corrupt: "Within these three days let me hear thee say / That Cassio's not alive" (3.3.475-6). What more could Iago want?

In the interludes he stages for the spectator Othello, Iago represents the Moorish General in much the same way he represents Brabantio and Roderigo in the interludes he stages for these characters, as excluded from love (or fantasy love) relationships with Desdemona. By portraying Othello as an identity excluded from his wife's sexuality/love, he destroys Othello's sense of identity:

But there where I have garnered up my heart,

Where either I must live or bear no life,

The fountain from which my current runs

Or else dries up—to be discarded thence! (4.2.58-61)--

As he accepts Iago's version of his identity, Othello reveals that "The fountain from which [his] current runs" is in actuality the volcanic one of self-righteous guardian of the

state, and the place where he has "garnered up [his] heart" is actually that of the enforcer and corruption-avenger.

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The male characters in *Othello* --Cassio,[37] Othello, and Roderigo-- resist Iago, at least sporadically and weakly, but they eventually abandon resistance and succumb. Emilia, Bianca, and Desdemona, in contrast, display resistance of another type. In 5.1, for example, Bianca resists the imposition placed upon her by both Emilia and Iago: "I am no strumpet/ But of life as honest as you, that thus / Abuse me" (5.1.121-3). Emilia, on the other hand, initially succumbs to Iago's machinations as she steals Desdemona's handkerchief--"I nothing, but to please his fantasy" (3.3.303)--knowing full well that Desdemona "loves the token" (3.3.297). Yet, at the crucial moment, Emilia resists--"Perchance, Iago, I will ne'er go home" (5.2.194); "No, I will speak as liberal as the north" (5.2.218)—and dies resisting: "Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan / And die in music" (5.2.245-6).

Desdemona, too, fails to resist initially and then attempts to so when it is too late. In her response to Othello's growing scorn, Desdemona resembles Helena as she repeatedly entreats love--"Upon my knees, what doth your speech import?" (4.2.31);. "Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?" (4.2.71); "They are loves I bear to you" (5.2.40)--and passively accepts Othello's anger: "Lay on my bed my wedding sheets" (4.2.107). At the same time, she resists that which Emilia would impose upon her with regard to marriage--"Good night, good night. God me such uses send / Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend!" (4.3.103-4)—as she resists death itself once it becomes apparent to her that Othello's love has been changed into hatred due to some sort of

[37] Cassio succumbs to dereliction of duty, although he never succumbs to hatred or action against Othello.

betrayal: "He will not say so" (5.2.70); "O, my fear interprets!" (5.2.72); "Alas, he is betray'd, and I undone" (5.2.75); "Kill me tomorrow, let me live tonight!" (5.2.79). Yet in resisting death, Desdemona inadvertently excludes Othello as she cries out upon hearing that Cassio has been "stopped" (5.2.71). As programmed by Iago, in response to this unwitting exclusion, Othello's only response is anger: "Out, strumpet, weep'st thou for him to my face?" (5.2.76). Desdemona's final words, "Nobody. I myself" (5.2.122), might be viewed as words of the uber-Helena or as words of sacrificial love, depending upon one's perspective. In this context, it might also be noted that Desdemona resists the desire to take vengeance in her final words of exoneration for Othello. In contrast to *Othello*, *Measure for Measure's* Isabella's similar willingness to resist indulging in vengeance will be foregrounded as the moment when that play makes its final turn to comedy.

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The close of *Othello* juxtaposes despair—"Who can control his fate?" (5.2.263); "Here is my journey's end"(5.2.265); "Where should Othello go?" (5.2.269); "This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven /And fiends will snatch at it" (5.2.272-3)—with the possibility of potentially reclaimed identity for Othello. If the possibility of redemption is fostered by acquired knowledge--"Dear general, I never gave you cause" (5.2.296)--forgiveness--"I do believe it, and I ask your pardon" (5.2.297)--or renewed awareness of love once given--"This look of thine" (5.2.272); "no way but this / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss" (5.2.356-7)--then perhaps Othello is portrayed as redeemed in death. And in a play where the protagonist, unlike Hamlet, chooses to refrain from seeking to send a soul to spiritual damnation--"I would not kill thy unprepared spirit, /

No, heaven forfend, I would not kill thy soul" (5.2.31-2)--perhaps such redemption is important.

Identities are stolen in *Othello*, and new ones assumed. Neely remarks, "Iago is the catalyst, but Othello makes his task easy" (112), and the same might be said of Brabantio, Cassio, Roderigo, and even Emilia initially. Still, Iago solicits and orchestrates evil as he usurps identities and leaves radical distortions in their places. In this, we see the old folkloric motif of the "shape-shifter" in Iago. *Measure for Measure*, the subject of the following chapter, contains a psychic shape-shifter of amazing versatility as well. Indeed, Angelo possesses such versatility that current critical assessments often shift the notion of villainy from him and place it upon the Duke of Vienna. Yet, as opposed to *Othello*, *Measure for Measure* remains generically rooted in the comic tradition. In this play, the Duke, whose course is often identified with Angelo's, despite the fact that he possesses and uses power to counter Angelo, somehow recognizes his deputy's potential to shape-shift from early one, and so embarks upon a course of imposition during a journey underground of his own. That journey is the subject of my next chapter on *Measure for Measure*.

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CHAPTER FOUR

"Against all sense you do importune her":
The Journey as Love and Resistance in *Measure for Measure*

"Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me" (5.1.435)

At a time when texts seemingly resist being captured in essence, Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* proves especially elusive. The character of Vincentio, Duke of Vienna, lends a particular indeterminacy to *Measure for Measure*. Veiled throughout by the ambiguous nature of his motives and actions, *Measure for Measure's* Duke embodies the questions and puzzles, complexities and paradoxes of a number of Shakespeare's earlier characters. Despite the conflicted set of excuses Vincentio provides for Friar Thomas in 1.3, for example, we never know exactly why the duke initially chooses not to administer the ancient laws of Vienna, nor why he suddenly reverses his earlier policy and re-imposes these harsh statutes as the play opens. Nor do we ever learn exactly why Vincentio decides to disappear and view Vienna through veiled eyes.

Another question which arises in *Measure for Measure* with regard to Vincentio's course of action involves the public spectacle he stages in Act 5. Is the purpose of this carefully-designed and orchestrated spectacle to restore Mariana's shattered reputation and save Isabella's from possible future attacks? Or is the

stylized and gratuitous interlude intended to celebrate Vincentio's power over two women, his own court, and the city of Vienna? Theatrics of this nature indeed cast a shadow upon one who says of himself:

> I have ever lov'd the life remov'd,
>
> And held in idle price to haunt assemblies,
>
> Where youth, and cost, witless bravery keeps. (1.3.8-10)[1]

Why the need for this public spectacle, for such display on the part of the Duke of Vienna if he is the shy and retiring violet he claims to be? And why, in a manner similar to Prospero's at the close of *The Tempest*, does Vincentio exit the stage leaving some of the play's most pressing questions unanswered? As *Measure for Measure* is Vincentio's story, this indeterminacy adds not only profound depth but also radical elusiveness to the play's suggestive subtexts.

Certain of the paradoxes which inform Vincentio's character and the play itself may be clarified through the use of a wider canonical lens, but at this point I note only one dimension of a more comprehensive picture to be developed below. As readers and theater-goers, we never fully understand the nature of the blinders which prevent Othello from containing the danger posed by Iago, any more than we understand the nature of the blinders which prevent Claudio from containing the danger posed by Don John. *Measure for Measure* elicits similar confusion, but for other reasons: as readers and theater-goers we remain ultimately uncertain as to why Vincentio *differs* from Othello and Claudio in his ability to successfully contain the dangers posed by Angelo to Isabella, Mariana, and perhaps even to his own rule.

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[1] All citations of *Measure for Measure* are to the Arden, ed. J. W. Lever (Surrey, UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1965).

To effect his journey underground, impose his will upon the wretched prisoners, and resist his deputy, Vincentio utilizes a variety of devices which might collectively be termed substitutions. While Angelo also attempts to impose his will upon Vienna through a variety of substitutions—false *persona* for true character, old laws for the more modern statutes, his own ego in place of the law, and slanderous lies for truth of character--Vincentio utilizes substitutions of a far different nature, both physical and spiritual, to implement his course of action. Along with head and bed tricks, Vincentio's obvious physical substitutions include deputy for duke--"Elected him our absence to supply" (1.1.18)--and friar for duke--"as 'twere a brother of your order" (1.3.44). On the social level, in a play marbled with multiple layers of irony, Vincentio exchanges his slandered self for his authentic self: "You must, sir, change persons with me, ere you make that my report" (5.1.334-5). Finally, while the Duke's critical intellectual substitution is his stated intent to use "Craft against vice" (3.2.270), his crucial spiritual *s*ubstitution, the imposition upon which all others depend, is his willingness to exchange power for invisibility and vulnerability.

At some undefined moment during the play, Vincentio is transformed. As *Measure for Measure* closes, a pair of linked substitutions on Isabella's and Vincentio's part-- prayers for prayers (5.1.430-53) and a brother for a brother (5.1.490-93)—pave the way for *Measure for Measure's* final grace, a gift extended especially to Mariana,[2] although similar gifts are extended to Juliet, Claudio, Barnardine, and Lucio (if only grudgingly and partially in the latter case).

[2] Whether we agree with Mariana's love for Angelo is beside the point; the fact is, the Duke grants her desire.

Despite the fact that we are left with questions, there is little doubt that *Measure for Measure* reverses earlier paradigms.[3] By this, I mean that when a character stages theater in *Measure for Measure*, that character does not function as an imposer in the mode of Iago, the "demi-devil" whose slanderous spectacles destroy foolish lovers (or foolish would-be-lovers) and their innocent beloved, Desdemona. Nor does *Measure for Measure's* director create in the mode of Don John, whose spectacle, designed for Claudio's eyes and replete with henchmen violating the sanctity of a garden, circumscribes Hero's life in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Rather, the master in *Measure for Measure* is Vincentio, the Duke of Vienna who imposes a carefully-orchestrated and very public spectacle[4] upon city and court in Act 5. In that Vincentio's course reverses previous plays' patterns of slander-incited murders and near-murders (and previous plays' betrayals and usurpations), I find myself applauding the interludes Vincentio stages rather than criticizing his creativity.[5] For the most part, then, I elide current (and negative) critical views with regard to Vincentio; indeed, the assumption which underlies this chapter is that Vincentio's public spectacle and his entire course of action are necessary if Isabella and Mariana are not to be destroyed.

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[3] See, for example, Robert B. Bennett, who juxtaposes *Measure for Measure* and *Othello* in his "Redemption and Damnation: *Measure for Measure* and *Othello* as Contrasting Paired Visions*," Romance and Reformation: The Erasmian Spirit of Shakespeare's* Measure for Measure (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2000).

[4] While Iago's interludes must be played out secretly, Vincentio's most important interlude depends upon public consumption: Vincentio attempts to undo slander rather than to operate from an Iago/Don John mode of engendering slander.

[5] I discuss Vincentio's creativity in more detail below. For a negative critical assessment of Vincentio's skills as dramatist, see Richard Wheeler, *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Power of Development* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986). For other attacks on Vincentio's character and ethics, see Alexander Leggatt, "Substitution in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988): 342-359; Richard A. Levin, "Duke Vincentio and Angelo: Would 'A Feather Turn the Scale'?" *Studies in English Literature* 22 (1982): 257-270; Ruth Nevo, "'Measure for Measure': Mirror for Mirror," *Shakespeare Survey* 40 (1988): 107-122.

From the perspective of imposition, the plot of *Measure for Measure* is easily summarized. The Duke of Vienna decides to journey underground for reasons which, although speculated upon in the play, remain for the most part unknown or unconfirmed. After conferring power upon his deputy, Vincentio disappears from court, only to re-surface as he manipulates the spiritual lives of the wretched souls who inhabit Vienna's prison and the visitors and officials attending these prisoners. While Vincentio seeks to change the prisoners, he, too, is transformed during his journey underground, and his transformation is confirmed in a radical way in Act 5. At this time, Vincentio stages an interlude, a spectacle of sorts, one that might be termed a *civic exorcism of slander* for want of a better name, but although he convenes the assembly, the script he follows is actually Angelo's rather than his own.[6] Finally, while the process of change is on-going during his journey underground, Vincentio's most radical indication of change--his proposal of marriage to Isabella in Act 5-- is preceded by Isabella's response to a test, a plea for help posed not by Vincentio himself but rather, by Mariana.

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[6] I argue that Lucio's slanders of Vincentio are in reality those of Angelo and other members of Vincentio's court who back Angelo's brand of religious zealotry. Although he is not of this ilk, Lucio appropriates the cultural slanders in the public court in that they serve his purpose to discredit the friar. Moreover, I argue that Vincentio goes underground because he must if he is not to be deposed by this band of zealots who have portrayed his previous mercy to sexual transgressors as being rooted in moral laxity and/or personal promiscuity. See Robert Bennet in *Romance and Reformation*, whose Erasmian view has been exceptionally helpful: "When Lucio reveals the duke beneath the cowl, he, in effect, returns to office the one whom he or his kind removed through disabling false rumor in the first place." "In *Measure for Measure* the disempowered Duke seeks to reverse the people's betrayal of their own nature by restoring ethos in the leadership of state, not by intimidation. . .The Duke's inaction in the face of a deteriorating moral scene in the time before the action of this comic romance was appropriately compliant with the natural law's allowance to free choice. . . on the basis of *Measure for Measure's* conceptual structure and subplot action [that] slandered reputation is a plausible explanation for the Duke's inadequacy in his own person to prevent the moral decay that plagues Vienna. Whatever the cause, the inefficacy of the Duke's rule at the time of his departure is not is not in question" (102-103). Critics taking positive views of Vincentio, include Bennet, who sees Vincentio as ultimately remedying his mistakes; Arthur C. Kirsh, "The Integrity of *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Survey* 28 (1975): 89-105, and Mathew Winston, 'Craft Against Vice': Morality Play Elements in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1981): 229-248.

Vincentio is not the only character in *Measure for Measure* who seeks to sway perception. In the duke's seeming absence, Angelo uses Vincentio's mandate to bring the old statutes of Vienna to bear with a vengeance, conferring criminal status upon citizens who do not view themselves as criminals. As Angelo's infatuation with power grows, he attempts to impose violate Isabella; when she resists, Angelo imposes his own desire as supreme law in Vienna.

Other characters in *Measure for Measure*, including Mariana and Isabella, impose in modes less integral to the tragic trajectory of the play than Angelo's and Vincentio's. For example, Mariana seeks to be Angelo wife despite his wishes[7] to the contrary and willingly takes part in Vincentio's bed interelude to accomplish her ends. Isabella seeks to impose her will upon one character in particular-- her brother Claudio, in whom she seeks to inculcate her views regarding the importance of chastity and the validity of her decision to resist Angelo's supposed bargain for his life.[8] Isabella presses her view to the terrified Claudio in a manner that can only be called extreme.

Comic instances of imposition leading to the play's resolution occur in *Measure for Measure* as well. For example, Mariana's growing friendship with Isabella breaks the code of isolation that characterizes *Measure for Measure*, while Vincentio finds love in the prison. In this sense, it is Isabella who concretizes the play's break with isolation and alienation. Although he does not reveal his feelings or introduce the matter of marriage until Act 5, Vincentio, who says of himself, "I have never heard the absent Duke much detected for women; he was not inclined that way"

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[7] Vincentio's story to Isabella, rather than being a fictional piece devised by a manipulative duke, is in fact authenticated by Mariana's own words and actions.

(3.2.118-119), displays new openness as his journey underground progresses and reflects this openness in the pardons he grants as *Measure for Measure* closes.

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Critical approaches to *Measure for Measure* vary. The complexity which gives rise to this diversity of interpretation has led Louise Schleiner to conclude that *"Measure for Measure* seems to have a chameleon quality, so radically can its complexion change" (227). At the same time, critical approaches to *Measure for Measure* tend to fall into certain well-defined categories. The traditional notion that *Measure for Measure* is rooted in Christian tenets and values, promoted by such Twentieth century critics as Roy Battenhouse, and Nevill Coghill[9] generates less interest today. More contemporary critics such as Harriet Hawkins, for example, argue that *Measure for Measure* will always display a certain elusiveness if we make Christian conduct in court and state the central focus of our critique of this play. To attempt to find evidence of a monolithic view of Christian behavior in *Measure for Measure* —as opposed to Christian scriptural sources--is, according to Hawkins, to presume:

> there was general agreement about what did, or did not, constitute proper Christian conduct. There was no such agreement. Different people, different denominations, held diametrically opposite views. . . Indeed, so far as Christian doctrines are concerned, *Measure for Measure* may itself reflect a kind of dramatic, theological, social,

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[8] This is in not meant as a criticism of Isabella's decision, but rather of her insistence, given Claudio's desperate circumstances, in forcing her decision down his throat. Given his death sentence, Claudio is probably the last person in Vienna who needs to hear Isabella's lecture on chastity.

[9] See Roy Battenhouse, "*Measure for Measure* and Christian Doctrine of the Atonement," *PMLA* 61 (1946): 1029-59; Nevill Coghill, "Comic Form in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Survey* 8 (1955): 14-27.

> and emotional civil war between dialectically opposed ideologies. . . (105-106)

Yet most writers even today acknowledge the influence of Scriptural maxims, both literal and metaphoric, upon various aspects of the play, from title to closing moments.

Contemporary critics also continue the tradition of exploring the generic aspects of *Measure for Measure*, often in combination with other current issues in an attempt to unravel the play's complex and nuanced exploration of potentially explosive subjects such as the nature of sexuality and the ramifications of capital punishment for the state. Richard Wheeler, for example, in his classic study, *Shakespeare's Development and the Problem Comedies: Turn and Counter Turn*, links sexual issues to the generic:

> *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure* become problematic, become problem comedies, when strategies that succeeded wonderfully in the festive comedies prove no longer adequate to conflicts that have become increasingly intense. . . Individual fulfillment, marital intimacy, and communal renewal are celebrated together in the festive endings of earlier comedies; the marriages that conclude *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* seem only superficially to resolve antagonisms that have developed between degraded sexual desire and the moralized social orders of these two plays. (3)

Despite the fact that *Measure for Measure* drifts restlessly upon the edge of tragedy, Shakespeare does not permit the play to close there. Nor does *Measure*

for Measure require magical intervention to achieve comic resolution (although a Duke in disguise is helpful). Still, it is clear from the play that the Duke of Vienna is in the place he needs to be—underground--at the exact moment he needs to be--as Angelo escalates the terror--because he has chosen to be there, not because he suddenly bumbles into comic resolution. Indeed, Vincentio does not miss his cue until too late, as Othello and Claudio do; rather, he checks Angelo's every move from his underground vantage point. Vincentio blocks the deputy in a course that might be termed one of counter-imposition, effectively containing Angelo's desire to implement his own desire as law. As such, *Measure for Measure* resolves itself with carefully-crafted revelation upon revelation rather than with slaughter upon slaughter or in *deus ex machina* fashion.

