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# SHAKESPEARE AND ASSAMESE LITERATURE

BY NANDA TALUKDAR

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ASSAM came under the direct control of the British in 1826, in pursuance of the treaty of Yanda. Simultaneously with the British came another group of foreigners, the American Baptist Missionaries, to whom Assam owes the ushering in of a new age in literature, for it was their journal *Arunoday*, the first of its kind in the Assamese language, that heralded the advent of Modern Assamese literature. The advent of Shakespeare in Assam almost coincided with the coming of the British into the land. The new rulers staged Shakespeare plays in their clubs and on ceremonial occasions and though the masses had hardly any opportunity to witness them, a selected few were fortunate enough to have a close view. Assamese students in Calcutta had a more frequent and more intimate contact with Shakespeare plays and, like most of their Bengalee counterparts, they were deeply impressed. On the other hand, the spread of English education brought Shakespeare closer to the intelligentsia of Assam who fell easy victims to the charms, and more so the prestige, of the great dramatist. No wonder that the young scholars and writers of Assam developed a Shakespeare-consciousness which in some cases veered dangerously to Shakespeare-idolatry.

The influence of Shakespeare on Assamese literature is three-fold. The direct impact is, of course, on the dramatic literature of Assam. This is followed by the indirect impact of Shakespearean stories, with their special set-up, on Assamese novels and narrative poems. The third influence is on poetry proper.

The influence of Shakespeare on the dramatic literature of Assam is also three-fold, involving formal innovations, new technique of characterization and direct translation. The story of Assamese literature is an old one. Barring *Parijat-Haran* of the Maithili poet Umapati Upadhyaya, the 'Ankia' playlets of Sree Sankardev are the earliest specimens of dramatic efforts among the modern Indian languages. The torch

of dramatic literature lit by Sankardev and ably nursed by his followers gradually died down in the post-Vaishnava period to be replaced by a new flame kindled by the English. This new dramatic literature of Assam was a child of Shakespeare. There was no division into Acts and Scenes in the Ankia-nat of Sankardev. Such formal innovations as we find in modern Assamese drama are a direct borrowing from Shakespeare. The change is first detected in Gunabhiram Barua's play *Ram-Navami* (1857). As a play of transition it carries unmistakable signs of affiliation with the older drama. Here we find the inevitable *Sutradhara* and also the time-honoured convention of ending the play in a song of the *lachari* type. But the influence of Shakespeare is apparent in the division of the play into eight scenes. In the days following, the influence of Shakespeare on Assamese literature grew appreciably. Acts, Scenes, Stage-directions, soliloquies etc. in the Shakespearean tradition became vital components of the new drama. Quite naturally, in the first phase of the change-over, the growth was slow and halting. It was in the *Jonaki* era that the new drama sprang into vigorous life, greedily seeking newer avenues. The high priests of this new drama were Lakshminath Bezborua and Padmanath Gohain Barua. Both of them were influenced by not only the form and technique of Shakespeare plays but also the Shakespearean way of characterization. Gajpuria and Priyaram of Bezborua's play, *Chakradhwaj Sinha*, were modelled after Falstaff. A large number of characters in Assamese drama have come into being, following the line of the Shakespearean clown. The special type of Shakespearean women, playing decisive dramatic rôles in the guise of men, have inspired a number of such romantically intriguing characters in Assamese drama. We find such characters in Padmanath Gohain Barua's *Lachit Borphukan*, Sailadhar Rajkhawa's *Pratapsinha*, Prasantalal Chowdhury's *Nilambar* and also in a novel of Gohain Barua named *Bhanumati*. Shakespeare's influence is also evident in long soliloquies, rhetorical speeches and occasional sprinkling of lyrics. Gohain Barua and Bezborua remain the ablest imitators of Shakespeare in the formal and technical aspects of drama.

A more comprehensive assimilation of Shakespeare was

effected by a group of four young Assamese who had studied in Calcutta colleges. They were Ratnadhara Borua, Gunanjan Borua, Ghanashyam Borua and Ramakanta Borkakoti. Together they produced the first full-scale translation of Shakespeare in the shape of *Bhramranga* which is the Assamese counterpart of *The Comedy of Errors*. It was not, of course, a word for word translation and an interesting feature was the substitution of Shakespeare's blank verse by prose.

The poet-philosopher Durgeswar Sarma wrote two plays called *Chandravati* and *Padmavati*, modelling them on *As You Like It* and *Cymbeline*. *Chandravati* retains the set-up of the old drama, but attempts to bring it in line with the new mode. *Padmavati*, modelled on *Cymbeline*, is an unpublished play. Here the dramatist has tried to give the story an Indian colour by substituting England and Rome by Avanti and Ujjaini. A similar adaptation of *Cymbeline* is found in another Assamese play called *Tārā*. Indianisation has been effected through building up the plot against the background of the clash between the Mughals and the Rajputs.