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Of late, much critical attention has been devoted to exploring the less beneficent sexual aspects of *Measure for Measure*, including the play's tendency to foreground sexual themes steeped in the imagery of disease, death and general revulsion, as well as the play's representation of what may be understood as less than responsible conduct in the sexual arena. Yet while distinguished critics such as Adelman, Baines, Bloom, Dollimore, Hawkins, Maus, Wheeler and others comment in this vein, I find myself as often as not diverging from their readings. The core of my disagreement involves the approaches and values these critics assign to the play's central characters--Isabella, Vincentio, and Angelo. For example, after a prolonged examination of what she sees as the play's "sado-masochistic" (108) elements, Harriet

Hawkins, in "'The Devil's Party:' Virtues and Vices in *Measure for Measure,*" seemingly expresses the desire to have Isabella tested sexually in Angelo's bed (109). Nowhere does Hawkins term Angelo a potential rapist, yet I question how can the Deputy be viewed otherwise, given the "deal" he proposes? Sexual imposition is sexual imposition: Angelo's hypocritical command—"Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite / Lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes" (2.4.160-61)--makes this quite clear, while the Deputy's subsequent threats escalate the terror which characterizes his version of sexual *consent*:

> Redeem thy brother
> By yielding up thy body to my will;
> Or else he must not only die the death,
> But thy unkindness shall his death draw out
> To ling'ring sufferance. Answer me tomorrow,
> Or, by the affection that now guides me most,
> I'll prove a tyrant to him. (2.4.162-68)

In Angelo's version of law, Isabella is to be made responsible for Claudio's horrible death, and the best Hawkins can do is to speculate on Isabella's sexual response? If affection for Isabella "now guides" Angelo, it must be affection in the style of Richard of York; if Isabella complies, she can do so only in the mold of Anne, not in the tradition of Shakespeare's comic heroines, including Olivia, Hermia, Rosalind, Beatrice, or even Viola. Despite the spin one may put upon Isabella's rubies speech (2.4.99-104)--a key citation for Hawkins and one which she magnifies (106-107)—Angelo could never be Isabella's beloved for one simple reason: the deputy seeks to destroy Isabella's power as acting

subject, and she wishes to retain this above all else. In this sense, Isabella *must* resist Angelo, who would not only steal her reputation and her brother's life, but her very essence—the right of self-determination.

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Vincentio's destination is not the underworld of myth and legend, of Book VI of *The Aeneid*, but rather, Vienna's prison.[10] Between the two sites, widely divergent as they are, important similarities exist: the characters populating both have lost freedom, and travelers to each may learn from experience to enhance their own freedom as acting subjects in the upper world. Once within the closed world of the prison, freedom ceases to exist in the physical sense. The mode of the disguised Vincentio, who becomes the consummate imposer within Vienna's prison, differs radically from Angelo's. While Angelo seeks to level physical punishment of various sorts including death for transgressors, Vincentio rather labors to inculcate his idea of Christian salvation in those he deems sinners as they face imprisonment and execution. The only freedom of choice permitted by the royal (if pastorally disguised) imposer who walks the prison halls is not freedom at all, although some might view the demand to assume guilt, contrition, and resignation as religious necessity.

Cloaked in his disguise, Vincentio takes on the role of friar,[11] serving as the prisoners' supposed mediator between religious salvation (guilt and repentance), and

[10] Ironically, the same prison in which Vincentio poses in the name of the Catholic Church to confer spiritual salvation upon sinners and criminals—doomed or not, whether they wish it or not—serves as the site of another imposition, the inadvertent one known as love, forbidden to the friar.

[11] I argue that this initial assumption of the role on Vincentio's part is a premature, even hollow one, and that only slowly does he grow into the role and make it less ill-fitting and hollow. Despite the fact that there are those who contend that Vincentio never assumes the role convincingly, or with any sort of pastoral authenticity, I believe that this does occur in an on-going process which climaxes as the play closes.

religious damnation (the uncontrite heart), between spiritual salvation and physical death:

> Bound by my charity, and my bless'd order,
> I come to visit the afflicted spirits
> Here in the prison. Do me the common right
> To let me see them, and to make me know
> The nature of their crimes, that I may minister
> To them accordingly. (2.3.3-8)

Thus, the Duke attempts to prepare the prisoners for a journey quite different from the much less torturous one—signified most concretely by a change in "habit" (5.1.382)--that he himself has taken. In other words, Vincentio seeks to prepare the wretched of Vienna for a journey involving a valued tenet of the Church the Duke purports to represent in his guise as friar--the soul's after-life.

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Before entering into the details of my argument below, a word about Vincentio and the negative tenor of current critical representation is in order. My thesis is that Vincentio changes during his journey underground. As his friar's hood is pulled off in 5.1, a radically different individual emerges from the ruler who first enters the prison. The most critical changes involve Vincentio's attitude towards women, especially with regard to Isabella. It is this change in Vincentio which resolves the play as comedy, which allows the latent elements of romance[12] in *Measure for Measure* to emerge and serve as the play's last word.

As noted above, I realize that positive critical assessments of Vincentio are easily contested. A. P. Rossiter's classic view of Vincentio, for example, although

complementary if judged by current assessments, does not hesitate to criticize the Duke's friarly *persona*:

> The Duke, disguised as Friar, generalizes with sombre finality on this in the strong set speech, ''Be absolute for death (III. i. 5 f.): a speech packed with sceptic deflations of human pride and self-importance, doubts of human validity, and insistence on man's servitude to time and circumstance; and most un-Friarly lacking in the faintest whisper of a Christian hope, or even an urge towards penitence. (122)

In contrast to Rossiter's rather low-key approach to Vincentio's failings, Richard Wheeler's *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Power of Development*, escalates current negative assessments of Vincentio as he ascribes the Duke's friarly *persona* to intents which are distinctly un-pastoral:[13]

> With *Measure for Measure* the shift into the tragic period has taken place, and we get a comedy where the center of identification is with men for whom women are problematic objects. The Duke's male identity dominates the play, but in special terms: his friar's habit hides his authority (and sexuality) while he plays at being Providence by means of Art, the art of plotting in the manner of a dramatist. (16)

It is true that Vincentio fails to show much sympathy for Claudio or the other prisoners and that his demeanor seems to be anything but forgiving as he slips into "confessor" mode. He shows little sympathy for Isabella, deliberately hiding from

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[12] See Bennet, 145-150.
[13] By pastoral here, I intend the religious sense of the shepherd caring for the flock.

her the fact that Claudio's life has been spared (4.3; 5.1.387-397). As late as 5.1, in his initial coldness to Mariana as she pleads for Angelo's life, Vincentio displays the same un-pastoral approach. During his encounter with Barnardine, Vincentio sees the reprobate as no more than the means to an end: in Vincentio's scheme, Barnardine's life is to be substituted for Claudio's.[14] Still, the final moments of *Measure for Measure* usher in a new Vincentio as the ruler hidden beneath the friar's habit emerges in a pastoral mode to offer forgiveness, if grudgingly, to all.

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In order to embark upon his journey underground, Vincentio engineers a number of substitutions, the first and foremost of which involves his own person. Vincentio substitutes deputy for duke as he bestows Vienna's highest office upon Angelo: "In our remove, be thou at full ourself, / Mortality and mercy in Vienna" (1.1.43-44). Although obviously a ruler accustomed to giving commands--"No more evasion" (1.1.50); "You were not bid to speak" (5.1.81); "Never crave him; we are definitive" (5.1.425)-- after making Angelo "a figure of us" (1.1.16), Vincentio removes himself from the halls and robes of power and exchanges his royal realm for the domain of a lowly friar.

While the decision on Vincentio's part to bestow his office upon Angelo and survey Vienna from the covert position of friar's cowl appears less sensational than his later substitution of head for head in the theater of execution or maid for maid in the theater of sexual tryst, the decision actually involves a far more radical substitution. It goes without saying that Vincentio's self-fashioning, his replacement

[14] Vincentio eventually drops this idea as he ultimately considers the well-being of the reprobate--"A creature unprepar'd, unmeet for death; / And to transport him in the mind he is / Were damnable" (4.3.64-68)—instead of viewing Barnardine's life merely as a means to an end. Ironically, Barnardine

of one role, position and *persona* with another--"Supply me with the habit, and instruct me / How I may formally in person bear / Like a true friar" (1.3.46-7)--permits him to assess Angelo's use of authority from a removed vantage point, as well as to hear truth and slander in Vienna.

In addition, the royal substitution permits Vincentio to explore the hearts and minds of his subjects, from lowest to highest, especially with regard to the sexuality that is seemly so much an issue in this representation of Vienna. For Vincentio, taking the habit means something else as well. The duke must let go of his royal trappings and assume the radically different qualities of spiritual director. As Vincentio directs his friarly gaze at those he encounters in prison, he slowly inculcates those qualities into himself, initiating a transformation revealed only in Act 5. As the play closes, Vincentio abandons the mode of forcing others to conform to his will and forgives the transgressors that he, Angelo and/or the laws of Vienna (in conjunction with personal choices to act outside the law) have deemed transgressors, including Angelo himself.[15]

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As he enters Vienna's prison, now home to as many of the city's sexual transgressors as Angelo can manage to have arrested, Vincentio's request for admittance reflects the *persona* he has chosen for his journey underground, one he has not yet fully assumed or inhabited:

> Bound by my charity, and my bless'd order,
>
> I come to visit the afflicted spirits

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is the ultimate resistor in this play, as oblivious to the Duke's desire to level capital punishment as he has seemingly been in the past to the imposition of law.

[15] This is despite the fact that evidence of such change is imperceptible initially in Vincentio and only gradually becomes apparent.

> Here in the prison. Do me the common right
> To let me see them, and to make me know
> The nature of their crimes, that I may minister
> To them accordingly. (2.3. 3-8)

Thus, after having relinquished his legitimate political power to others, Vincentio imposes himself upon his subjects as the false purveyor of a religious code. Once inside the prison, Vincentio's disguise allows him to evaluate the prisoners' hearts and their choices as acting subjects. Disguise provides Vincentio with an entry into hearts at the site of his subjects' deepest fears (Claudio), deepest shames (Juliet), and deepest outrages (Isabella). Vincentio's self-fashioned *persona* also provides access to the site where acting subjects make choices for and against the law and ethical principles (Angelo, Isabella, the Provost).

Initially, *Measure for Measure* depicts a rigid Vincentio, one interested solely in imposing certain sexual and moral standards upon the prisoners and eliciting admissions of remorse and guilt from them: "Your partner, as I hear, must die tomorrow, / And I am going with instructions to him" (2.3.37-28). Although it would be difficult to imagine a character facing death as Claudio is—"Ay, but to die, and go we know not where; / To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;"(3.1.117-18)—to be easily comforted, Vincentio seems to stretch the boundaries of decorum when he chooses to function as moral judge rather than as confessor who confers peace and healing. His manner with Claudio, most apparent in the "Be absolute for death" (3.1.5) speech he delivers as the youth awaits execution, is insensitive, even cruel. As he informs Claudio of the way he should view his life and approaching death--"If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing/ That none

but fools would keep" (3.1.7-8)--he reaffirms the punitive view of justice that Angelo has already inculcated in Claudio. In that Claudio accepts his vision--"Let me ask my sister pardon; I am so out of love with life that I will sue to be rid of it" (3.1.170-1)--Vincentio may be said to be successful in his endeavors.[16]

Even as he seeks to reconcile Claudio to state-mandated execution, Vincentio attacks Juliet at the site of what he deems to be *her* sexual transgression: "So then it seems your most offenceful act / Was mutually committed?" (2.3.26-27). As with Claudio, Vincentio's interaction with Juliet reflects characteristics of Girard's[17] figure of the triangle:

> I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience
>
> And try your penitence, if it be sound,
>
> Or hollowly put on. (2.3.21-23)

In the person of Juliet, Vincentio finds a more docile and repentant prisoner than Claudio, one who displays the openness, malleability, and contrition--"I do; and bear the same most patiently" (2.3.20); "I'll gladly learn" (2.3.23); "I do confess it, and repent it, father" (2.3.29); "I do repent me as it is an evil, / And take the shame with joy" (2.3.34-35)--necessary to satisfy his demands. Thus, with Juliet, Vincentio's desire to impose his vision of spiritual salvation is seemingly fulfilled.

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[16] Whether we term Claudio's sudden resignation regarding his approaching death Christian or Stoic, helpful or not helpful, Vincentio seems to have engendered it.

[17] With Claudio, the dynamic occurs as Vincentio counsels him to face death. The encounter becomes a matter of triangulation as the Duke imposes himself upon Claudio's sexual choices and declares him guilty in the eyes of God. In the mode of a Roman Catholic Confessor—a model discredited in Post-Reformation England, but one Shakespeare apparently likes, given *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet,* etc.—Vincentio attempts to impose himself as mediator between prisoner and God while preparing Claudio for death. Admittedly, this is made quite tricky by the fact that Vincentio is not in fact a friar. A similar dynamic occurs with Juliet. In this regard, the Duke imposes beyond the boundaries of decorum as he hears Claudio's confession and advises the frightened prisoner spiritually in the face of death.

As he enters into his subjects' hearts, Vincentio's judgments seem flawed, as, for example, in his callous treatment of Claudio's fears with regard to his imminent death, noted above, or in his conclusions regarding Juliet's transgression: "Then was your sin of heavier kind than his" (2.3.28). More importantly, in posing as a confessor, Vincentio moves beyond the realm of decorum. Even if his motives are ideal--directed only to countering Angelo and saving everyone in Vienna--he violates the sanctity of the human heart by assuming a confessor's role when he lacks this authority.

While there are those who might argue that such a pattern proves Vincentio is more similar to Angelo than he is different--that he is yet another character in *Measure for Measure* to play into Goddard's notion of "lie of authority"[18] as Angelo does, or even that he may serve as a double[19] of Angelo--I suggest that as Vincentio moves from counseling Juliet and Claudio to intervening in the relationship between Isabella and her brother, between Isabella and Angelo--"The assault that Angelo hath made to you, fortune hath conveyed to my understanding" (3.1.183-184)--and between Angelo and the Provost, he changes.

Because Vincentio has divested himself of his power to judge others politically and legally;[20] and retained only enough secular power to effect whatever outcome he deems necessary during his journey underground, his entire role is bound up with the spiritual; having exchanged the power of secular and temporal punishment for the spiritual power of confession--the religious mode of mediating forgiveness—at some elusive moment in the play, Vincentio begins to assume his self-chosen role with deeper awareness. His saving grace is that as he attempts to

[18] Goddard, 452.
[19] Wheeler, 16.

impose himself inappropriately upon others by way of disguise and the interludes he stages, he is slowly transformed. Laboring to save others from spiritual damnation, Vincentio saves himself from isolation.

As Vincentio learns more about lies and transgression against the law from his Deputy than he cares to know; more about truth and terror from Claudio as glimpsed in the youth's stark fear of death; more about self-absorbed resistance from Barnardine--whose absolute refusal to die initially elicits comments of disgust from the Duke--and hears more protests of innocence from the erring sexual underworld of Vienna than he cares to hear, he begins to register the perspectives of others, to see with their eyes, if imperfectly, and to respect, if not always fully, their power to choose as acting subjects.

Isabella serves as a catalyst for change in Vincentio by allowing him to incorporate into himself the virtues—awareness of fallibility in his office, and the need for humility; charity, and justice—that he professes as he dons the physical cloak Friar Thomas provides for his journey. It is Isabella who helps to authenticate Vincentio's friarly habit as she confronts a side of his secular role and office that, in her words, involves "A pond as deep as hell" (3.1.93). (In Vincentio's own words this involves, "Shame to him whose cruel striking / Kills for faults of his own liking!" [3.2.260-261]). Vincentio's choice to strip himself of political power, in conjunction with Isabella's pain, leads to new openness, as he labors to adopt humility, justice, and concern for inner spiritual well-being. The invisibility necessitated by the role of powerlessness that Vincentio assumes manifests itself in a variety of ways, from the fact that the duke must actually hide--"Bring me to hear them speak, where I may be conceal'd" (3.1.52)—to his

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[20] This does not stop Vincentio from judging the prisoners *morally*.

expression of concern for Isabella's reputation: "Leave me a while with the maid; my mind promises with my habit no loss shall touch her by my company" (3.1.175-7).[21]

Vincentio's experiences serve to educate and transform him as he comes to see faithfulness and principle in Isabella, repentance in Juliet, resistant humanity and the will to live in Claudio and Barnardine, and generosity and courage in the Provost. Due to his underground encounters, Vincentio's initial awareness of Angelo's dual nature grows in complexity. As the Duke begins to sound the depths of Angelo's perfidy—"To weed my vice, and let his grow" (3.2.263)--the biblical maxim of "Judge not" begins to resonate in this play, assuming an authenticity all its own, for imposition in its most tragic sense is about imposing judgments without regard for the other.

Vincentio determines that Claudio, despite his failings, possesses greater worth than Vienna's law would have it: "Claudio, whom here you have warrant to execute, is no greater forfeit to the law than Angelo who hath sentenced him" (4.2.156-8) and that the Provost, sworn "To him, and to his substitutes" (4.2.183), is other than he *seems* to be by virtue of his role: "This is a gentle Provost; seldom when / The steeled gaoler is the friend of men" (4.2.86-87). Although he assumes a particular *persona* originally as a disguise, by the end of the play the fantasy substitution becomes reality.[22]

Lucio's view of the friar he seemingly seeks to destroy in 5.1--*"Cucullus non facit monachum*: honest in nothing but in his clothes*"* (5.1.261-2)—is

[21] Concern of this nature distinguishes Vincentio from Angelo.
[22] The obvious exception here is the vow to remain unmarried which Vincentio seemingly is no longer interested in following.

especially ironic in that Vincentio eventually assumes the qualities which in the ideal accompany the habit.

Finally, as the heroines of the festive comedies educate their beloveds, Isabella inadvertently educates Vincentio: "The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good. The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty brief in goodness; but grace, being the soul of your complexion, shall keep the body of it ever fair" (3.1.179-180). Vincentio's sentiments are solidified in Act 5 as Isabella imposes willingness to forgive upon Vincentio on behalf of Mariana.

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One element of *Measure for Measure* which distinguishes the play from certain of Shakespeare's earlier comedies involves the scope of imposition to be effected and its seemingly impersonal nature. In this play, imposition is not solely a dynamic of the private and personal; rather, characters' desires to impose move into what we might call the political and public realms of mandated laws governing personal sexual conduct--in other words, uniform standards applied to an entire community. Angelo, working through the venue of ancient law and by implication, religious ideals, imposes restraint of liberty, physical punishment, and even capital sentence upon a variety of sexual offenders in an impersonal way: "It is the law, not I, condemn your brother" (2.2.80). Vincentio, also working through the institutions of religion and law with Claudio, Juliet, and assorted felons, similarly attempts to impose a framework of guilt--"Then was your sin of heavier kind than his" (2.3.28)--repentance, and what he believes to be the chance for spiritual salvation.

In *Measure for Measure*, then, two social constructs, religion and law, are used as tools by those who would impose standards of sexual conduct, not solely upon

a particular individual or a small group of individuals in close community, but rather upon society as a whole. In this sense, if *Measure for Measure* is compared to earlier comedies, it is obvious that imposition manifests itself as a more political, public, and impersonal dynamic than in *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night*, and even than in *Othello*.[23]

Despite all this political complexity and impersonality, *Measure for Measure* raises the question of whether strictures of imposition with punitive consequence attached to transgression (in the sense of harsh communal laws) can actually keep supposedly revered political and ideological ends separate from the (at times, base) self interest of those administering the law or presiding as supreme authority. These poles—the political and personal, the public and private--quickly become blurred in *Measure for Measure*, as what begins as a seemingly impersonal campaign to impose sexual standards upon a city deemed in need of restraint shifts into a campaign of ego-centered criminal behavior, at least on Angelo's part.[24]

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To subdue Vienna, Angelo utilizes a variety of devices which might together, like Vincentio's, be categorized as substitutions. In addition to considering the false *persona* that Angelo lays upon Vienna, I explore the Deputy's re-institution of ancient, repressive standards of sexual conduct, his subsequent moves to displace

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[23] We see this dynamic in a limited way in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as Egeus uses the law of Athens and Theseus' political power in an attempt to force Hermia to submit to Demetrius as love choice, or be executed if she refuses. Despite this recourse to law, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* imposition remains a personal, familial issue, with Egeus' overbearing views of a father's rights over his daughter's love choice and Hermia's refusal to submit forming the core of the dispute, rather than blanket attempts to regulate the social and sexual mores of all citizens as occurs in *Measure for Measure*.

[24] I argue that Vincentio's course throughout is not criminal, although he imposes inappropriately by invading the human heart under false auspices.

civil law and impose himself as Vienna's only law, and his efforts to slander, to displace truth of character with lies.

From the perspective of imposition, law might be viewed as a socially-sanctioned, communal imposition, a particular society's codified system, agreed upon and promulgated by its authorities, if not by all its members. The "if not," however, denotes an important exception. By its very nature, law as external imposition creates a problem of immense proportions--the tendency of certain individuals and groups to refuse to obey received norms and even to transgress against these norms. Depending upon the social and legal conventions operating in a given society at a particular moment in time, those who dissent may or may not be permitted to remain in society's good graces. When dissenters take themselves beyond the pale of the acceptable, they find themselves cast from society's good regard, designated as criminals and deemed worthy of punishment.

In this framework of law as imposition, I suggest that criminals are created or designated (and/or create/designate themselves) when those who cannot or will not accept the system of laws codified by their society come into conflict with society's authorities, running afoul of those who would make, promulgate and order laws for all. In this sense, *Measure for Measure* is above all the story of dissenters and non-practicioners of sexual prohibitions--Lucio, Claudio, Pompey, Elbow, and Mistress Overdone, among others.[25] Previously accepted as being within the law in Vienna despite their transgressions, they are suddenly designated criminals by a new version of the old code that has been peremptorily implemented in Vienna. For my purposes,

[25] Jonathan Dollimore puts it this way: "Whatever subversive identity the sexual offenders in this play possess is a construction put upon them by the authority that wants to control them; moreover, control is exercised through that construction" (73). See Jonathan Dollimore, "Transgression and Surveillance

then, the question in *Measure for Measure* becomes the following: Who in this play serves as the primary creator/designator of criminal status? Who imposes criminality in *Measure for Meausre*? Does Vincentio assume this role, and, if so, does he do so willingly? Does Angelo? Do both men?[26]

While Vincentio seeks to impose the role of sinner, Angelo is the main criminal-maker, the key designator of criminal status in *Measure for Measure*, the character who takes his version of the law to transgressors and labels them as deserving of punishment. Initial appearances of characters in this play therefore take on a more than the usual parade-like quality: in *Measure for Measure*, first appearances serve as narrative venues, permitting the tales of those in Vienna who have suddenly been designated as criminals to be recounted. These appearances serve to foreground the stories of those who protest and dissent--of those who would resist the sudden imposition of old law, escape punishment, and justify both their resistance and their deliverance.

This is true of Pompey, who informs Escalus that his trade should be lawful--"If the law would allow it, sir" (2.1.224)—and argues against enforcing the laws from the point of view of their impracticality: "Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city?" (2.1.27-28). It is true of Lucio, who clearly views Claudio's offense in a far different light than does Angelo, as he informs Isabella: "For that which, if myself might be his judge, / He should receive his punishment in thanks" (1.4.27-28). It is also true of Claudio and Juliet. Found guilty when the "strict statutes and most biting laws" (1.3.19) of Vienna change their boundaries--the

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in *Measure for Measure*," *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985), 72-87.

scope of the law widens, seemingly overnight, to include both Claudio and Juliet—these laws catch Claudio in a vicelike grip from which there is seemingly no escape. As Mistress Overdone, who assesses matters from a strictly business standpoint suggests--"Why, here's a change indeed in the commonwealth! What shall become of me?" (1.2.96-97)--others have suddenly been designated as criminals as well.

Yet the ever-widening gyre in *Measure for Measure* which draws dissenters into nets only to re-create them as criminals is rooted in a venue other than the law of Vienna, as the Provost, leading Claudio to the prison from which he will not return, suggests: "I do it not in evil disposition, / But from Lord Angelo by special charge" (1.2.110-11). Thus, despite his various demurs—"Your brother is a forfeit of the law, / And you but waste your words" (2.2.71); "It is the law, not I, condemn your brother" (2.2.80)**;** "The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept" (2.2.91)—Angelo, by administering the absent Duke's mandate in the manner in which he does, personally creates the *sexual criminals* we find in this play, including Claudio.[27]

The newly-designated criminal Claudio is aware of Angelo's power to impose law, and ironically--if unwittingly--reflects upon the Deputy's own transgression in this area:

> Thus can the demi-god, Authority,
> Make us pay down for our offence by weight.
> The words of heaven; on whom it will, it will;
> On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just. (1.2.112-15)

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[26] This is the role assumed by Egeus *in A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and resisted by Theseus. In *Measure for Measure* it is assumed by Angelo: Angelo, as Othello does in death, seeks to declare himself a criminal deserving of death as the play closes, rather than accept mercy, at least initially.
[27] I say "sexual criminals" because Angelo has not necessarily created Barnardine or Ragozine as criminals.

Although Claudio is aware of the arbitrary nature of his arrest, he ultimately seems to assent to and even identify with the external view, condemning himself in accord with the charges leveled against him by "the demi-god, Authority." As the youth recounts his (Angelo-deemed) transgression to Lucio, his word choice reflects a view of his relationship with Juliet that resembles Angelo's own: "Our natures do pursue, / Like rats that ravin down their proper bane, / A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die" (1.2.120-1). At this point Claudio seemingly sees with Angelo's eyes and speaks with Angelo's voice rather than with his own. Claudio's view as reflected in these lines--not positive ones for a supposedly affianced young man—dovetails with Angelo's view of matters quite nicely. Such is the deputy's power to impose his "moral" stance upon others.[28]

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Slander, from the Latin *scandalum* (scandal) and the Greek *skandalon* (trap) (*Oxford English Dictionary*), is both imposition and substitution, the imposition of lies upon truth and false report upon actual character. Angelo's most pervasive vice is thus not the sexual imposition he attempts to effect, nor even his broken promise of marriage to Mariana, but rather, slander,

As slander is more than a vice in *Othello*, it is more than a vice in *Measure for Measure*. Slander--the crucial manifestation of Angelo's will to power in *Measure for Measure* and the most potentially-tragic form of imposition to be found in this play—is also narrative, performance, and theater in its own right. Harold C. Goddard's classic exploration of Angelo's character

[28] Perhaps the malleable nature of human beings reflected here is one reason why authorities are able to impose their will upon populaces in large numbers.

and the dynamic of power as exercised in *Measure for Measure* alludes to authority's power to efface truth:

> Why does Authority always lie? Because it perpetuates itself by lies and thereby saves itself from the trouble of crude force: costumes and parades for the childish, decorations and degrees for the vain and envious, positions for the ambitious, propaganda for the docile and gullible, orders for the goosesteppers, fine words (like "loyalty" and "co-operation") for the foolishly unselfish---to distract, to extort awe, to flatter and gratify inferiority, as the case may be. (452).

Slander, a potentially destructive force in this play, is thus one form of the "lie" of "authority."[29]

For Angelo to throw Mariana over and appear credible in the eyes of the wider community, the deputy must provide credible reasons. Slander--"her reputation was disvalu'd / In levity" (220-21)--causes Marianna to be deprived of a contracted marriage after the wreck of her brother's ship (3.1.213-223) and

[29]Examining the role of this vice in another comedy proves instructive. We do not normally think of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* for example, as being about "slander." We might even make the observation that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* does not contain slander—tyranny suffices in this play as an opposing force. Yet, even as Egeus assumes the role of tyrant to Hermia, he slanders Hermia and Lysander to others in the community. Egeus vilifies both to Demetrius, Theseus, and the court. At the same time, as Theseus aids and abets Egeus' tyranny by imposing the law at his demand, he does so by condoning and legitimizing Egeus' attacks upon Hermia's character. In the process, Hermia is demonized before court and community. Her wish to choose love by her own eyes is rendered, not only as undutiful and unfilial, but also as unlawful and unacceptable to the political and social authority and power of Athens. The next step in this progression is to impose the status of the criminal upon Hermia, a criminality for which it is deemed that she must face death or the cloister. Similarly, while it cannot be denied that Angelo employs "tyranny" in *Measure for Measure* when it suits him—against Claudio, Isabella, and various and sundry sexual offenders—the Deputy also slings slander when it suits his purposes—against Mariana and potentially against Isabella. In Act 5, by giving credence to Lucio's attacks against the friar, Angelo attempts to discredit him and bring charges of treason against him as well.

the loss of her dowry. Slander bestows life in a "moated grange" (3.1.265) upon Mariana rather than life as a wife. By way of slander, Angelo,

> Left her in her tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort: swallowed his vows whole, pretending in her discoveries of dishonour: in few, bestowed her on her own lamentation, which she yet wears for his sake; and he, a marble to her tears, is washed with them, but relents not. (3.1. 225-30)

Angelo's power to slander so preys upon Vincentio that he warns Isabella early on that the deputy will defame her reputation to the point that she will not be permitted to speak against him or even *to* him: "as the matter now stands, he will avoid your accusation; he made trial of you only" (3.1). When Isabella later expresses the wish to "pluck out" Angelo's eyes, Vincentio again notes Angelo's power to dismiss those who come against him, predicting that she will "not be admitted to his sight" (4.3.120). Isabella will not be "admitted" because Angelo commands the power of theater.

In contrast to Iago's course, Angelo's situation necessitates that he proceed in the public forum; public accusations of slander allow him to do this. Despite Isabella's assertion that "truth is truth / To th'end of reck'ning" (5.1.48-9), Angelo's slander veers *Measure for Measure* in the direction of *Much Ado About Nothing* as he seemingly obscures Mariana's goodness of character (5.1.220-221) and boasts that he can do the same to Isabella: "my false o'erweighs your true" (2.4.169).

Late in the play, in the court of power under the direction of Angelo and Lucio, as Angelo imposes slander upon a city and seemingly, upon a ruler, *Measure*

for Measure careens in the direction of *Othello*, the play in which a young wife is tried and convicted with no knowledge of the fact that she has been put on trial,:

> I did but smile till now:
> Now, good my lord, give me the scope of justice.
> My patience here is touch'd: I do perceive
> These poor informal woman are no more
> But instruments of some more mightier member
> That sets them on. Let me have way, my lord,
> To find this practice out. (5.1.232-8)

Angelo's ominous, "Let me have my way, my lord," in the presence of the court testifies to the power of slander to destroy membership and rights in the larger society.[30] Slander thus provides an effective tool by which power may deflect challenges to its own breaches of decorum.

Measure for Measure, then, is more than a representation of the conflict between justice and mercy. On a subtextual level, the play portrays authority's own conflict with law--authority's desire to circumvent the law it imposes upon others. Slander plays a special role in a conflict of this nature in that the slanderer imposes lies upon truth of character in order to destroy the (slandered) victim's membership in the larger community to deprive him or her of his or her rights. In this sense, slander provides credence and legitimacy for authority. Authority's misuse and abuse of power is erased, rather than foregrounded, as slander is used to deflect criticism. Because slander permits authority to retain

[30] There is the power of the disguised duke to be reckoned with, but the question is what would have happened had not the duke gone underground?

its good name, its "seeming," the vice serves as the perfect cover for actions intended to destroy physical and social freedom, or both.

The potential of the slanderer to do theater makes the vice particularly suited to tragic outcomes. Slander exudes appeal in all its forms. As the Twentieth and now, Twenty-First centuries have shown, the narrative and theatrical possibilities of slanderous ideologies are limitless. Slander differs crucially from other forms of the lie in that the vice embodies, usually within the context of a story or complex ideology, an attack upon an individual's (or group of individuals') reputation/s, even to questioning their place in society or their basic humanity. Slander in this sense might be viewed as a narrative that turns an individual or a group of individuals into something other than society expects or wishes them to be, and, most especially, "other" than the individual or group perpetrating the slander. This type of slander (and the attitudes and behaviors which give rise to it and to which it gives rise) forms the basis of and lends legitimacy to such dynamics as prejudice and discrimination, colonization, genocide and war. No matter who the *"other"* is, if they are different--or represented as different, if they are less--or represented as less--they are open to being demonized by way of slander.

From this perspective, I argue that Angelo is the catalyst for Vincentio's every move in this play, rather than any innate desire on the part of the Duke to impose his own moral or social views upon others. The deputy's ability to make lies appear to be truth, an ability he shares with Iago and Don John, means that Vincentio must counter, *measure for measure*, to stop him.

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Angelo's use of slander against Isabella and Mariana—at once substitution and imposition, narrative and theater—is foregrounded by Lucio's parody of, and/or comic rendition of the same vice. In his seminal essay, "Transgression and Surveillance in *Measure for Measure*," Jonathan Dollimore's argues that *Measure for Measure*:

> shows how corruption is downwardly identified—that is focused and placed with reference to 'low-life' license; in effect, and especially in the figure of Angelo, corruption is displaced from authority to desire and by implication from the ruler to the ruled. (73)

Dollimore's view is well suited to the one which underpins this chapter, although I approach the relationship between Angelo and Lucio from the perspective of slander rather than from the perspective of generalized corruption. Because Lucio is a charming, irrepressible figure who exploits sexual issues, we tend to focus upon his slander at the price of dismissing Angelo's more sophisticated and subtle slander of Mariana and Isabella. In the context of *Measure for Measure's* plot, Lucio's lurid slanders overwhelm Angelo's, whose use of this vice seems to verge on what we might call slander by implication, or slander, subtle and nuanced, as subtext.

In that it directs our minds along a trail of illicit and outrageous sexuality, causing us to both minimize and ignore Angelo's more corrupt and dangerous version of slander, Lucio plays a crucial role in *Measure for Measure*. I suggest that Lucio is *Angelo's* foil in slander rather than Vincentio's in sexual appetites. With regard to the sexual improprieties Lucio seemingly exposes in Vincentio, I argue rather that in

slandering Vincentio the rake serves as Angelo's mouthpiece in his drive to impose repressive sexual standards in Vienna.[31]

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Lucio displays strong loyalty to his friend Claudio (1.2., 1.4., and 2.2.) and endearing wit throughout *Measure for Measure.* While in this sense the gallant is a sympathetic character, he displays another side as well. Lucio reveals to Isabella a tendency to avoid being sincere in conversation with women: "'tis my familiar sin, / With maids to seem the lapwing, and to jest / Tongue far from heart" (1.4.31-3). Yet *Measure for Measure's* plot makes it clear that it is not only "maids" with whom Lucio may "jest," and speak, "Tongue far from heart," and that it is not only in the matter of love that he, like Iago, Don John, and Angelo, imposes false words and sentiments.

Lucio recounts betraying a woman in 4.3.170; he betrays Pompey in 3.2, the supposed friar in 5.1, and he tells tales of the absent Duke throughout. In Act 5, Lucio accuses those with whom he comes into conflict of treason. In the process (although he is seemingly quite different in character from Angelo) Lucio begins to serve as the mouthpiece and tool of Angelo. In circumstances which can no longer be considered "jest," Lucio slanders Isabella by virtue of her association with the Friar:

> But yesternight, my lord, she and that friar,
> I saw them at the prison: a saucy friar,
> A very scurvy fellow. (5.1.137-39)

It is one of many ironies in this play that on this occasion Lucio attacks Isabella, whom earlier he professes to hold as "enskied and sainted" (1.4.34).[32]

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[31] See *Romance and Reformation.*

Ultimately, it is difficult to know about Lucio, but in Act 5, it cannot be denied that the rake's slanders are set in a framework replete with implications of treason and capital punishment for Friar Lodowick as well as for Isabella. Moments before he attacks Isabella by way of her association with Friar Lodowick, Lucio accuses the friar of verbal treason against the Duke (5.1.130-33; 661- 63). To support Angelo, Lucio mounts the "burning throne" (291) to which Vincentio angrily refers in 5.1. Thus, in 5.1, through the slander-as-performance that Lucio places at Angelo's service-- "What can you vouch against him, Signior Lucio? / Is this the man that you did tell us of?" (5.1.322-323)--Vienna's disguised Duke is almost convicted in his own court, in his own name, of defaming himself by way of slander. Lucio's words, twisted and twisted again--"And do you remember what you / said of the Duke?" (5.1.328-9)—provide Angelo with the pretext he needs to dismiss Friar Lodowick, seemingly the only one who can question Angelo's credibility and affirm Isabella's and Mariana's.

Given Lucio's overall issues of credibility, I question why we take him so often at his word today, or even whether we are meant to do so. Vincentio vehemently resists Lucio's imposition of dishonor upon his character in the streets: "Sir, your company is fairer than honest" (4.3.173); "the Duke is marvelous little beholding to your reports; but the best is, he lives not in them" (4.3.158-9); "You have told me too many of him already, sir, if they be true: if not true, none were enough" (4.3.165-6). This last defense, especially, rings

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[32] It is thus difficult to discern a pattern in Lucio's slanderous attacks; this sudden attack upon Isabella serves as a prime example of his inconsistency as a character.

true. Moreover, Lucio confesses to having lied in the past when lying allows him to evade responsibility: "I was fain to forswear it" (4.3.170).

In Act 5, Lucio constructs an even more complex set of lies. Although the slanders Lucio hurls against Vincentio in the presence of the disguised friar are seemingly delivered as praise of the absent Duke, such praise lasts just long enough for Lucio to be required to repeat his tales in public, at which time he changes his tale, as Vincentio notes: "You must, sir, change persons with me, ere you make that my report. You indeed spoke so of him, and much more, much worse" (5.1.334-336).

Because he is the champion of freedom of sexual expression, catching Lucio in bold-faced lies seemingly fails to shake faith in him in current critical assessments. Indeed, Lucio's version of Vincentio is privileged over "the very stream of [Vincentio's] life" as seen in the duke's efforts to save Mariana and Isabella (as Vincentio himself asserts). Furthermore, Lucio's version of Vincentio is privileged over the views of characters seemingly more reliable than he. When Escalus (who displays nobility of character for most of the play, although he is seemingly swayed by Angelo in the trial scene) is asked by the disguised friar to assess the absent duke's character in 3.2, he does not hesitate: "One that, above all other strifes contended especially to know himself" (226-227; 229-231). As such, Escalus reflects upon Vincentio in a radically different way than does Lucio. As the text proves Escalus to be trustworthy in other matters, I am not sure why we take Lucio's word over his, or why we accept Lucio's view of matters when Vincentio identifies possible motives other than the desire to speak the truth behind Lucio's slander:

> Either this is envy in you, folly, or mistaking. The very stream of his life, and business he hath helmed, must upon a warranted need give him a better proclamation. Let him be but testimonied in his own bringings-forth, and he shall appear to the envious a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier. (3.2.137-42)

Although Vincentio gives Lucio a way out --"mistaking"—the rake's only interest seems to be in further slandering the Duke. While we do not need to be royalists and accept every word powerful characters provide for us, the fact is, Vincentio displays awareness that Othello and Claudio fail to display: "Love talks with better knowledge, and knowledge with dearer love" (3.2.146-147). Despite Vincentio's words, "And yet my nature never in the fight / To do in slander" (1.3.42-3), then, by way of his awareness, the Duke cuts to the core of slander and unravels that which Othello, King Hamlet, Duncan, and others cannot, at least not until after the fact.

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Given the combination of Angelo's perfect *persona* and his power as consummate slanderer, Vincentio's task is to stage a public spectacle so powerful that it can unravel slander, restore the slandered, and expose the slanderer. As slander is theater and narrative first and vice, second only counter-theater and counter-narrative can unravel it. In other words, if Vincentio objects to Angelo's form of theater, Vincentio has the power to counter with his own form of theater, and he does

Ironically, the false but extremely powerful and public rumors we label "slander" are based upon events of a non-public nature, events which therefore cannot be easily refuted by victims. Furthermore, due to the essentially private nature of that

which is put out for public consumption, the intended audience--those *to whom* the slander is directed in hopes of enlisting support for the slanderer's cause and marshaling it against the victim's—cannot easily prove or disprove slander, either. Vincentio's task is to remove Angelo's disguise, a much more difficult task than to remove the Duke's own, as Lucio demonstrates in Act 5. To fight a corrupt "Angel," then, rather than to manipulate or indulge in self-aggrandizing theatrics, Vincentio carefully plans an interlude to stage the public exposure of Angelo. Such is the form of Vincentio's "craft against vice" (3.2.270).