Debananda Bharati's *Bhimdarpa* is an echo of *Macbeth* while Padmadhar Chaliha's *Amar Lila* is an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear* were recreated by Atul Chandra Hazarika in the shape of *Banij Konwar* and *Asru Tirtha*. None of these is a literal translation; they are rather free adaptations with a conscious effort to lend them a local look. As a result, many of the characters of the original have lost their Shakespearean quality in the process of being Indianised.

Karmavir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi also tried his hand at writing plays of the Shakespearean type. His *Tarun-Kanchan*, *Bishad Kahini* and *Danduri Daman* are variations of *Troilus and Cressida*, *King Lear* and *The Taming of the Shrew* respectively. Of these, only *Tarun-Kanchan* has come out in the *Journal, Abāhan*, the other two are still to be published. Another successful adaptation of Shakespeare is Sailadhar Rajkhowa's *Ranjit Sinha*, based on *Othello*, which has been a great success on the stage.

Conforming to the present-day need of one-act plays and radio-plays, attempts have been made to clip Shakespeare into radio versions. Phani Talukdar's Assamese adaptations

of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, and Narayan Bezborua's *Julius Caesar* have been very successfully broadcast through All India Radio, Gauhati.

The impact of Shakespeare on Assamese literature is not confined to drama alone. It has penetrated into the novel also. Many an echo of *Romeo and Juliet* is heard in Rajani Kanto Bordoloi's *Monomati*, while *Miri Jiaroi* has a plot clearly modelled on that of the same play. *Romeo and Juliet* peeps also through Lakshminath Bezborua's *Padum Kunwori*, while Padmanath Gohain Borua's *Bhanumati* shows the indirect influence of both *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It*.

In the penetration of Shakespeare into the sphere of the novel, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* has played a vital rôle. It has not only encouraged retelling in prose the more popular plots of Shakespeare but has also tempted the young Assamese novelist to incorporate plot-outlines and character-sketches of Shakespeare into their works. As regards poetry proper, Shakespeare has acted as an effective inspiration to some highly successful poetic flights. Hiteswar Borua's 'Desdemona' is a notable example of such poetry. The Sonnets also have a deep influence on Assamese poetry. Not only have they been instrumental in bringing into existence a fairly capable sonnet literature in Assam but have also enriched the poetic idiom of the Assamese language. ✓

On the whole, Shakespeare's influence on Assamese literature has been of a far-reaching nature. In form, tone and content, the modern drama of Assam has been directly shaped by Shakespeare. But one has to admit that the influence has not been as deep as it has been wide. Nevertheless, modern Assamese drama has been built on an impetus received from Shakespeare and though today Ibsen is more in vogue, Shakespeare still remains the base to start from.

# THE IMPACT OF SHAKESPEARE ON BENGALI LITERATURE

BY ARABINDA PODDAR

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## I

SHAKESPEARE'S plays had their performers, spectators and readers in Bengal long before the foundation of modern Bengali literature was laid in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The lovers of Shakespeare were the relatively enlightened members among the early English settlers who built Calcutta's first playhouse, in Lalbazar Street, as early as 1755, and although information is unfortunately lacking as to its histrionic activities, it may well be assumed, from the wealth of information littered in newspapers and journals of the last two decades of the century, that Shakespeare's plays or selected scenes thereof must have figured prominently in the list of its performances. The elite of the English community, since the publication of Bengal's first newspaper, *Hickey's Bengal Gazette*, in 1780, as editors, correspondents, reviewers or humorists, frequently stated, discussed or commented upon Shakespeare or simply referred to him by name. ✓

✓ This was how the members of the local gentry and *banians*, the grandfathers of latter-day Anglophiles, must have found it both profitable and gratifying to avail themselves of the courtesy of their English masters, and while they eyed the alien beauties in playhouses, they also filled their hearts with the grandeur of an exotic art. ✓

This chance acquaintance with the Bard picked up at playhouses developed into a kinship with subsequent generations that plunged in for English education. The senior boys of the Hindu College had to read as many as four Shakespeare plays—*Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and they were fortunate to have teachers of the eminence of Derozio and D.L. Richardson to interpret Shakespeare to them. Derozio, himself under the spell of Byron, could yet thrill his students when ✓ he read aloud from Shylock's speeches; while Richardson

could read Shakespeare in a way that swept even the conceited Macaulay off his feet. One authority maintains that his reading of Shakespeare stimulated Madhusudan Dutt's poetic perception. As the study of English literature grew in and around Calcutta, other authors too began to win the admiration of the young Bengalee, authors such as Milton, Byron, Scott and even Macaulay. The primacy of Shakespeare, however, remained undiminished. To the generation of young men who had grown up on English education, Shakespeare was the norm by which the quality of a literary piece was to be ascertained. The epoch-making literary journal, Bangadarsan, never missed an occasion to quote, discuss or allude to Shakespeare. In an article on the ideals of chastity of Indian womanhood, Desdemona was set up as an object of emulation, and in another on ethical standards, I found a citation from Dowden's Shakespeare. With the progress of English education in Bengal, Bacon, Scott, Macaulay and even Byron and Milton have faded out, but not Shakespeare. He reigns as a living presence.