In addition to Isabella and Mariana, *Measure for Measure's* final scene involves another set of characters. As opposed to the two women who play crucial speaking roles, this latter group in attendance at the drama staged before the city gate's never utters a word. Still, this group is by far the most important component in Vincentio's staged interlude: Vincentio's *intended audience* consists not of Angelo, Mariana, nor even of Isabella, but rather of "the generous and gravest citizens" (4.5.13) of Vienna. This audience plays a more significant role than the two players who voice Vincentio's pre-arranged script on the stage because it is to this group that Vincentio's script is directed. It is the citizens of Vienna who must be liberated from the constructs Angelo has imposed upon the city if the deputy's power is to be neutralized. Therefore, after opening at the city's gate with effusive (but ironic) praise of Angelo (5.1.4-8; 10-18), Vincentio employs a variety of stratagems to insure that the people of Vienna are drawn deeply into the spectacle, the *skandalon* he has designed.

Due to the intricacies involved in exposing Angelo to this critical audience, the Duke proceeds carefully--"By cold gradation and well-balanc'd form" (4.3.99)--

with his alternative theater. He assumes the position of Devil's Advocate, professing strong support and sympathy for Angelo throughout and countering or challenging each charge Isabella and Mariana level. In the process, Vincentio attempts to sway the crowd's emotions by way of a carefully-crafted series of alternating responses. These responses vary in tone and tenor at any given moment, but one aspect remains constant: Vincentio balances his overall expression of seeming horror and anger at the women's audacity and/or insanity with confused perplexity as to the content of their message. Simultaneously, he balances strong expressions of support and sympathy for Angelo with the same confused perplexity.

Initially, Vincentio insists that the citizens of Vienna side with Angelo as he himself appears to do. The Duke refers Isabella's pleas for "Justice, O royal Duke!" (5.1.21) to Angelo, while his command, "Reveal yourself to him" (5.1.29), threatens the women and reaffirms the Deputy's power. Moments later, Vincentio feigns shock that anyone dare mention Vienna's "angel" in a negative context, delivering a sharp rebuke to Isabella for her criticism of Angelo: "Nay, it is ten times strange" (5.1.45). Immediately after this rebuke, Vincentio dismisses Isabella completely, although here he interjects a calculated word of supposedly compassionate pity for the distracted woman: "Away with her. Poor soul, / She speaks this in th'infirmity of sense" (5.1.49-50). Vincentio continues to manage the emotions of the crowd, functioning as both prosecutor and defense and channeling emotions this way at one moment and that the next.

Vincentio gives Isabella leave to begin her tale while keeping the court's view of Angelo and Angelo's own carefully-constructed facade--"My unsoil'd name, th'austereness of my life" (2.4.154-155)—intact. Yet, at various points as Isabella

enters into the specifics of her tale, Vincentio begins to distance himself from his charge of "infirmity of sense" and allows confused perplexity to slip into his responses: "If she be mad, as I believe no other, / Her madness hath the oddest frame of sense" (5.1.63-4); "Many that are not mad / Have, sure, more lack of reason" (5.1.70-71). Thus, Vincentio's much vaunted scene of dramatic manipulation is in reality a series of juxtapositions, of sympathy and support extended publicly to Angelo and just as suddenly supplanted by seeming confusion on Vincentio's part. It is a drama which juxtaposes Vincentio's ostensible expressions of anger at the women with confusion and pity for them.

As the scene progresses, Vincentio gives Isabella minimal amounts of credence as he plays the crowd which serves as both audience and judge. The people of Vienna must know of Angelo's duplicity, but lest Vincentio appear to have changed his mind due to weakness, laxity, or his even own vice (accusations Lucio has been quick to hurl), Vincentio must not appear to doubt the Angel of Vienna. He thus distances himself from Isabella as she proposes a radical new version of Angelo's character for the benefit of those in attendance. As Isabella terms Angelo "pernicious caitiff Deputy" (5.1.91), Vincentio orchestrates a swell of public sympathy for the deputy: "That's somewhat madly spoken" (5.1.92). Isabella's next attempt to expose Angelo is met by Vincentio's outright sarcasm—"This is most likely!" (5.1.106)--and immediately after, by a lecture calculated to enlist public support for Angelo and against Isabella.

Vincentio's lecture covers every point the court and people of Vienna might offer in the Deputy's defense. Functioning as the misled Vienna's mouthpiece,

Vincentio intones the defense city and court would make were he not doing it for them:

> By heaven, fond wretch, thou know'st not what thou speak'st,
> Or else thou art suborn'd against his honour
> In hateful practice. First, his integrity
> Stands without blemish; next, it imports no reason
> That with such vehemency he should pursue
> Faults proper to himself. If he had so offended,
> He would have weigh'd thy brother by himself,
> And not have cut him off. Someone hath set you on:
> Confess the truth, and say by whose advice
> Thou cam'st here to complain. (5.1.108-117)

Thus, Vincentio assumes another *persona* as he becomes the voice of court and crowd in defense of Angelo. I say "court and crowd" because, as noted earlier, even the merciful Escalus sees with the eyes and speaks with the voice of Angelo:

> Why, thou unreverend and unhallow'd friar!
> Is't not enough thou hast suborned these women
> To accuse this worthy man, but in foul mouth,
> And in the witness of his proper ear,
> To call him villain? And then to glance from him
> To th' Duke himself, to tax him with injustice?
> Take him hence! To th'rack with him!--We'll touse you
> Joint by joint, but we will know his purpose.
> What! Unjust!

All of Vienna labors under the same misapprehension. Vincentio cannot save them. Court and city must re-adjust their own vision; he can only guide the process.

Although he balances his challenges to Isabella with moments of pity and perplexed sympathy, the word "attack" rather than "challenge" more precisely describes his manner in the makeshift court. Finally, in the moments before he divests himself of power for one last time, Vincentio closes what serves as a second occasion of fleeting ducal presence in *Measure for Measure* by leveling the charge of "slanderers" against Isabella and Mariana:

> Do with your injuries as seems you best,
> In any chastisement. I for a while will leave you;
> But stir not you till you have well determin'd
> Upon these slanderers. (5.1.255-58)

Although Vincentio consciously twists the appellation of "slanderers," the court, including Escalus, fails to grasp the irony. The fact that Isabella's accusation —"You bid me seek redemption of the devil" (5.1.30)—is refused a hearing reveals more fully than anything the nature of the gathering Vincentio has ostensibly called. While the duke has called the assemblage, it is not his own; even the script he follows is not his own. Thus, Vincentio overrules Isabella's demands for a judge other than Angelo because he must. The script is of Angelo's devising, and a court under Angelo's sway will not consider such a request. If Vincentio is to preside in a manner consistent with Vienna's blind acceptance of Angelo's integrity, he cannot consider such a request, either.

Despite the fact that Vincentio plays the scene at Vienna's gates, first with Isabella and Mariana, later as friar, for all that it is worth, it is to no avail. The graded series of accusations fail to touch Angelo's credibility, and the plan to pit "craft against vice" is of little avail. Only power that is innocent and has been absolved of slanderous charges leveled against itself--"Words against me!" (5.1.134)--can do this. But this is *Measure for Measure*, after all, and the miracle necessary to effect comic resolution is already in place. A duke has changed places with a deputy, only to become a friar. Plot developments laced with irony conjure the necessary miracles when the court fails to move naturally in the direction of truth. The true presence of power--ironically stripped of its seeming powerlessness by a slanderer but returned to power in the stripping--is available (and will be required) to convict Angelo.

Lucio's stripping of Friar Lodowick's hood is an act designed to humiliate, but the Duke re-assumes his rightful role only after he is so humbled. As Isabella and Mariana fail in their attempts to speak the truth against Angelo, Friar Lodowick also fails. Lucio, who plays this scene as an extension of Angelo, sees to that. Prior to the moment when Vincentio is exposed before the court, Lucio's slanders against the friar serve to prevent the psychological stripping of Angelo that Vincentio has worked so carefully to orchestrate. Substituting his own attacks against a duke for the words a supposed friar utilizes to defend that same duke, Lucio takes center stage as his comic slanders displace Angelo's more subtle attacks upon the two women. In the process, Lucio discredits both the friar and Isabella:

> Why, you bald-pated, lying rascal!--You must be hooded, must you? Show your knave's visage, with a pox to you! Show your

sheep-biting face, and be hanged an hour. Will't not off?

(5.1.352-55)

Lucio's attempt to humiliate Vincentio brings with it yet another substitution, yet another irony. As Lucio strips Vincentio of his disguise, Vincentio drops his role of powerless friar, counsel to his subjects, and veiled adversary to Angelo, and re-assumes his role as law and power in Vienna.

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It is in the context of Vincentio's role as life and death in Vienna that the play's final substitutions take place. With the removal of his habit, Vincentio outweighs Angelo as ranking power in Vienna. At this point, the protests of Isabella, Mariana and Friar Lodowick become almost anticlimactic, so readily are they believed. If Vincentio has been vulnerable in the past to Angelo's demands for turning Vienna into an area of repressed sexual expression, he is no longer; it is Angelo who is now stripped:

I should be guiltier than my guiltiness

To think I can be undiscernible,

When I perceive your Grace, like power divine,

Hath looked upon my passes. (5.1.365-368)

Such is the power of slander to entangle the slanderer if and when—no easy task—the vice is convincingly exposed in the public forum.[33] Still, *Measure for Measure* makes it clear that it is only Vincentio's identity as Duke of Vienna--not the truth he attempts to reveal through Mariana, Isabella, or his disguised self as Friar Lodowick--which provides the power necessary to counter Angelo. (Still, it must

[33] Ironically, once discovered, Angelo imposes the status of criminal upon himself, even as he has with others.

not be forgotten that Vincentio is where he needs to be at the moment he needs to be because he has *chosen* to be there.)

It seems to me that *Measure for Measure* radically questions the right of the state to forcibly impose its views upon individual members of society; moreover, the play surfaces the inevitable problems that arise when individuals cede personal power and freedom of choice to the power of the state. Yet on a deeper level, perhaps, *Measure for Measure* surfaces another issue: it is not only the state which restricts freedom; individual members of society who abdicate their freedom to others do so as well. Although Isabella is not willing to do so, Mariana is definitely willing to offer her freedom as acting subject to Angelo. In this sense, the play suggests that even as power resists hearing the truth about itself, individuals also choose to barter away their own freedom. In such a case, *Measure for Measure* seems to suggest, human attempts to promote truth must be aided by a miracle of sorts--by power that seeks to examine itself, others, and be just (or by a duke disguised as a friar).

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The definitive substitutions of *Measure for Measure* are spiritual, and they ultimately negate Vincentio's decree, "An Angelo for Claudio; death for death" (5.1.407), a mandate itself based upon ancient vendetta laws of substitution. This final series of substitutions, including Isabella's hands, knees and prayers for Mariana's, moves *Measure for Measure* beyond Vincentio's initial desire to execute Angelo and represents the duke accepting a substitute brother and extending forgiveness of one kind or another to all. Thus, *Measure for Measure's* final impositions are what might be termed counter or comic impositions: as the play

closes, various characters, especially Vincentio and Isabella, step back from tragic modes and turn to comic imposition, including offers of forgiveness, love and marriage.

In Act 5, Mariana requests that Isabella add her "hands" (436), "knees" (429), and prayers to Mariana's own in the face of Vincentio's intractable sentence against Angelo's life: "We do condemn thee to the very block / Where Claudio stoop'd to death, and with like haste" (5.1.412-413). As forgiveness of this nature and the love it implies must be freely given, Mariana's plea for substitution of a most radical kind gives rise to the counter-imposition with which *Measure fir Measure* closes:

> O my good lord—sweet Isabella, take my part;
> Lend me your knees, and all my life to come
> I'll lend you all my life to do you service. (5.1.428-30)
>
> . . . . .
>
> Isabel!
> Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me;
> Hold up your hands, say nothing: I'll speak all.
> They say best men are moulded out of faults,
> And, for the most, become much more the better
> For being a little bad. So may my husband.
> O Isabel! will you not lend a knee? (5.1.434-40)

As Mariana prays for help from Isabella, she provides *Measure for Measure* with a new mode of imposition. She asks Isabella to share values-- compassion, sympathy, love, prayer--with her. In contrast to the play's previously foregrounded (tragic) modes of imposition, Mariana seeks to have these shared

values actualized in prayer and directed to Vincentio. This whisper of love and shared prayer appears as a sudden grace in a play which often lacks visible manifestations of grace, despite its foundational Scriptural allusions. Indeed, as so much of *Measure for Measure* involves portrayals of characters who atomize, spy, betray, and slander, a forthright request of this nature on Mariana's part initiates a new combination of characters united in the dynamic of building bridges rather than breaking apart, and a spirit of co-operation rather than alienation.

In contrast to fanatically-imposed religious rules, Mariana's request for prayers, a request which might be stated in this way--"I am not you, but will you be with me in this?"--directly counters tragic imposition in its most deadly sense. A request for companionate prayer by its very nature presupposes awareness that the other must make an individually-based choice. Mariana's plea for prayers from Isabella clearly draws separate boundaries between the two women and recognizes and affirms Isabella's freedom as acting subject. If Isabella agrees to plead for Angelo's life, she does so while retaining her freedom to choose; coercion cannot mandate that for which Mariana asks.

By way of the false vision he has imposed upon Isabella—the mistaken belief that her brother is dead—Vincentio sets Isabella up to condemn Angelo. Awareness of his own duplicity thus moves Vincentio to excuse Isabella from Mariana's request:

> Against all sense you do importune her.
> Should she kneel down in mercy of this fact,
> Her brother's ghost his paved bed would break,
> And take her hence in horror. (5.1.431-34)

Perhaps this is a deliberate test of Vincentio's, as the Duke's words to Angelo in 5.1—"But stir not you till you have well determin'd / Upon these slanderers"--are a public test, meant to see how far Angelo will go to hide his own breach.[34] It is not in any way apparent, however, that Vincentio hides the truth from Isabella to test her willingness to forgive. More likely, he does so to make himself a hero in her eyes--"But I will keep her ignorant of her good, / To make her heavenly comforts of despair / When it is least expected" (4.3.108-110)--and in 5.1 moves to excuse her due to the surprise of Mariana's request which appears like a lightning bolt after Angelo has been fully exposed to the assembly. Such a request does not have a precedent in this play, and so could not have been anticipated.

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Lucio prevents Vincentio from witnessing the ultimate outcome of his *skandalon* with regard to Angelo's dishonesty and willingness to abuse power. In contrast, Vincentio witnesses Isabella's response to Mariana's plea in full. In the mistaken belief that Angelo has executed her brother, Isabella has earlier expressed to Vincentio the wish to "pluck out" his "eyes" (4.3.119). Yet in responding to Mariana's prayers, Isabella chooses an alternate course to the one the disguised Vincentio has earlier promised her: "you shall have your bosom on this wretch" (4.3.134). In this sense, Isabella has changed since her moments with Claudio in 3.1: "I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death; / No word to save thee" (145-6). Her prayers to Vincentio on behalf of Mariana for Angelo's life--her "knees" and "hand" for Mariana's knee and hands--constitute *Measure for Measure's* ultimate countering of destructive imposition, or, alternatively, the play's consummate comic imposition, that of love.

Isabella's willingness to let go of the desire for vengeance and to extend forgiveness by taking Mariana's plight as her own reflects striking resistance to imposition in the destructive sense, in the sense of the *self* bent upon destroying the *other*. Whatever Vincentio's perspective regarding Isabella's willingness to forgive the man she assumes has executed her brother, her response is especially moving in light of the fact that Vincentio has previously taken on a friar's role and *played* at confessing and bestowing forgiveness. Isabella does the real thing.

In that Marianna cannot force a choice, and Isabella accepts her plea by responding freely, joint prayer constitutes the opposite of Iago-style imposition:

> Most bounteous sir:
> Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd
> As if my brother liv'd. I partly think
> A due sincerity govern'd his deeds
> Till he did look on me. Since it is so,
> Let him not die. My brother had but justice,
> In that he did the thing for which he died:
> For Angelo,
> His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,
> And must be buried but as an intent
> That perish'd by the way. Thoughts are no subjects;
> Intents, but merely thoughts. (5.1.441-52)

Some may criticize Isabella's logic as flawed in that she focuses upon actions Angelo intended but which were subverted by others through no ethical choice of Angelo's own. Yet mercy is not about logic, unless we consider mercy as an

alternative form of the logic that we call *justice*. The point is that Isabella extends mercy, for whatever reason. Her willingness to support Mariana and substitute forgiveness for vengeance for Mariana's sake—as Prospero does in other circumstances--is critically important to the play's comic outcome. Comic outcome in this play is basically dependent not upon magic, coincidence or bumbling, but rather upon the decision to forgive or not to forgive. Furthermore, the choice to forgive provides Vincentio with--or solidifies--motivation for a marriage proposal..

It might also be argued that Vincentio toys with the participants in the drama before the city gates for the sole purpose of making himself a hero to Isabella. As noted above, however, I assume that Vincentio plays out the scene at the city gates primarily to re-instate himself to power, to restore Mariana' reputation, and save Isabella's. I also assume that the Duke is not joking when he tells Mariana, "Never crave him. We are definitive" in 5.1. Vincentio has shown himself quite receptive to seeking Mariana's good, but before the city gates he expresses more interest in seeking blood than in "charity" (2.3.8).

Isabella and Mariana concretize the spiritual dynamic of forgiveness. Isabella's decision as acting subject to forgive Angelo[35] is more heroic than the Duke's to forgive Lucio in that Isabella not only believes that Angelo is guilty of executing her brother; she knows he is guilty of sexual manipulation and of threatening to ruin her reputation by slander. Given that she has been slandered and abandoned by the deputy, Mariana, too, is heroic in her willingness to forgive Angelo. Yet spiritual forgiveness is not political or social forgiveness. Although

[35] Unless the slanders Lucio voices in the text are initiated by Angelo in a bid to usurp power from Vincentio.

Vincentio experiences more difficulty in resisting his desire to impose capital punishment on Angelo and Lucio than Mariana and Isabella seemingly experience in reaction to far greater cause, the fact is, at this moment in Vienna, Vincentio *is* power.

Only power, only Vincentio, can actualize Mariana and Isabella's spiritual forgiveness in a concrete, political and physical way. Despite his sullen affect, Vincentio chooses to do this. By permitting Mariana's and Isabella's mercy to imbue his will, Vincentio ultimately counters his desire to level revenge, especially with regard to Lucio, but also with Angelo. Angelo violates the Duke's sacred trust by the unethical way he administers Vincentio's mandate, as Vincentio himself notes early on: "Twice treble shame on Angelo, / To weed my vice, and let his grow" (3.2.262-63); "If his own life answer the straitness of his proceeding, it shall become him well: wherein if he chance to fail, he hath sentenced himself" (3.2. 249-251). From this perspective, Vincentio's bestowal of forgiveness is more gracious than at first glance. As he grants pardon and earthly life to the intractable Barnardine, so that he may "provide / For better times to come" (5.1.482-83), to Claudio for Isabella's sake--"He is my brother too" (5.1.491)--and to Angelo for Mariana's sake—"her worth, worth yours" (5.1.495), Vincentio resists indulging in the desire to impose revenge--"And yet here's one in place I cannot pardon" (5.1.497)--even forgiving Lucio as well as the others. Thus *Measure for Measure* ends with forgiveness and the "quickening in [his] eye" (5.1.493) as "Angelo perceives he's safe" (5.1.492), an ending quite different from other plays with

similar themes in that the slanderous offender is not only neutralized but forgiven.[36]

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While Desdemona never sees the devil before he blindsides her, Isabella is given the opportunity to do so--"You bid me seek redemption of the devil" (5.1.30)--and she takes this opportunity to the full. In the process, Isabella not only saves herself, Claudio, and Mariana; she also effects a change in one who in 1.3 remarks, "No, Holy father, throw away that thought; / Believe not that the dribbling dart of love / Can pierce a complete bosom" (1-3). In every instance prior to Act 5, Vincentio imposes himself upon his subjects, demanding that they move in the direction in which he wishes them to move--Claudio and Juliet to repentance, Isabella as envoy and leading lady in a play of his devising, Mariana to "perform an old contracting" (3.2.275). In Act 5, Vincentio moves in Isabella's direction.