## II

I have said that the staging of Shakespeare's plays began in the playhouse of Lalbazar Street (1755-59). Later playhouses built and run by the English residents of Calcutta continued to perform Shakespeare plays along with other plays. Of these, the New Playhouse (1776), Mrs. Bristow's Theatre (1789), The Chowringhee Theatre (1813-39), Sans Souci (1839-49) initiated the local intelligentsia into the complicated art of dramaturgy. That the Bengalees did not long lag behind in histrionic ability is evidenced by the singular fact that when Sans Souci presented Othello in 1848, the rôle of the Moor was assigned to a Bengalee, Baishnab Charan Addy, whose performance was greeted with well-merited applause by a very full house. Some Bengalee aristocrats of Calcutta started a theatre, the Hindu Theatre (1831), built to perfection on the prevailing English model with the intention of staging English plays. On the very inaugural night, the Theatre presented portions of Julius Caesar and a Sanskrit play. All the schools of the time, the Hindu College, Metropolitan Academy, David

Hare Academy, Oriental Seminary, etc used to organize, on festive occasions, the performance of Shakespeare plays in whole or in parts by the boys. The report goes that Madhusudan Dutt appeared in the rôle of Gloucester at a college function in a scene from Henry VI, Part I. David Hare Academy had on record two performances of The Merchant of Venice by its students in 1853; Clinger, the Senior Master of English of the Calcutta Madrasa, having trained the boys. The Oriental Seminary had a stage of its own, called the Oriental Theatre, and the alumni of the Seminary successfully undertook the following dramatic programme: Othello presented on 26th September and again on 5th October, 1853, The Merchant of Venice on 2nd March, 1854, and Henry IV on 15th February, 1855, Clinger again and one Mrs. Alice having undertaken the task of training and guiding the boys. Julius Caesar was enacted at the private playhouse of Peary Mohan Bose of Jorasanko, an influential member of the Anglophile middle class. The performance drew a distinguished audience, including Europeans, and the acclamation was universal, judged from the encomium of the leading Bengali journal of the time, Sambād Prabhākar, surpassing the expectation of everybody present. Hamlet was staged by a set of leading intellectuals including Keshab Chandra Sen, Pratap Chandra Mazumder and Narendra Nath Sen at the country residence of the first named at Garifa, near Calcutta.

1857 marks the close of a phase of the theatrical movement in Bengal; for, since then, no Bengali playhouse ever presented an English play. But theatrical companies from Europe continued to pay seasonal visits to Calcutta, and thus helped the Bengali stage to achieve new dimensions in dramaturgy. From 1872 to 1876 Lewis's theatrical troupe organised seasonal shows on the Calcutta Maidan, which greatly delighted theatre-goers. The plays presented by the troupe included a good many of Shakespeare's. Amritalal Bose, a noted comedian and wit, has recorded in his reminiscences that all the innovations introduced in the stagecraft of the Bengali theatre by Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great playwright and actor, owed their inspiration to the performances of this troupe, and that he himself learnt from them that affectation and mannerism were not 'acting'. One Herr Bandmann visited Calcutta with

his troupe in 1882, and gave shows of Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Richard III and Othello. Charles Venn arrived in 1909, to be followed, in 1911, by Matheson Lang and his party who staged *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Hamlet*. Before starting for London they left the stage to Allen Weekly of London Repertory fame whose programmes included *The Merry Wives*, *The Merchant of Venice* and some of the tragedies named above. Lang and Weekly returned the following year to repeat their performances. In 1918 came Harding and Howitt to re-interpret the plays to crowded houses. All of them, especially Matheson Lang, left behind a well-cherished memory, and made possible the rise of Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, a great name in Bengal's histrionic art.

Shakespeare was also presented in Bengali by the commercial playhouses of Calcutta. Of these *Othello* (1875) staged by the Bengal Theatre, *Macbeth* (1893, tr. by Girish Chandra Ghosh) and *Cleopatra* (1914, tr. by Pramatha Bhattacharyya) by the Minerva Theatre, *Hariraj* (*Hamlet*, 1897, tr. by Nagendra Choudhury) and *Othello* (1919, tr. by Debendra Nath Bose) achieved conspicuous success. The Minerva Theatre made quite a stir with Ghosh's *Macbeth* for it was presented on the very night of its inauguration with a cast and set that out-classed everything hitherto considered adequate for the Bengali stage. The best European talent then available was engaged by Ghosh to lay the set, draw the scenes and design the accoutrement. And the story goes on. The staging of Shakespeare in both English and Bengali by amateurs as well as professionals is as vigorous to-day as it was yesterday.