The marriages and offers of marriage which close *Measure for Measure* foreground the play's connection to romantic comedy. It is true that two of these marriages, Lucio's and Angelo's, are mandated against the wishes of the men and are met with great resistance. Indeed, Angelo, the criminal-maker, pleads for death as a criminal rather than life with Mariana (5.1.370-371; 472-475), while Lucio, also a criminal-maker of sorts, protests that "Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, / Whipping, and hanging" (5.1.520-521). Admittedly, these marriages, Angelo's and Lucio's, leave much to be desired. Yet Richard Wheeler, in *The Whole Jour*ney, argues that Vincentio's offer of marriage to Isabella leaves much to be desired as well, in that Vincentio

[36] *Much Ado About Nothing's* Don John is not forgiven; nor is Iago.

attempts to force marriage upon Isabella without courtship or love, and without permitting her a choice:

> Anglelo can be seen as a running dog for the Duke in the pursuit of Isabella, with Lucio as a chorus who serves to bring out the sexual potential of the game the 'duke of dark corners' is playing, with out acknowledgment until the theatrical finale. (16)

In contrast to this view, I suggest that Vincentio has been subtly courting Isabella all along as Friar Lodowick:

> The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good. The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty brief in goodness; but grace, being the soul of your complexion, shall keep the body of it ever fair. (3.1.179-83)

However, the distance between the remark---"I have spirit to do anything that is not foul in the truth of my spirit" (3.1.205-207)--and Vincentio's response—"Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful" (3.1.208)—is closer than the distance between a duke disguised as a friar who comes to love a novice might indicate. Indeed, as Act 5 closes, Vincentio speaks to Isabella in a way that Angelo has not:

> Come hither, Isabella.
> As I was then,
> Advertising and holy to your business,
> Not changing heart with habit, I am still
> Attorney'd at your service. (5.1.379-83)—

Vincentio's sentiments provide a sharp contrast to Angelo's order to Isabella: "Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite" (2.4.160).

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The argument might be made that Vincentio never *asks* Isabella to marry him, but that he rather tells her he wishes to marry. Yet despite the fact that Vincentio's proposal is made in the context of a statement rather than a question, the duke includes a number of linguistic elements which make the proposal a request rather than a command:

> If he be like your brother, for his sake
> Is he pardon'd; and for your lovely sake
> Give me your hand and say you will be mine.
> He is my brother too: but fitter time for that. (5.1.488-91)

Vincentio does in effect *ask* Isabella to marry him. While his proposal is expressed linguistically in statement form, Vincentio asks for two responses from Isabella, both of which require action upon her part. First, Vincentio makes a request: "Give me your hand and say you will be mine" (5.1.490). Isabella, as acting subject, must choose whether to extend her hand and whether to respond or not. Vincentio brings up the subject once more as the play closes, again with a *request* implicitly embedded as a subtext within the linguistic framework of a statement:

> Dear Isabel,
> I have a motion much imports your good;
> Whereto *if* you'll a *willing* ear incline,
> What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine. (5.1.531-34)

"If" and "willing" are the key words here: "If you'll a willing ear incline," is not quite the language of Egeus, Brabantio, Roderigo, Angelo, or even of the early Demetrius or Orsino. The assumption behind these words is that Isabella is not only free to make her own choices, but that she must make the choice if it is to happen.

Vincentio does not seek to impose love upon Isabella in domination as the endearment, "Dear Isabel," indicates. Rather, the relationship between the two has developed steadily throughout the play as Isabella and Vincentio, working together to counter Angelo and save Claudio, encounter each other. From Vincentio's words of admiration in 3.1.179-83, to the interplay between the two in 4.3--"Good morning to you, fair and gracious daughter" (111); ''The better, given me by so holy a man" (4.3.112)--Isabella comes to look to Vincentio--"I am directed by you" (4.3.136)--in his role as friar more than she does to her previously all-important convent directress.

While it is true that Isabella does not speak after Vincentio puts forth his proposal, the argument might be made that the very public forum through which Vincentio exposes and counters slander makes it "not the time or the place for this"--as Vincentio himself quickly realizes: "but fitter time for that" (5.1.491); "So bring us to our palace, where we'll show / What's yet behind that's meet you all should know" (5.1.535-536).

Isabella does not fall in love with a duke; nor could she decide to marry a duke on a moment's notice as seemingly occurs in Act 5. Although this is not supposed to happen in comedy because friars cannot marry, Isabella actually falls in love with a friar, Because *Measure for Measure* is a comedy, the friar suddenly

reveals himself to be a duke.[37] Vincentio, in the wrong clothes to speak of love during his journey underground, finds himself suddenly freed by the removal of his friar's habit. At some point, perhaps in 3.1, Isabella and Vincentio, like Ferdinand and Miranda, "have changed eyes." Wheeler argues that the play's close foregrounds sexual and marital degradation:

> the marriage of Lucio to Kate Keepdown—a degraded relationship forced to take the stamp of official respectability—comes perilously close to providing an emblem for the entire play. (7-8)

In that Vincentio lectures Angelo on moving beyond his degraded notions of sexuality, however--"Love her Angelo: I have confess'd her, and I know her virtue" (5.1.523-524)--the argument could also be made that these views are transcended by Vincentio's choice as acting subject to aid Isabella and allow himself to be changed in the process. By working with Isabella to circumvent Angelo's slander, Vincentio becomes, like Benedick, another in the line of the heroes educated to wisdom and marriage. In this sense, the choice becomes more than a dramatic device of fairy tale lore in which a good ruler dons a disguise to observe his land from an invisible perspective: Vincentio's willingness to divest himself of power adds a significant spiritual dimension to the play's comic resolution as well.

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It seems to me that *Measure for Measure* tells us that those who would impose intolerance, as Angelo would upon Vienna, have an easy time of it. All that is needed is to pit hatred and intolerance against the slander (or truth) of sexual transgression,

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[37] Ironically, he is a duke who resists love prior to becoming a friar, at which point he falls in love with a novice.

and intolerance becomes quite acceptable. Anything goes, the play seems to say. Perhaps hatred and intolerance as modes of imposition always benefit from charges of sexual wrong-doing. It is therefore ironic that while Angelo imposes the tactics of hatred and intolerance—repression, excessive punishment, humiliation and even death---upon a community in the name of purity of sexual standards, he also seeks to impose himself sexually upon Isabella.

If slander is used as a ruse to deflect social unrest and excuse intolerance from rulers, and if tales of sexual misconduct make the best slander, then Angelo's supposedly admirable sexual standards in actuality do not have to run too deep. Or alternatively, if slander is a ruse used to wrest power from those who have it, once again, Angelo's sexual standards might not need to be as pure as his desire to usurp Vincentio needs to be.

At its core, *Measure for Measure* depicts more than irresponsible sexuality, more than authority's abuse of power, more than the tension between administering the law to achieve justice, or laying aside the law to extend mercy. In addition, the play represents hatred and intolerance as modes of imposition, cloaked, as in *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, in fervor for sexual purity. But *Measure for Measure's* representation is not solely through an isolated villain—Iago or Don John—but through a community. It seems to me that Hawkins, whom I cited early in this chapter, overlooks the hatred and intolerance part to focus on the sexual. As such, Hawkins not only does Shakespeare's characterization of both Isabella and Vincentio a disservice; she also lets Angelo off the hook and so misses a radically important dimension of *Measure for Measure*. The play is not about irresponsible sexuality so much as it is about irresponsible sexuality being used as a tool, by way of

slander, to impose intolerance. The beauty of *Measure for Measure*—and there's a great deal in this play that is not beautiful—is that where Iago succeeds, Angelo fails; where Othello falls, Vincentio stands. Choices that are left unmade in *Othello* in this play are made.

What makes the Problem Comedies 'problem' is that the mode of imposition which we have learned to distrust in the tragedies becomes the mode upon which we must rely for comic deliverance. While *Measure for Measure* is not Shakespeare's typical comedy or romance, perhaps we can sacrifice certain elements of these genres for a large dose of realism and a story of imposition, slander, and hypocrisy sorted out well enough to expose the danger and save everyone. Given that the alternative is the familial and communal blood bath that is *Othello*, *Measure for Measure* serves as an Anti-*Othello* as it takes on key issues--the slandered and rumored self vs. the authentic self, and the destruction wrought by slander vs. the not-easily accessed theatrical and narrative power necessary to counter or even neutralize it. In *Othello*, Iago's ability to impose himself upon others brings about the destruction of almost everyone with whom he comes into contact. In *Measure for Measure,* through an elaborate series of counter-impositions actualized by substitutions—craft for vice, confession for capital punishment, prayers for prayers, forgiveness for vengeance--Vincentio effectively squelches the power of the slanderer to impose in tragic mode. The spectacle at the city gate is a form of counter-imposition in that it exposes Angelo, but the ultimate imposition in *Measure for Measure* is the willingness of Mariana and Isabella to forgive. Their willingness, accepted by Vincentio, redeems at least

one offer of marriage, perhaps two.[38] In contrast to those who attack *Measure for Measure's* ending as unsatisfactory, then, I suggest that--given the nature of the play--the extension of general forgiveness and the possibility of at least one freely-chosen marriage is a not a bad way to end.

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[38] We never know if Mariana's love will redeem Angelo.

CHAPTER FIVE

"His tears run down his beard like winter's drops / From eaves of reeds": Prospero and *The Tempest's* Cosmic Resistance

"When this burns, / 'T will weep for having wearied you"

"My charms I'll break; their senses I'll restore;
And they shall be themselves"

In *The Tempest*, Prospero conjures the magic, but nature conjures the miracles. Prospero assumes he is the presiding power on the island, making the magic and controlling the elements, but the elements into whose magic he taps display power far greater than his own. Although Prospero behaves throughout *The Tempest* as if Ariel were a mere extension of his will, in actuality, the sprite modifies Prospero's outcomes and intentions at every turn. Fulfilling Prospero's purposes in his own way, Ariel moves the magician's interactions with the Italian castaways away from vengeance and in the direction of character reform. In this sense, the beneficent, magical forces of the island, aided by the compassion of Miranda and Gonzalo, serve as key conduits of resistance, transforming Prospero until he abandons his sinister magic, "deeper than did ever plummet sound" (5.1.56).[1]

[1] All citations of *The Tempest* are to the Arden Edition, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (UK: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd, 1999).

In Act 5, Gonzalo suggests that *The Tempest* re-writes in "gold on lasting pillars" (5.1.208) old tales of imposing lovers, fathers, and brothers found in earlier plays,[2] and *The Tempest* does indeed simultaneously replay and rewrite patterns found earlier in Shakespeare's canon. As the play opens, for example, Prospero seeks to impose a version of dynastic marriage upon his daughter and the captive Ferdinand, while Caliban (and perhaps Ferdinand as well) seek to impose themselves sexually upon Miranda. But *The Tempest* moves beyond these opening themes in radical ways: Prospero foils and so re-writes the scheming brother/betrayer figure, the successful usurper and king-destroyer of earlier plays. In addition, Prospero and Alonso both re-think their roles as fathers, with Alonso going so far as to ask forgiveness of Miranda.[3] For her part, Miranda resists imposing herself upon Ferdinand, a role she might easily play, given her father's power over the young prince. In a reversal of Helena's role in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Miranda asks: "Do you love me?" (3.1.67). Finally, under Prospero's protective direction--"Look thou be true. Do not give dalliance / Too much the rein" (4.1.51-52)--Ferdinand resists the temptation to become a sexual predator or abandoning-lover in the style of Claudio or Angelo.[4] Whatever his faults, Caliban, too, experiences some form of change of heart[5] after resisting Prospero's seductive trinkets—"Let it alone, thou fool;

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[2] Imposing lovers refuse to recognize the will of their intendeds; imposing fathers, their daughters, and imposing brothers/ensigns in Shakespeare refuse to accept power or love directed anywhere outside of themselves.

[3] This is an unusual move for one of Shakespeare's imposing fathers.

[4] Angelo abandons Mariana. While this is somewhat glossed over in the text in light of Lucio's lurid sexual digressions, it is an element of the play's subtext that is crucial to my reading of *Measure for Measure*.

[5] Caliban's final words testify to this change of heart, noting as they do the idea of grace linked to forgiveness and opposed to idolatry: "Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter / And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass / Was I to take this drunkard for a god, / And worship this dull fool!" (5.1.295-298).

it is but trash" (4.1.125); "I will have none on't" (4.1.447)--temptations which ensnare the fools Stephano and Trinculo.

Most significantly, imposition in *The Tempest* is connected to Prospero's magical interactions with the Italian castaways. Throughout, his overtly-expressed desire to take revenge on the Italians is juxtaposed with a desire on his part to reform his old enemies and forgive past betrayals. That the drive for character reformation and integration eventually triumphs testifies to the thread of compassion-based resistance which is present in nascent form in the play's opening tempest and which builds throughout the course of *The Tempest* to its climax in Ariel's admonition to Prospero in 5.1 (16-19). In *The Tempest*, then, resistance--both human and elemental--to the desire to impose vengeance becomes the ascendant magic in the play's final moments.

Miranda and Gonzalo, both of whom resist Prospero's desire for vengeance, each in his or her own way, serve as conduits in *The Tempest* for a geography of compassion. In addition to the compassion displayed throughout by Gonzalo and Miranda, the island and its elements, especially as manifested in Ariel, are the main forces of resistance to Prospero's drive for vengeance. In this sense, *The Tempest* dramatizes one thread of a larger Shakespearean pattern as it takes previous plays' representations of tragic imposition and re-writes these as evolving forms discernible throughout the course of the play. Most significantly, as concretized in *The Tempest's* closing moments, Prospero's ceremonial leave-taking of two worlds

alludes to realms, beyond those of magic and theater, of cosmic and spiritual salvation.

The formal leave-taking of the worlds of magic and theater which closes *The Tempest* is not merely a self-aggrandizing display on Prospero's part. Rather, this leave-taking constitutes the core of *The Tempest* in that it concretizes the play's drive to rewrite previous portrayals of tragic imposition. I make this argument not because *The Tempest* closes with resistance that successfully counters or subverts every form of destructive human imposition to be found in the play (although this is the case). Rather, I make this assertion in light of the impositional force--the elemental magic of the island-- which resolves *The Tempest*. This force, stronger than Prospero's own magic, teaches by way of a series of interludes, including the play's opening tempest. Thus, interludes staged in earlier plays—by Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by Viola[6] and Maria in *Twelfth Night*, by Iago in *Othello*, and by Vincentio in *Measure for Measure*--are transformed in *The Tempest* into cosmic dramas which institute character reform and subvert or re-write earlier representations of tragic imposition. In that the island's elemental magic inculcates resistance to vengeance in Prospero and an abandoning of past courses by Alonso, it is about compassion and character reformation. In that this magic accomplishes the release of the island's captive spirits to freedom, it affirms the power of subjectivity, autonomy, and free choice.

In so far as this magic taps into power beyond the human, it signifies Grace. I argue, then, that *The Tempest* suggests that stronger powers exist in nature than characters can impose upon each other. From this perspective, the dominant force of imposition in *The Tempest,* larger than any one individual and larger even than the

collective community which closes the play, is not mercy nor even compassion but rather, Grace, a representation of Divine Providence as manifested in saving action and actualized by the drawing back of various characters from the desire to impose in tragic mode.

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From Caliban's paean to the isle "full of noises" (3.2.135), to Prospero's benediction-like aside--"Fair encounter / Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace / On that which breeds between 'em" (3.1.74-76)--to Ferdinand's prayer of grateful relief— **"**Though the seas threaten; they are merciful. / I have cursed them without cause" (5.1.178-179)--the ethos of Prospero's isle is a complex interplay of human emotions and cosmic elements. *The Tempest* foregrounds this symbiotic relationship between nobility of character and the physical elements of the island. The island seems almost miraculously inclined to bestow grace and happiness upon human endeavors, especially upon those characters willing and able to receive these gifts. In this sense, notwithstanding the irony of the boatswain's comment in 1.1, *The Tempest* portrays a Cosmos that "cares" (16), from opening to close. Nobility of character and elemental beneficence are indeed intertwined, and *The Tempest*'s portrayal of the magic which occurs when beneficent human emotions interact with the elemental forces of the island is almost unique in Shakespeare's canon.[7] When acting in concert in this play, human emotions and the island's elements display the requisite magic necessary to draw characters to new levels of growth, radically changing these characters in the process, thereby neutralizing the desire to impose in

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[6] Viola's disguise in *Twelth Night* gives rise to ongoing gender-bender interludes.
[7] Elements of *The Merchant of Venice's* Belmont and the woods of Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* encapsulate in miniature various aspects of this dimension of *The Tempest*. In *Othello*, the

potentially tragic modes which repeatedly threatens to rupture the fabric of *The Tempest*.

Miranda, Gonzalo, and Ariel embody the island's particular blend of nobility of character and ability to connect with nature's elemental mercy. Each draws other characters--Ferdinand, Alonso, and Prospero--forward to growth and change. Because Ariel projects himself into the elements, he becomes one with the elemental life of the island. Because Ariel, Miranda and Gonzalo enter into the human pathos which calls to them from amidst the island's forces--the terror of the shipwreck, Ferdinand's torments with the logs, Alonso's despair at the seeming savagery of the sea--all three become one with human suffering. Miranda's remark, "O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer" (1.2.5-6), exemplifies this union. In the process, these characters transform Prospero's infliction of punishment into character reformation and rainbow-washed bridges of forgiveness.

More than reflecting or concretizing the island's complex intertwining of elemental mercy and human emotion, Miranda, Gonzalo, and Ariel embody it. Miranda embodies the emotive dimension of elemental mercy as she speaks to Ferdinand about the logs he has been forced to carry--"When this burns, / 'Twill weep for having wearied you" (3.1.18-19). In contrast, Gonzalo represents the active dimension of saving love. In conjunction with the elements—"Upon mine honour, sir, I heard a humming, / And that a strange one too, which did awake me" (2.1.318-319)--Gonzalo resists the tragedy which Sebastian and Antonio would impose upon *The Tempest* and in the process, saves both Alonso and himself. These two dimensions, emotive compassion and saving action, are united in Ariel's

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potential for nature's beneficence is neutralized and, later, destroyed on Cyprus after it is accessed during a safe sea-passage.

manifestation of elemental magic. For characters, including Alonso—"Methought the billows spoke and told me of it; / The winds did sing it to me . . ." (3.3.96-97)—and Ferdinand—"The white-cold virgin snow upon my heart /Abates the ardour of my liver" (4.1.55-56)—who come to hear the island and recognize its message, resistance to previously held patterns of imposition proves transformative.

Caliban, perhaps the most ambiguous figure to fall into (or step out of) a Shakespearean play, taps into the island's numinous magic in his own way. On one level, Caliban attempts to utilize the island's elements in the sinister way of Sycorax:[8]

> All the infections that the sun sucks up
> From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him
> By inchmeal a disease! (2.2.1-3)

Like Prospero, however, Caliban is prevented from inflicting curses by the power of magic stronger than his own--the magic embodied in Ariel. We learn that Ariel has in the past resisted Sycorax, the play's female personification of unmitigated imposition. As *The Tempest* opens, Ariel resists a similar drive in Prospero. Sycorax and Caliban thus embody the contradictions, ambiguities, and tragedies of a Post-Colonialist world, wherein a homeland and its resources prove double-edged swords to a people. Yet in that Caliban reflects the island's elemental magic in his own way, he shares to a degree in the play's closing redemption.

Other characters in *The Tempest* seemingly refuse to abandon the desire to impose in tragic mode and therefore fail to share fully in the play's closing harmony. About the conspirators, Gonzalo observes:

> All three of them are desperate: their great guilt,
> Like poison given to work a great time after,

Now ‘gins to bite the spirits. (3.3.105-107)

Yet with support from the mediating efforts of Miranda and Gonzalo, the island’s elements also prove beneficent to *The Tempest’s* ambiguous Old World characters; the fountains of compassion which permeate the island and imbue the play prove constant in the midst of exile, potential regicide, and usurpation attempts, both past and present.

Miranda, Ariel and Gonzalo—all three of whom are juxtaposed throughout *The Tempest* with the “three men of sin” (3.3.52)—are powerful separately, and when combined, their energies and magic are enough to save the day. Together, they call Prospero to resist the desire to take revenge upon his enemies, abandon his old magic, and embrace the island’s. In lieu of revenge, then, and aided by the radical change which occurs in the King of Naples, Prospero and Alonso together forge the creation of a “brave new world” (5.1.183), predicted by one father who renounces his past--“O heavens, that they were living both in Naples, / The king and queen there” (5.1.149-151)—and designed by another who also abandons the past to re-make the future.

The beneficent elements of the isle as personified in Ariel--in conjunction with *The Tempest’s* human characters of inherently compassionate nature, Miranda and Gonzalo--thus serve as crucial agents of character transformation and comic resolution. Under Ariel’s direction, Prospero’s drive to impose vengeance is submerged in efforts to elicit character reformation. In similar fashion, Prospero’s wish to unite his daughter and Ferdinand in a dynastic match becomes a search to elicit consent from both characters as freely-choosing subjects. Moreover, Prospero’s drive to enslave the inhabitants of the island eventually culminates in a granting of freedoms. Thus *The Tempest* resists and re-writes Shakespeare’s previous tales of

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[8] It is noteworthy that this is also Prospero’s way when it suits him.

imposing fathers (Prospero and Alonso); brothers (Sebastian and Antonio); and lovers (potentially Ferdinand and Caliban), not merely through the human agency of Prospero, but also by way of the island's magic.

Prospero is changed by the magic which he thinks he controls, but which possesses powers qualitatively and quantitatively beyond his. To this end, he ultimately abandons his own "rough magic" (5.1.50) and replaces it with "heavenly music" (5.1.52), the beneficent magic of the island:

> But this rough magic
> I here abjure; and when I have required
> Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book. (5.1.50-57)

Until he accepts the magic of the island, Prospero struggles between the desire to draw blood and the desire to resist doing the same: "Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick, / Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury / Do I take part" (5.1.25-27). This is especially true with regard to the King of Naples--"Most cruelly / Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter" (5.1.71-72). Forgiving Alonso, even for Gonzalo's sake--"To him thou follow'st, I will pay thy graces" (5.1.70)—is difficult for Prospero.

Prospero, who characterizes Caliban as "Thou most lying slave, / Whom stripes may move, not kindness" (1.2.345-6), initially presumes that imposing his

internal desires upon others by way of external force is perfectly acceptable. Only after he embraces the magic of the island can Prospero trust himself in the presence of the conspirators.[9] Only as Ariel helps him to recognize that his desire to direct others must be rooted in awareness of and respect for these others as acting subjects--"They being penitent, / The soul drift of my purpose doth extend / Not a frown further" (5.1.29-31); "My charms I'll break; their senses I'll restore; / And they shall be themselves" (5.1.31-32)—can Miranda be truly free and Ferdinand (and Caliban) accepted and integrated.

I take seriously Prospero's question to Ariel: "My brave spirit, / Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil / Would not infect his reason?" (1.2.206-208).[10] Indeed, *The Tempest*'s unique magic is personified by Ariel, who is linked with both the elements and the human virtue we know as compassion. Refusing to see with the eyes of rage or the desire for vengeance, Ariel remains calm throughout. In Ariel therefore reposes that elemental magic and graced power of which Prospero is unable to fully partake until the closing moments of the play; by way of his question with its implied affirmation, Prospero acknowledges this beneficence of Ariel. In this sense, Ariel serves as the chief agent of change in *The Tempest*. Powerful enough to radically alter characters flawed in one way or another--Prospero, Alonso, Ferdinand, and even Caliban after the uprising which leads to his betrayal by Stephano and Trinculo—Ariel draws these characters to new levels of growth, moving them to

[9] Until this time, Prospero can only spy on the castaways from a safe distance through Ariel.
[10] Prospero seemingly awaits Ariel's answer with some trepidation due to his own conflicted internal state.

emulate those humans, especially Miranda and Gonzalo, who extend radical compassion and mercy from the outset.[11]

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For his part, *The Tempest's* Duke-Magican and controlling Director attempts to impose his will upon any and all in his path. Prospero's on-going desire that his daughter should conform to his will is revealed in the magician's "backward" (1.2.50) and panoramic reflection upon their relationship. Designed to move Miranda from the confusion of an unknown past to the possibilities inherent in a future about to unfold before her eyes, Prospero's mode of discourse is itself impositional: "Obey and be attentive" (1.2.38); "I pray thee mark me" (1.2.67); "Dost thou attend me?" (1.2.78); "Thou attend'st not!" (1.2.87); "Dost thou hear?" (1.2.106). Ironically, Prospero's tirade also reveals his own role as Miranda's "schoolmaster" (1.2.172), and the educational impositions implied therein.

Prospero's efforts to subdue the Prince of Naples become apparent almost immediately, as does the fact that the goal in tormenting Ferdinand involves arranging a marriage with dynastic potential for Miranda. In another arena, *The Tempest* portrays Prospero's efforts—similar to those of *Measure for Measure's* Vincentio in this regard--to impose guilt and repentance upon the shipwrecked Italians. To this end, Prospero devises an even harsher plan of torture and harassment than the one he imposes upon Ferdinand. Yet more problematic than either Prospero's torture of Ferdinand or of the Italian castaways is his relationship to the isle's inhabitants, Ariel and Caliban. For Ariel and Caliban, Prospero becomes the colonizer who oppresses

[11]On the island, this happens to certain hardened characters—as, for example, an imposing father and usurping ruler like Alonso-- but it seemingly does not happen to the malcontents Antonio and Sebastian.

and enslaves, the traveler who, after arriving in a New World, imposes his power upon its inhabitants.

Through all of this, *The Tempest's* environment, from storm-tossed seas to musical mirages, from chastising spirits to enchanted landscapes, serves as a psycho-geography. It aids Prospero as he attempts to resist his own desire to impose, even as it insures that he will prove stronger than the machinations of those who would destroy the future community--with Miranda at its center--that he envisions. More striking than Shakespeare's re-writing of the dynamic of potentially tragic acts of human imposition portrayed in earlier plays, then, is the fact that *The Tempest* privileges the nature of its island setting and the elemental forces which imbue it in a unique way. Despite the prominent position of the "Green World" in Shakespeare's earlier plays, such an active psycho-geographical role for a play's environment is unprecedented with the exception (perhaps) of certain moments in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As Alonso says of his enforced sojourn on the island, "These are not natural events; they strengthen / From strange to stranger" (5.1.227-228).

Long before he permits himself to be in the presence of the Italian castaways, Prospero conquers the island--its weather, its moods, its inhabitants. In response, the island "takes on a life of its own" (Vaughan and Vaughan 16) and resists Prospero's machinations. In so far as *The Tempest* juxtaposes human nobility with beneficent elemental interaction to create magical resistance, the play suggests a quantum leap in Shakespeare's power to represent the numinous aspect of life. Indeed, resistance in *The Tempest* is portrayed as stronger and deeper than any given human attempt to throw off sway and choose freely. The power to resist is portrayed instead as deeply embedded in the mystery of "providence divine" (1.2.159). Alonso, like Ferdinand,

proves himself willing to take the leap beyond "nature" (5.1.243) as the King encounters and accepts forces and courses different from those of his past:

> This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod,
> And there is in this business more than nature
> Was ever conduct of. Some oracle
> Must rectify our knowledge. (5.1.242-245)

Prospero's island thus serves not only as comic convention, but also as graced power in its own right. I argue this not because the tempest which roars through the island's waters spares the ship (although this is the case), but rather because the hidden power residing at the core of the island eventually reveals itself to be stronger than the storm and stronger than Prospero's desire for revenge. While revenge tales have been told and resolved before in Shakespeare's canon, in *The Tempest* below the powerful forces of human emotion which underpin the desire for vengeance is an even stronger force residing at the heart of the island. This force allows Prospero to abandon magic directed to vengeance--"I'll drown my book" (5.1.57)—and to cease wreaking havoc upon his enemies.

In that imposition in *The Tempest* moves beyond the scope of personal interaction into the more formalized processes of social and dynastic education to love, secular education to repentance, and imperialistic education to colonization and slavery, the play on occasion resembles aspects of *Measure for Measure*, wherein the institutions of law and religion are used as social instruments, and individuals are portrayed as emmeshed in social contexts. However, in that Shakespeare portrays a numinous environment, imbued with beneficently magical elements possessing the

power to radically alter human character, *The Tempest* suggests that human action has been superseded, and Providence takes precedence.

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The 1999 *Arden* edition of *The Tempest* edited by Vaughan and Vaughan provides a broad overview of Prospero's journey, both as character and as figure journeying through literary history:

> Prospero is "fortunate" in that after twelve years of suffering on a lonely island he sees his daughter happily betrothed and is at long last restored to his dukedom. He is clearly the play's central character; he has far more lines than anyone else; and manipulates the other characters throughout. One's reaction to Prospero almost inevitably determines one's response to the entire play. In the eighteenth century, when the magus was perceived as an enlightened and benign *philosophe*, the play seemed a magical comedy; by the late twentieth century, when Prospero had come to be viewed as a tetchy, if not tyrannical, imperialist, the play itself seemed more problematic. . . (24)

Recent criticism has indeed taken this view of Prospero as "a tetchy, if not tyrannical imperialist" to its logical extension in historical and cultural contexts, especially with regard to European colonialist ventures:

> The "new historicists" of the 1970's and 1980's rejected both the intentionalist and the allegorical approaches and insisted instead that what really mattered about *The Tempest* was its broad historical and literary context—the dominant discourses, both written and

> oral, from which Shakespeare inevitably drew his inspiration and the play's lineaments, characters, and ultimately, its literary and political significance. Some critical analyses of *The Tempest* incorporated Jacobean England's simultaneous, and often greater, concern with other places and issues, including events in Ireland, Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Caribbean. Relevant, too, were discourses about events at home (social and political disorder, monarchial succession, and witchcraft, to name a few) and in continental Europe (religious wars, dynastic struggles, territorial expansion). Despite such wide-ranging foci, the core of the new historicist reading of *The Tempest* remained colonialist—or, more accurately, anticolonialist. . . (Vaughan and Vaughan 6)

Decades earlier, Leslie Fiedler saw in *The Tempest* "the myth of the new and the West . . .the myth of American and of the Indian" (174), and a "complementary myth of the East" (175) with its roots in the well-known *Apollonius of Tyre*. To Fiedler, Caliban was Shakespeare's "Stranger," the embodiment of an overarching umbrella character for those previously non-integrated characters of lust and greed in the canon, including Othello and Shylock. In a more current study, "Learning To Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century," an exploration of otherness from the perspective of the spoken word, Stephen Greenblatt considers the two poles of language represented in the play:

> In *The Tempest* the startling encounter between a lettered and an unlettered culture is heightened, almost parodied, in the relationship between a European whose entire source of power is

> his library and a savage who had no speech at all before the European's arrival. (23)

Language, too, may be viewed as an externally inculcated social system.

In another study, David J. Baker and Dympna Callaghan have recently researched aspects of the overlord/oppressed underlying relationship occurring in Ireland due to the on-going British appropriations of that country; they and other critics project this conflict Caliban's relationship with Prospero in *The Tempest*. Meredith Skura, who also calls for broadening the parameters of *Tempest* scholarship, makes the following observation:

> When Prospero finally acknowledges Caliban, although he is a long way from recognizing the equality of racial "others," he comes closer than any of Shakespeare's other "Prosperos" to acknowledging the otherness within, which helps generate all racism---and he comes closer than anyone else in colonialist discourse. Prospero acknowledges the child-like Caliban as his own, and although he does not thus undo hierarchy, he moves for the first time toward accepting the child in himself rather than trying to dominate and erase that child (along with random vulnerable human beings outside himself) in order to establish his adult authority. (79)

Other contemporary writers and critics explore related dimensions of Caliban's role in *The Tempest*. In *Wild Men in the Looking Glass*, for example, Roger Bartra joins the growing number of writers calling for renewed emphasis upon exploring the European roots *of The Tempest*. Bartra explores in detail an ancient representation found in Western tradition from its roots and closes by embedding Caliban within the

context of this tradition: "The fact that *The Tempest* has been consistently viewed as a metaphor of colonialism has sometimes blurred Caliban's link with the European wild man" (176). While the perspectives of these and other contemporary critics, including Paul Brown, Kim F. Hall, Peter Hulme, and Stephen Orgel,[12] enrich our understanding of the play and serve as springboards for this study, my chapter on *The Tempest* moves away from contemporary critical assessments to explore other issues.

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Despite the fact that Prospero seeks to impose his version of dynastic marriage upon Miranda and Ferdinand, I argue that Miranda plays a far more important role in *The Tempest* than that of mere pawn in her father's game. First, it is obvious from the text that Prospero searches for signs of developing love, affirmation, and mutual consent to the match he has devised from both Ferdinand and Miranda. Given that Prospero displays concern for his daughter's views that fathers (including Egeus, Brabantio and Leonato) in previous plays fail to display, he in effect re-writes the imposing father ethos of Shakespeare's earlier works.

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[12]See Dympna Callaghan, "Irish Memories in *The Tempest," Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage,* Dympna Callaghan (New York, London: Routledge, 2000); Francis Barker and Peter Hulme, "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: The Discursive Con-texts of *The Tempest*," *Alternative Shakespeares*, John Drakakis. ed. (London: Methuen, 1985), 206-27; Roger Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness*, trans. Carl T. Berrisford (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1994); Paul Brown, "'This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism," *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, eds. (London: Manchester UP, 1985), 48-71; Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972); Stephen Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century," *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Routledge, 1990), 16-39; Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995); Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986); Stephen Orgel, "Prospero's Wife," *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, eds. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 50-64; Meredith Anne Skura, "Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 42-69.

On another level, as Prospero seeks to inculcate love for his daughter in Ferdinand, the former duke and erstwhile magician goes beyond merely refusing to promise his daughter immediately in marriage to Ferdinand as the young prince would have it. In addition, Prospero demands evidence of Ferdinand's devotion to Miranda as a necessary prelude before he even considers freeing Ferdinand from the program of heavy labor he has designed to restrain the young man:

> All thy vexations
> Were but my trials of thy love, and thou
> Hast strangely stood the test. (4.1.5-7)

In this sense, Prospero re-writes the model of indifferent father in this play,[13] playing the patriarch in *The Tempest* to bestow a very unpatriarchal model of marriage upon his daughter:

> Here, afore heaven,
> I ratify this my rich gift. O Ferdinand,
> Do not *smile* that I boast her off,
> For thou shalt find she will outstrip all praise
> And make it halt behind her. (4.1.7-11, italics mine)

Rather than viewing Prospero as totally sexist, then, it might be more precise to say that he has certain ideas (granted, these ideas might be termed *patriarchal* in nature) about protecting his daughter. To use Lawrence Stone's term, Prospero offers Miranda to Ferdinand as a "companionate partner," rather than as an unworthy piece of property.

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[13]Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, is an indifferent (perhaps he might even be termed *betraying)* father to Hero once Claudio's regard for his daughter's virtue disappears. Prospero, in contrast, is concerned with designing Miranda's future and indulges in pre-emptive strikes to that end.

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The character who is patriarchal to his core in this play--if we are to impose such terms upon Shakespeare---is Ferdinand, not Prospero. As such, Prospero seeks to educate the young prince to worthiness in marriage.

The institution we call "education" might be viewed as one manifestation of socially and culturally-sanctioned attempts to impose on a widespread scale. For my purposes, education might be described as a comprehensive, socially-sanctioned, collectively-designed program directed to those members of a culture deemed in need of training by agents of the society entrusted with this charge and with the power necessary to accomplish it. Prospero's earliest interaction with his daughter indeed reflects such a comprehensive and consciously undertaken program:

> Here in this island we arrived, and here
> Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
> Than other princes can that have more time
> For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful. (1.2.171-74)

Prospero is, above all, then, the educator of the island. After educating Miranda to his specifications during their sojourn on the island, he embarks upon a new project after the arrival of Ferdinand. The prince thus experiences the full brunt of Prospero's education-to-love efforts soon after *The Tempest* opens.

In that Prospero speaks harshly to Ferdinand--"I fear you have done yourself some wrong. A word" (1.2.444)—and calls him "spy" (1.2.456), "traitor" (1.2.461) and "impostor" (1.2.478), despite Miranda's protests, the duke-magician seems at first glance to be an imposer in the style of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Egeus. While

Prospero does not indulge in death threats, he does not hesitate to employ a variety of lesser torments and compulsions:

> I'll manacle thy neck and feet together;
> Sea water shalt thou drink; thy food shall be
> The fresh brook mussels, withered roots, and husks
> Wherein the acorn cradled. Follow! (1.2.462-465)

Prospero's carefully-designed program condemns Ferdinand to "remove / Some thousands of these logs and pile them up, / Upon a sore injunction" (3.1.9-11). He is determined to see that the model of marriage he wishes for his daughter is actualized. Still, in any attempt to assess Prospero's role in *The Tempest*, the following question might be posed: Is such a radical program of harassment necessary to insure Miranda's future well-being? I argue that Prospero's protective efforts are necessary and that these efforts distinguish him from Shakespeare's earlier fathers.[14]

Ferdinand's brief account to Miranda of his previous relationships with women reveals much about the young man:

> *Full many* a lady
> I have eyed with best regard, and *many a time*
> Th' harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
> Brought *my too diligent* ear. For several virtues
> Have I liked *several women;* never any
> With so full soul but *some defect* in her
> Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,
> And put it to the foil. . . (3.1.39-46, italics mine)

Exactly what the nature of the specific "defect" found in each of the young ladies whom Ferdinand has in the past "eyed with best regard" could possibly be must remain forever outside *The Tempest* as it is written. These "defect (s)" exist only in the realm of the speculative as it were, but they do make for interesting speculation. Yet not only from the perspective of dynastic aspiration but also from the perspective of a concerned father--"I have done nothing but in care for thee" (1.2.16)--Prospero's efforts to insure that Ferdinand is sincere in his attentions to Miranda are prudent, given Ferdinand's candid account of his previous relationships with women.

Ferdinand is not shy, nor does he hesitate to clarify his position in the great scheme of things: "Myself am Naples" (1.2. 435). In fact, it might be argued that Ferdinand projects self-assurance that at times borders on the arrogant:

> My language? Heavens!
>
> *I am the best of them* that speak this speech,
>
> Were I but where 'tis spoken. (1.2.429-31, italics mine)

This self-assurance surfaces again as Ferdinand abrogates the right to bestow a crown upon a woman: "I'll make you / The Queen of Naples" (1.2.449-50). While the young prince's claim is not totally outrageous, given the circumstances, for a Renaissance father to deem that such a young man might be in need of testing--"lest too light winning / Make the prize light" (1.2. 452-3)—does not confirm the portrayal of such a father as solely tyrannical; rather, it might also suggest that he is wisely protective.

Ferdinand initially attempts to avoid Prospero's demands through open defiance--"I will resist such entertainment till / Mine enemy has more power"

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[14] I argue below that such protection on Prospero's part *is necessary*, if Miranda is not to become another Mariana, given Ferdinand's revelations about earlier women and his concern with Miranda's

(1.2.466-467)—accompanied by a physical attempt to establish himself as the superior power by way of a sword. In response to Prospero's threats--"I'll manacle thy neck and feet together" (1.2.462)—Ferdinand mounts the most effective resistance he can mount, that of his sword. Yet in this play we know that the power of aggressive imposition cannot win and that stronger magic is waiting to be tapped. In that Ferdinand has previously heard the island in his heart--"This is no mortal business nor no sound / That the earth owes" (1.2.407-408)—the forces of the island which will initiate "a sea change" (1.2.401) are already on the move.

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Another "sea change" is working upon Prospero. Once again in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare represents freedom of perception and love choice through the eyes: "At the first sight / They have changed eyes" (1.2.441-42). Even as Prospero seeks to impose his version of dynastic marriage upon Ferdinand and Miranda, he also looks for their emotional response. From early on, Prospero attempts to ascertain that the love he imposes will develop into a freely-chosen commitment rather than remaining his external construction: "It goes on, I see / As my soul prompts it" (1.2.420-21).

While Prospero admits that his "soul prompts" the proceedings, he also observes that the dynamic is separate from, and outside of himself: "It goes on" (1.2.420). He notes this free-to-choose aspect of Ferdinand and Miranda's love in another context as well: "They are both in either's powers" (1.2.451). As opposed to Egeus with Hermia and Demetrius, Prospero never claims that the lovers are completely and totally in his power, but rather notes that their exchange is mutual, and that it exists outside of him. While he can verify the existence of their love by spying--"Poor worm, thou art infected! / This visitation shows it" (3.1.31-32)--he

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chastity.

seemingly does not assume that he alone can make it happen. Prospero acts as the master puppeteer, but his asides reveal keen interest in seeing that both parties exercise the right to choose freely as acting subjects.

Through the power of magic, Prospero sees to it that marriage will be proposed; at the same time, given that *The Tempest* foregrounds Prospero's concern to elicit the consent of both his daughter and the prince, the play re-writes the dynamic of the imposing father willing to destroy his daughter if necessary to effect his end that is played out both in Shakespearean tragedy and Shakespearean comedy. In contrast to these earlier versions, *The Tempest* follows Miranda's eyes as she moves forward in a relationship of choice--"Believe me, sir, / It carries a brave form" (1.2.411-412); "I might call him / A thing divine, for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble" (1.2.418-420). It is obvious that in The *Tempest* Miranda sees with her own eyes, not with her father's.

The Tempest also takes care to foregound Miranda's concern for Ferdinand's welfare in 3.1: "Pray set it down and rest you" (3.1.18); "I'll bear your logs the while" (3.1.24). Once again, it might be noted that Prospero's observation about the lovers having "changed eyes" refers to an interaction predicated by its very nature upon freedom of choice. Similarly, Ferdinand's reflective words--"these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours" (3.1.14)--are Ferdinand's own, not Prospero's. Rather than seeing his choice for his daughter's love object as solely an external imposition, Prospero seeks to have both parties ratify love in and of themselves.

Prospero continues to impose chastity upon Ferdinand by way of injunctions that the prince "take heed" (4.1.22). If by doing so, Prospero "protects" Miranda, lest Ferdinand--like Angelo or Claudio--change his mind about marriage, we might indeed

term his actions patriarchal. However, when contrasted with fathers such as Egeus, Brabantio, and even the cowardly Leonato who attacks Hero in the face of social censure, Prospero's role as protective father takes on the attributes of benevolence as well.

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In that Prospero successfully protects Miranda and her betrothed never seeks to slander or vilify her, *The Tempest* re-writes the sexually-slandered maid theme of earlier plays. Yet as far as Prospero's supposed preoccupation with Miranda's sexuality, I argue that Miranda's father is no more concerned with Miranda's sexuality or chastity than Miranda herself is as she speaks to Ferdinand: "No wonder, sir, / But certainly a maid" (1.2.428-429); "(The jewel in my dower)" (3.1.54); "I am your wife, if you will marry me; / If not, I'll die your maid" (3.1.83-84). Granted, this preoccupation of Miranda's—"I should sin / To think but nobly of my grandmother; / Good wombs have born bad sons" (1.2.118-120)--may well reflect Prospero's own concern on the subject. Miranda's preoccupation may be a direct result of Prospero's previous inculcations of various kinds, including those on the nature of his brief and ambiguous reference to Miranda's mother: "Thy mother was a piece of virtue" (1.2.56). Be this as it may, however, it is apparent from the text that the concern, even if originally Prospero's, has been internalized by Miranda before *The Tempest* opens.

More importantly, the matter of Miranda's chastity in this play clearly extends beyond Prospero and Miranda. In fact, another character, one who raises the issue on two different occasions, is more concerned with Miranda's sexual status than either

Prospero *or* Miranda. The character in question is the Prince of Naples who observes, "for several virtues / Have I liked several women" (3.1.42-43).

We get the feeling that Ferdinand moves quickly in and out of relationships. Ferdinand's salutation to Miranda, "Most sure the goddess / On whom these airs attend!" (1.2.421-422), constitutes an expression of admiration, but his admiration is not quite as unconditional as it might seem at first glance: indeed, the prince's subsequent lines somewhat limit his seemingly unbounded devotion. At the core of Ferdinand's admiration for Miranda lies a very definite qualifier:

> My *prime* request,
> Which I do last pronounce, is (O, you wonder!)
> If you be maid or no? (1.2.426-28, italics mine)

Ferdinand voices a "prime request," one which conditions his sentence and his sentiments. His request for information concerning Miranda's chastity--or lack thereof--is followed by a variation on the same theme. The self-assurance which reserves to itself the power to crown a queen reserves to itself the power to impose conditions upon this (or any other) prospective queen:

> O, *if* a virgin,
> And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you
> The Queen of Naples. (1.2.447-49, italics mine)

Ferdinand's "if" is more condition than it is inquiry. The Prince makes it clear that only the correct sexual status can provide access to relationship, title, marriage; Miranda therefore does not speak lightly as she refers to "the jewel in my dower."[15]

While Ferdinand's love for Miranda is orchestrated by Prospero, and while he is initially self-absorbed and as interested in Miranda's sexual status as he is in her,

Ferdinand soon chooses love as well. His initial concern regarding Miranda's chastity fades as the "strutting chanticleer" (1.2.386) begins the process of replacing arrogance and self-absorption with humility and unconditional acceptance:

> My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.
> My father's loss, the weakness which I feel,
> The wreck of all my friend's, nor this man's threats
> (To whom I am subdued) are but light to me,
> Might I but through my prison once a day
> Behold this maid. All corners else o'th' earth
> Let Liberty make use of; space enough
> Have I in such a prison. (1.2.487-494)

Even so, Prospero as protective father takes the precaution of seeing to it that Ferdinand's desires are restrained, at least for a while, by hard labor and arduous testing.

That Prospero's goal of educating both Ferdinand and Miranda to love has been realized is evident in the interaction of the pair in the chess scene as the play closes. Despite his stated devotion to Miranda, Ferdinand yet attempts to impose himself in ways other than in his role as "Naples," the prince who immediately seeks to verify virginity in a prospective bride. Ferdinand seemingly will take a win at any cost, and checking must yet be the order of the day, as Miranda suddenly discovers: "Sweet lord, you play me false" (5.1.172). Although resistance for Miranda seems to crumble quickly in the face of love--"Yea, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play" (5.1.174-175)—it is significant that she can observe and protest Ferdinand's move. His

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[15] "Of course, at no point do we hear Ferdinand discuss or explain *his own status* in this regard.

denial—"No, my dearest love, / I would not for the world" (5.1.172-173)—also speaks volumes: Miranda is represented in *The Tempest* as seeing with her own eyes and speaking with her own voice, even as she willingly accepts the internal imposition we know as love.

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I would be remiss if I did not note that many view Miranda as no more than a minion in her father's political, social, and perhaps even sexual control. waiting as the play closes to be transferred to Ferdinand's control, so she can take up duties of dynastic nature.[16] In contrast to this view, I have argued that *The Tempest*'*s* representation indicates that Miranda chooses Ferdinand as acting subject, and that Prospero, in contrast to the fathers of Shakespeare's earlier play, seeks ratification of his dynastic imposition in the couple themselves (1.2.441-42). In fact, Prospero is so elated to find that which he seeks that he moves to fulfill his promise to free his sprite: "Delicate Ariel, / I'll set thee free for this" (1.2.442-443). While Miranda's choice is undoubtedly the choice Prospero wishes her to make, it is one she makes freely with her own eyes rather than with her father's, and Prospero recognizes this.

In addition to her choice of Ferdinand as beloved, Miranda functions as a powerful, courageous and freely-choosing subject in other ways in *The Tempest*, especially in her willingness to resist Prospero as he torments the Italians

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[16] For example, see Lorie Jerrell Leininger, "The Miranda Trap: Sexism and Racism in Shakespeare's *Tempest*," *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, Carol Thomas Neely, eds. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1980), 285-294; Ania Loomba, "Seizing the Book," *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 142-158; Stephen Orgel, "Prospero's Wife," *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*; David Sundelson, "So Rare a Wonder'd Father: Prospero's *Tempest*," *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays,* Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980), 33-53; Anne Thompson, "Miranda, Where's Your Sister?: Reading

(including Ferdinand). Indeed, from the perspective of Miranda's resistance to Prospero's desire to exact revenge, her kinship with the elements of the island, and her refusal to play the role that Helena plays in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I argue that she must be taken seriously as a character in her own right rather than as a cog in Prospero's throne reclamation efforts.

Even as Ariel displays the ability to resist Prospero's attempted impositions, Miranda does also. Despite the fact that her father decides that she will be Ferdinand wife, Miranda resists indulging in the unwelcome entreaties and threatening demands which characterize the roles of Helena, Orsino and Demetrius, among others. Ignoring her father's efforts to make Ferdinand her betrothed without permitting him to choose freely, Miranda instead asks: "My husband, then?" (3.1.88). Because Miranda asks, Ferdinand is free to respond as acting subject rather than as captive in thrall to her father: "Ay, with a heart as willing / As bondage e'er of freedom" (5.1.88-89). Both make the choice freely, but it is Miranda's willingness to resist the temptation to impose herself as forced love object that allows Ferdinand to be free.

Miranda resists her father more than is generally noted in other ways as well. That she is willing to brook Prospero is apparent in her response to the ship's plight (1.2.1-13), to her father's imperious recounting of their past, and also to the hard labor Prospero imposes upon Ferdinand. She does not shy away from challenging Prospero--"Your tale, sir, would cure deafness" (1.2.106)--nor does she hesitate to judge him with regard to Ferdinand's plight: "Why speaks my father so ungently?" (1.2.445); "My father's of a better nature, sir, / Than he

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Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Sellers (Hemel Hempstead, U.K.: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 45-55.

appears by speech" (1.2.497-498). It is obvious, then, that in this play, Miranda draws her own observations.

The fact that Miranda disobeys Prospero--"O my father, I have broken your hest to say so" (3.1.36-37)—when she believes he is not around is not untypical for a Shakespearean daughter, but Miranda goes so far as to push Prospero to the brink of anger when he *is* around. She argues, insisting that Prospero recognize her voice until he responds in anger--"Silence! One word more / Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee" (1.2.476-477)—a rebuke can only be viewed as having been elicited by strong and direct confrontation. In resisting, Miranda relies upon the vision of her eyes and the validity of her perception: "My affections /Are then most humble. I have no ambition / To see a goodlier man" (1.2.482-484).[17]

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Miranda's role in this play is important from another perspective as well. In the new Arden, editors Vaughan and Vaughan observe: "Miranda's 'I have suffered with those I saw suffer' (1.2.5-6) underscores her compassion" (22). Indeed, it is Miranda's compassion which first gives rise to her desire to resist Prospero's efforts to toture the Italians.

Rather than considering Miranda's compassion in and of itself, I consider her exercise of this virtue in so far as it is linked to the elemental mercy of the island; her awareness of and kinship to these elements is crucial to my argument. While Ferdinand highlights the close relationship between elemental mercy and human compassion in terms of plot--"Though the seas threaten, they are merciful / I have cursed them without cause" (5.1.178-179)--Miranda's very character is

[17] As such, Miranda falls in the line of Hermia rather than in the line of Helena.

bound up with this interlacement of human emotion and merciful elements.[18] She is touched by the pathos that emanates from the island's elements conjured to rage by Prospero, and her ability to merge with this pathos is linked to a desire to transform. Miranda would have the island's elements shower blessings upon human endeavors and she would have others, especially Prospero, likewise extend mercy rather than terror through the cosmic forces.

By virtue of an almost fierce compassion that is resistance in its own right, Miranda actualizes the beneficent elements of the island. She opens 1.2 by linking a personal emotional response to elements which in her framework suddenly appear more hostile to human endeavors than beneficent:

> If by your art, my dearest father, you have
> Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
> The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch
> But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheeck,
> Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered
> With those that I saw suffer—a brave vessel
> (Who had no doubt some noble creature in her)
> Dashed all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
> Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perished.
> Had I been any god of power, I would
> Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere

[18] Caliban is the one exception: he of all characters in this play fails to receive Miranda's compassion. Yet once again the sexual imposition dynamic floats ambiguously above the scene. Similar ambiguity floats above other scenes in Shakespeare's plays, as, for example, in *Measure for Measur*e, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. Perhaps only in *The Tempest* by way of Ferdinand does Shakespeare resolve this hydra-headed issue, which erupts in new manifestations in various plays. For a thorough history of Caliban's permutations through literature and history, and across stage and

It should the good ship so have swallowed and

The fraughting souls within her. (1.2.1-13)

In an attempt to impose compassion upon Prospero by identifying herself with the victims of his magic, Miranda insists that the forces Prospero twists to terrorize the Italians must be free to support human endeavors. The play thus foregrounds the interconnection between Miranda's character and the elements, and between the elements and compassion.

Miranda reflects this interrelationship between human emotion and environmental elements in other contexts as well. As she sympathizes with Ferdinand, she refuses to sympathize alone. Instead, she marshals the forces of the island to shower compassion, in support of her own, upon Ferdinand: "When this burns, / 'T will weep for having wearied you" (3.1.18-19). Despite the fact that her father insists his actions are in her best interests, Miranda seeks to dispose of the elements Prospero uses to vent his rage: "Had I been any god of power, I would / Have sunk the sea within the earth" (1.2.10-11); "I would the lightning had / Burnt up those logs that you are enjoined to pile!" (3.1.16-17). In so doing, Miranda moves the desire for vengeance that continuously smolders below the surface of the text in *The Tempest* in the direction of character reformation. While she cannot quite effect saving action on the level of Ariel or Gonzalo, Miranda imposes compassion by another mode, the mode of empathetic response: "Pity move my father / To be inclined my way" (1.2.447-448).

Perhaps there is a reason for Miranda's close kinship to the magical forces of the island. Although Prospero testifies only to his own power to educate and

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screen, see Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).

influence his daughter, in point of fact he has not been the only formative influence in Miranda's life: the island itself played a significant role in Miranda's early life and education. As Prospero informs Miranda, the elements of the island were his first support as he endeavored to save his helpless child. Although at that point Prospero must have been in the first flush of desire for vengeance—desire that seemingly might never dissipate--the elements spoke to him of Miranda and the mercy which would come later:

> To cry to th' sea that roared to us; to sigh
> To th' winds, whose pity, sighing back again,
> Did us but loving wrong. (1.2.149-151)

The forces which seemingly transgressed against father and daughter thus showed "pity," a deep compassion which Prospero senses at the time and which he can later recall.[19]

Prospero's recollection of Miranda's role in their miraculous deliverance from the sea also highlights the link between his daughter's compassion and the beneficent elements of the island:

> O, a cherubin
> Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile,
> Infused with a fortitude from heaven,
> When I have decked the sea with drops full salt,
> Under my burden groaned, which raised in me
> An undergoing stomach to bear up
> Against what should ensue. (1.2.152-158)

[19] He recalls this not only with Miranda, but also in conjunction with Gonzalo, a process which Ariel aids.

Prospero links his daughter's "smile" filled with "fortitude from heaven," with the elemental "sea" and with his own "drops full salt." Once again, therefore, *The Tempest* foregrounds the relationship between elemental beneficence and positive human emotions. As the play closes, other drops—Gonzalo's tears (5.1.16-17)--linked by Ariel to the elements of the island, come to serve as catalysts for forgiveness.

While it may be folk convention for the princess to take the hero's part instead of her father's, Miranda's resistance assumes a particular form in *The Tempest*. In that she manifests the ethos of the island, Miranda attempts to integrate Prospero into her framework; she seeks to have him adopt her vision, instead of choosing to abandon him. Once again, Miranda differs in this respect from certain of Shakespeare's earlier (and tragic) heroines, including Juliet, Desdemona, and Cordelia, all of whom choose to fight or abandon fathers. Instead, Miranda seeks to draw her father into her world. Her comment--"O, I have suffered with those I saw suffer" (1.2.156)–makes explicit this mode of attempting to draw Prospero to her perspective-- to have his eyes see with her eyes.[20] Miranda displays a similar pattern on other occasions as well--"Pity move my father / To be inclined my way" (1.2.447-448). In response, Prospero allows Miranda to choose freely in a way that few fathers in Shakespeare's earlier plays do, re-writing his own role and those of the fathers who have come before him. In this sense, it might be said that Miranda liberates the play's romance form by accepting Ferdinand and figuratively, with Ariel, by transforming Prospero.

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[20] Hermia never accomplishes this with Egeus.

In contrast to Post-Colonialist approaches which explore politically and culturally imposed chains (collectively-imposed chains), this chapter considers the individual's contribution to the suppression of and/or nurturance of human freedom. Thus, while the story of Prospero's desire to conquer and subdue the island has been told repeatedly of late in critical texts, the alternative story—Prospero's resistance to this desire and the power which nurtures resistance—is not recounted as often in our Post-Colonialist World.

Nothrop Frye observes, "In this island, the quality of one's dreams is an index of character" (20).[21] The point might be made that the power to connect with the magic of the island also serves as "an index of character" in this play. From such a perspective, *The Tempest* foregrounds two types of imposers. First, the play showcases characters who desire to impose their will upon others--or who have previously done so, no matter what the consequences--but who ultimately open themselves to the power of the island as it confronts them during their enforced sojourn.[22] Secondly, *The Tempest* showcases characters who desire to impose upon others, and who, at the same time, refuse to open themselves to the island's magical elements when confronted by the same.

The distance between the two groups of characters is immense with regard to comic outcome. The first, characters like Ferdinand, Alonso, Prospero, and, to a degree, Caliban, permit the island's magic to work upon them and ultimately step back from roles which encode acts of imposition in tragic modes. These characters are counterpoised by others--Stephano, Trinculo, Sebastian and Antonio--who seem unable and/or unwilling to open to the island's power and divest themselves of their

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[21] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. and Introduction by Northrop Frye, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1970).

roles as tragic imposers. In that the latter characters refuse to let the magic of the island permeate their perception, they remain—although happily neutralized as to effectiveness--unchanged and alienated from the general harmony as *The Tempest* closes.

The oft-commented-upon scene between Gonzalo and Antonio and Sebastian serves as an example of this. While the contrast between Gonzalo's view of the island—"Here is everything advantageous to life" (2.1.52); "How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!" (2.1.55)--and Antonio's and Sebastian's view--"The ground indeed is tawny" (2.1.56)—has been examined so often that to explore it again would be redundant, it is also true that the distance between Gonzalo and the co-conspirators Antonio and Sebastian is the distance between the play's outcome as comedy or tragedy. The interaction in 2.1 (200-291), wherein Antonio tempts Sebastian, is a classic scene of Shakespearean tragic imposition--of inculcation from the outside--while Sebastian's response is a classic Shakespearean representation of the same dynamic in its later stages:

> Thy case, dear friend,
> Shall be my precedent. As thou got'st Milan,
> I'll come by Naples. Draw thy sword! One stroke
> Shall free thee from the tribute thou payest,
> And I the king shall love thee.

Gonzalo resists when others in Shakespeare fall.

The old courtier recognizes the interplay between elemental mercy and human emotion immediately upon his arrival on the island: "Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first in Africa" (2.1.70-71). In 3.3, he again notes

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[22] Prospero and Alonso are key figures here.

the saving action of the elements, this time ironically juxtaposing the newly-felt beneficence with previous choices made by his human companions:

> Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of
> Our human generation you shall find
> Many--nay, almost any. (3.3.32-34).

Most importantly, because Gonzalo inserts himself into the interfacing between positive human emotion and the island's elements in the embodiment of Ariel--"Upon mine honour, sir, I heard a humming" (2.1.318)—the old courtier becomes the representation of *The Tempest's* re-writing of the usurpation/regicide dynamic which haunts many of Shakespeare's plays in one form or another.[23]

As Frye notes, "The island looks different to different people. It is a more pleasant place to Gonzalo than to Antonio and Sebastian" (15). With the exception of the pain the old courtier witnesses in Alonso, Gonzalo finds himself in harmony with the island's magic immediately upon his arrival, as he fantasizes a society--seemingly supported by the island's magic--in which forms of collective (social) imposition are abolished:

> I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known, riches poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard—none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine or oil;

[23] The boundary between Alonso who is warned and Duncan and King Hamlet, both of whom fail to recognize the snake in their midst until too late, is fluid and permeable in Shakespeare.

No occupation, all men idle, all;

And women, too, but innocent and pure;

No sovereignty. . . (2.1.148-157)

Gonzalo suggests that establishing his ideal society means ending various aggressive modes used to determine the social fabric of society: "treason, felony, / Sword, pike, knife, gun" (2.1.161-162). While the remnants of previous Milanese social and political actions are thus ever-present, the primary imposition in Gonzalo's scheme is to be a natural one, the "perfection" of a "Golden Age" (2.1.169).

As noted above, in 5.1 Gonzalo testifies to *The Tempest's* re-writing in "gold on lasting pillars" (5.1.208) previous tales from Shakespeare's canon of fathers who dictate love choices, lovers who force themselves upon unwilling love objects, and brothers who kill. Gonzalo addresses the futility of such attempts, including the one in which he has previously played a role:

Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue,

Should become kings of Naples? O rejoice

Beyond a common joy, and set it down

With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage

Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis;

And Ferdinand her brother found a wife

Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom

In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves,

When no man was his own. (5.1.205-213)

Gonzalo's remark that "no man was his own" captures the essence of usurped perception, and his affirmation of integrity contrasts with the conflicted ambiguity of

earlier tragic heroes who let others determine their perception as Cassius, reflecting upon what he knows will soon be found in Brutus, suggests:

> Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet I see
> Thy honorable mettle may be wrought
> From that it is dispos'd; therefore it is meet
> That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
> For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd? (1.2.308-322)

Brutus soon views Rome and Caesar through the eyes of Cassius. In contrast, Gonzalo is the courtier who sees with his own eyes in the face of familial betrayal and social usurpation.

Along with his ability to access the island's magic, Gonzalo possesses the courage necessary to resist external imposition, a quality sorely lacking in the rest of Alonso's party, as Antonio remarks: "for all the rest / They'll take suggestions as a cat laps milk" (2.1.288-289). In a reprise of his deliverance of Prospero and Miranda on the occasion of the first usurpation (1.2.160) in Milan, Gonzalo wakes as Ariel and the elemental magic of the island seek out his kindred consciousness: "Upon mine honour, sir, I heard a humming, / And that a strange one too, which did awake me. . ." (2.1.318-319). In true romance form, as *The Tempest* approaches tragedy, the elemental magic which pervades Prospero's isle touches those humans open to it. Replacing conventions used in earlier plays--disguise, bumbling peripheral characters, and flower potions--in *The Tempest*, the island's compassionate elements intervene:

> My master, through his art forsees the danger
> That you, his friend, are in, and sends me forth
> (For else his project dies) to keep them living. (2.1.298-300)

Thus, in place of the conventions of earlier plays, *The Tempest* represents Gonzalo's saving action and the virtues of compassion and mercy from which these actions spring as resistance finding its source in the graced power of the island.

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Like Ferdinand, Alonso is radically changed by his interaction with the elemental magic of the island. A member of the triad, Prospero's "three men of sin" (3.3.52), Alonso eventually abandons his old imposing ways.[24] I make this point regarding Alonso because if Sebastian is to be believed, Alonso, too, is one of Shakespeare's imposing fathers:

> You were kneeled to and importuned otherwise
> By all of us, and the fair soul herself
> Weighed between loathness and obedience, at
> Which end o'th' beam should bow. (2.1.129-132)

While this is about Africa and racism, it is also about imposing fathers in the style of Egeus. Alonso might march with the best of Shakespeare's imposing fathers as Prospero suggests:

> Honest lord,
> Thou hast said well, for some of you there present
> Are worse than devils. (3.3.34-36.)

Because the term "devils" is not used lightly, it is safe to say that Alonso has a history.[25]

There are other signs as well that in his past, Alonso may not have been the most compassionate or freedom-granting ruler to sit on a throne. Although *The*

[24] Prospero, Miranda, and Claribel, at the least, are victims of Alonso.

Tempest foregrounds the affectionate bond which exists between Ferdinand and his father in the post-shipwreck scenes of mourning and meeting--"Now all the blessings / Of a glad father compass thee about!" (5.1.179-180)--Ferdinand is careful to kneel to greet Alonso in 5.1 and even more careful to humbly inform his father of his relationship to Miranda: "I chose her when I could not ask my father / For his advice, nor thought I had one" (5.1.190-191).

Still, despite Alonso's complicity in the matter of usurped Milan and the more elusive issues noted briefly here, the King of Naples and Milan allows the magic of the island to change him and acknowledges his "trespass" in a way that Antonio and Sebastian fail to do:

> Methought the billows spoke and told me of it;
> The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder--
> That deep and dreadful organ-pipe--pronounced
> The name of Prosper. It did bass my trespass.
> Therefore my son i'th' ooze is bedded, and
> I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded,
> And with him there lie mudded. (3.3.96-102)

Thus, whether it is to the end of imposing revenge as Prospero seemingly would have it, or whether to the end of character reform as Ariel would have it, Prospero's "three men of sin" have their perceptions jostled by cosmic interludes. During these interludes, the elements of the isle--"the never-surfeited sea" (3.3.55), the "shores" (3.3.74) and "all the creatures" (3.3.74)—show themselves in modes other than their beneficent ones. As such, it becomes readily apparent to the spectators to whom these

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[25] If we do not see Alonso as an imposing father, it is because over the course of *The Tempest*, he allows himself to be transformed.

interludes are targeted that the elements of the cosmos recoil in horror at deeds perpetrated so long ago in Milan:

> You are three men of sin, whom destiny,
> That hath to instrument this lower world
> And what is in't, the never-surfeited sea
> Hath caused to belch up you, and on this island
> Where man doth not inhabit-- you 'mongst men
> Being most unfit to live--I have made you mad;
> And even with such-like valour, men hang and drown
> Their proper selves. (3.3.53-60)

For Alonso the interludes evoke guilt, terror, and repentance—"Thy dukedom I resign and do entreat / Thou pardon me my wrongs" (5.1.118-119)—despite the fact that this is seemingly not the case for Antonio and Sebastian. As the play closes, Alonso takes an even more radical step toward change. By allow repentance to impose itself upon his consciousness with regard to Miranda, Alonso becomes a rarity in Shakespeare's canon: "But O, how oddly will it sound that I / Must ask my child forgiveness" (5.1.197-198). It is not often that one of Shakespeare's imposing fathers asks a young woman for forgiveness.[26]

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In his tribute to the island (3.2), Caliban links the emotional work of abandoning fear--"Be not afeard"--to the island's elemental "noises, / Sounds and sweet airs" (135-136). In the benediction Prospero mutters as an aside for Miranda and Ferdinand, the magician ties the elemental "rain" to the spiritual mystery known

[26] While Lear asks forgiveness of Cordelia, he does so only after the tragedy he has precipitated by his overweening desire to impose himself upon his daughter as her primary love object cannot be averted.

as "grace," while Ferdinand, who in 5.1 connects the "seas" with the virtue of "mercy," likewise foregrounds the relationship between the transcendental and the natural, the spiritual and the elemental in this play. From this perspective, I argue that *The Tempest* explores the miracle of Grace as found in the natural world.

Subtle and yet vital, the most powerful magic in *The Tempest* is rooted in the mysterious and elusive cosmic forces which imbue the island. Stronger than Prospero's magic, and powerful enough even to overcome potentially tragic modes of imposition, the island's magic imbues the cosmic elements which pervade its seas and airs. While the active dimension of this power is most strikingly reflected in Gonzalo and its emotive dimension in Miranda, the two are united in the magic of Ariel, a creature in harmony with the island in ways that Caliban and Prospero are not.

From one perspective, the moment of liberation in *The Tempest* occurs in 5.1 when Alonso professes a wish to be bedded in the "oozy slime" (5.1.151), so that Prospero's seemingly lost daughter and his own seemingly lost son might be both happily found (5.1.148-152). I make this argument because it is only as Alonso re-writes previous plays' usurpation dynamic that Prospero reveals Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess and thereby irrevocably re-writes the revenge dynamic (5.1.172-200). From another perspective, however, the moment of liberation must be Prospero's, and Prospero often displays ambiguity of motive in his interaction with the castaways.[27] At times, the former Duke of Milan proceeds as if he desires to exact revenge from his old enemies or control them for the sake of controlling. At other times, the goal of character reformation peeks out from within the elemental torments Ariel implements on Prospero's behalf. Thus, the conflict for Prospero in *The*

[27] Interestingly, Prospero's interaction until the end is always at a safe distance.

Tempest might be formulated in this way: To impose revenge, pure and simple, or to impose character reformation?

While Ariel and the elements display restraint, Prospero fails to do so for most of the play. As noted above, while I realize this is an alternative reading, I argue that Prospero's words to Ariel--"My brave spirit, / Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil / Would not infect his reason?" (1.2.206-208)—indicate Prospero's awareness of Ariel's desire to reform character in a way that Prospero himself, initially bent upon revenge, knows he cannot approximate. (That Prospero has trouble restraining his own desire for vengeance is obvious by the fury with which he continues to torment the castaways.) In contrast, Ariel's confident assurance of safety for all early in 1.2--"Not a hair perished; / On their sustaining garments not a blemish" (217-218)--reveals the sprite's ability to remain above the fray and refrain from vengeance for the sake of vengeance.

As the play opens, Ariel, who attempts to avoid carrying out Prospero's orders, is crushed into submission by the magician:

> If thou more murmur'st I will rend an oak
>
> And peg thee in his knotty entrails till
>
> Thou hast howled away twelve winters. (1.2.294-96)

Because the sprite has earlier resisted this play's female representation of imposition in tragic mode--Sycorax--Ariel suffered then as well:

> And—for thou wast a spirit too delicate
>
> To act her earthy and abhorred commands,
>
> Refusing her grand hests—she did confine thee,
>
> By help of her more potent ministers

> And in her most unmitigable rage,
> Into a cloven pine, within which rift
> Imprisoned thou didst painfully remain
> A dozen years, within which space she died
> And left thee there, where thou didst vent thy groans
> As fast as millwheels strike. . . (1.2. 272-281)

Thus, Ariel is represented as a resistor of potentially tragic imposition from the play's early moments.

Charged with administering Prospero's torments in the present, Ariel does so, all the while resisting being caught up in Prospero's desire to exact revenge from enemies "worse than devils" (3.3.36). As he carries out Prospero's commands, Ariel works to implement character transformation rather than revenge.[28] As such, the sprite elevates character reformation to the heart of *The Tempest* as he successfully avoids colluding in Prospero's periodic swings in the direction of revenge.[29]

Unlike Miranda and Gonzalo, who display compassion from a human point of view, Ariel, clearly not meant to be a human representation, is rather the personification of the elements--"To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride/ On the curled clouds" (1.2.191-192)—and of unbounded resistance to tragic imposition. In this sense, Ariel is also the personification of the power of characters to make free choices as acting subjects, rather than to be determined solely by their dramatic settings. It is therefore fitting that when Prospero releases the sprite, he does so in conjunction with

[28] Likewise, Ariel avoids taking Puck's course, directed to humiliating humans and viewing their confusion as entertainment.

[29] The scene in *Hamlet* during which Hamlet draws back from killing Claudius in hopes of killing the king while he is not at prayer (so as to insure Claudius' eternal damnation) comes to mind as an example of Shakespeare's representation of this dynamic in tragic mode.

the elements--"Then to the elements / Be free, and fare thou well!" (5.1.318-319)—and the pure freedom they signify.

Thus, while on the surface Prospero ostensibly controls the action of *The Tempest*, the magician actually delegates tutelage in the way of elemental compassion and mercy—what we might call character reform--to the "correspondent to command" (1.2.297) "spriting" (1.2.298) of Ariel. Taking care to see that courtiers (1.2.217) and "mariners" (1.2.225) alike are ultimately safe, Ariel torments Sebastian, Antonio, Alonso, and even Ferdinand, to greater or lesser degree and with more or less effective results. "Full fathoms five" (1.2.397-403), for example, is Ariel's effective but simple interpretation of Prospero's command to torture Ferdinand. In that *The Tempest* portrays Ariel as taking care not to harm irrevocably, the link between the mercy of the elements and concern for human well-being is once again made explicit.

At crucial boundary moments wherein tragedy potentially overwhelms comedy in *The Tempest*, Ariel's voice can be heard advising Prospero. In 5.1, for example, Prospero must decide whether to impose revenge and end the play as tragedy, or mercy and end the play as comedy and romance defined by character reformation. Prospero's last word will be what? At that moment, Ariel projects Gonzalo's pain into the elements of the island, seeking to evoke in the magician the quality of mercy:[30]

> His tears run down his beard like winter's drops
> From eaves of reeds. Your charm so strongly works 'em
> That, if you now beheld them, your affections

[30] This is in contrast to Iago, who seeks to evoke not mercy or forgiveness in Othello, but rather, rage and vengeance.

Would become tender. (5.1.16-19).

Even in the face of Gonzalo's suffering, Prospero has trouble transforming his desire from revenge to sympathy, but as he struggles to resist, Ariel, who links human emotional responses--"tears" and "affections"--to the elements--"winter's drops"--to the island's cosmos, with its "eaves of reeds," comes to his aid. Like Miranda, Ariel draws Prospero to mercy, asking him to acknowledge perspectives other than his own: "Mine would, sir, were I human" (5.1.20). In the process, Ariel moves Prospero's commands away from vengeance and in the direction of openness and mercy, as Prospero himself recognizes:

Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. (5.1.26-28)

With his gift of love—a crucial gift, in that it is emblematic of love offered to Prospero in the face of a brother's unnatural lack of love--Ariel changes not only the castaways, but also Prospero himself. With Ariel's help, renunciation of the sinister magic upon which Prospero has come to depend becomes less difficult:

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions and shall not myself
(One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
Passion as they) be kindlier moved than thou art?

We never see why *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* Theseus chooses to absolve Hermia and the rest of the lovers from Athenian law as Egeus would have it. In contrast, in the spriting of Ariel in *The Tempest*, subtextual mechanics from earlier plays are not only given a place in the plot, they are foregrounded:

Their understanding

Begins to swell, and the approaching tide

Will shortly fill the reasonable shore

That now lies foul and muddy. (5.1.79-82)

The breakthrough is "understanding," and Prospero permits it to happen.

For a long time, Prospero's version of magic has blinded him to the island's magic. While certain characters in the play—for example, Gonzalo, Miranda and even Caliban on occasion—seek to identify with the island's beneficent elements, Prospero has trouble doing so, even with Ariel's tutelage. Yet the numinous nature of Prospero's island transcends[31] what it is--a small outcropping of land in the midst of the sea. Ariel gives voice to this, and Prospero eventually recognizes it as well:

Holy Gonzalo, honourable man.

Mine eyes, ev'n sociable to the show of thine,

Fall fellowly drops. (5.1.63-4)

From another perspective, we might say that the island is a solipsism that transcends itself. Prospero was put of out of Milan, and in some ways becomes--or feels himself to be--unfit for human company. On the island, he becomes selfhood--ego, pure and simple--driven by the desire to see that no one transgresses against him ever again. As he develops compassion by way of Gonzalo's pain and resistance from Ariel and Miranda, he changes.

In this play, the protagonist who thinks of himself as the Director is always being educated by someone else--by Caliban as to where to find food and how to survive, and by Ariel, Miranda and Gonzalo as to how to resist the desire for

[31] As noted above, if we did not know better, we might say that the island itself is a metaphor that evokes religious notions of heaven and Grace.

vengeance, develop compassion, and grant others freedom of perception and the right to choose as acting subjects. Yet in the play's epilogue, Prospero himself draws the audience in the direction of resistance:

> And my ending is despair,
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
> Which pierces so that it assaults
> Mercy itself, and frees all faults
> As you from crimes would pardoned be,
> Let your indulgence set me free. (15-20)

On the surface this is about theatrical power, but it is also about a more intrusive power, already renounced by Prospero in lines of poetry that are magical in themselves. This "turn" to acceptance of the new—the freedom of the elements and of resistance—the power to abandon "rough magic"--comes only after lines of homage to war and thunder:

> Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
> And ye that on the sands with printless foot
> Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
> When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
> By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
> Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
> Is to make midnight-mushrooms, that rejoice
> To hear the solemn curfew, by whose aid--
> Weak masters though ye be—I have bedimmed
> The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,

> And ‘twixt the green sea and the azured vault
> Set roaring war; to the dread-rattling thunder
> Have I given fire and rifted Jove’s stout oak
> With his own bolt: the strong-based promontory
> Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
> The pine and cedar; graves at my command
> Have waked their sleeper; op’d and let ‘em forth
> By my so potent art. (5.1.33-50)

Still, the renunciation comes in time, and the poetry resonates with us yet today:

> But this rough magic
> I here abjure; and when I have required
> Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I’ll break my staff
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I’ll drown my book. (5.1.50-57)

My chapter closes as it opened. In *The Tempest*, Prospero conjures the magic, but nature conjures the miracles; the director conjures the theater, but nature conjures the grace. It is clear from *The Tempest* that renunciation of Prospero’s magic brings with it other magic: “calm seas, auspicious gales” (5.1.315). It is also clear that what we did not see about Theseus in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*—the mechanics of his change from the court scene with Egeus to the pardon he grants in the forest---and the catalyst for his willingness to forgive the lovers—is made explicit in *The Tempest* in

the spriting of Ariel, the compassionate responses of Gonzalo and Miranda, and the willingness to resist the desire to take vengeance ultimately represented by Prospero himself.

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