### III

Bengali translations of Shakespeare's works are too numerous to be enumerated in full; only the comparatively worthwhile ones will be named here. It is, of course, interesting to note that in this sphere too the icebreaker was an Englishman, C. Monckton, a student of Fort William College, Calcutta. He translated *The Tempest* into Bengali in 1809 as, it is stated, one of his class exercises. In 1853 came Harachandra Ghosh's version of *The Merchant of Venice* under the title *Bhanumati Chittavilas*. But Harachandra took so many liberties with

Shakespeare that his execution was more an adaptation than a translation. The work, however, satisfied the Rev. Long whose comment was, 'Shakespeares's idea, but given in a Bengali dress; well and ably done.' His next venture, Charumukha-Chittahara (*Romeo and Juliet*), came out in 1864, but in this case too what was gained by faithful adherence to the original was invariably lost by the translator's unrestrained preference in most scenes for prose at the cost of poetry. In 1879 was published Nalini Basanta, an adaptation of *The Tempest* by a distinguished poet, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay. But the poet's intention to remain faithful was totally jeopardized by his unconscious predilection for cockney Bengali as well as by the shifting of the place of action. The result was anything but happy. The same remark is applicable to his more publicized adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, although the poetry is both graceful and ebullient. Here is a Romeo in Bengali dress. Nabin Chandra Sen, another notable poet, published in 1894 an adaptation in Bengali of *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream* entitled Naidagh Nishitha Swapna; but his pseudo-realistic attempt was absolutely foiled by a language that was vulgar and unpoetical.

Thus ended the rather barren period of adaptation, after which we enter an epoch of literal and competent translation of Shakespeare's plays. The one to be most favourably received was the version of *Macbeth* of Girish Chandra Ghosh, already referred to above. It suffers at points from an exuberance, both emotional and verbal, but it has nonetheless admirably preserved the heightened spirit as well as the dramatic tension of the original. Tagore, the report goes, rendered the tragedy into Bengali when he was in his early teens. The manuscript has unfortunately not been preserved; but the few extant songs of the witches clearly establish the superiority of his juvenile version over that of the matured Girish Chandra. ✓  
✓ Jyotirindranath Tagore's translation of *Julius Caesar* was acclaimed by critics at the time of its publication in 1909. Read today, his literary style appears to be too tender and supine to match the ascending passion of, say, the murder scene. Of much popular interest were the complete plays in two volumes published by the Basumati Sahitya Mandir translated by various authors. These included some of the

versions discussed above; the others, though attempting to be literal and faithful, were commonplace and insipid in comparison. In recent years also we have had several new translations which testify to Bengal's continuing interest in Shakespeare. But more competent and more satisfying, to my mind, are the renderings of Shakespearean sonnets by some of the leading poets of today. I do not know of any poet of even moderate reputation who has not turned at least one Shakespeare sonnet into Bengali.

Of the countless prose adaptations and stories, the earliest, that of *Romeo and Juliet* by Gurudas Hazara, was published in 1848, and was followed in 1852 by a collection of stories compiled by Muktaram Vidyabagis and others. Vidyasagar's thoroughly Indianised version of *The Comedy of Errors* under the title Bhrāntivilas appeared in 1870, since when prose stories from Shakespeare, some intended for the consumption of young people, have continued to flow at regular intervals from distinguished pens. Of these the most prominent, in respect of the meticulous attention given as well as the excellence attained, were the translations in four volumes (1898-1910) by Haranchandra Rakshit. These ran through several editions before going out of print. Basumati Sahitya Mandir's collection of a bunch of stories known as Shakespeare's Granthabali was also well received by a very considerable section of Bengali readers.

The all-pervasive influence of Shakespeare in our literature is more to be felt than proved with a load of statistics. There are Bengali plays that have been patterned after his plays or been influenced by his dramatic ideas, structure, characterization, dialogue and blank verse. Jogendra Chandra Gupta, who wrote the first Bengali tragedy, named Shakespeare in a lengthy preface as his ideal and argued elaborately in favour of the Aristotelian principles of tragic art. And although Michael Madhusudan Dutt held the view that 'we Asiatics are of a more romantic turn of mind than our European neighbours', some of his characters, particularly in his drama *Krishnakumāri*, are found to have their prototypes in the plays of Shakespeare. Dinabandhu Mitra, his contemporary and author of *Nil Darpan*, came nearest to Shakespeare in the comic view of life, and had his play *Navin Tapaswini* based

entirely on The Merry Wives. Nimchand, a never-to-be-forgotten character of Dinabandhu's full-length farce, Sadhavar Ekadashi, thinks and speaks in the language of Romeo, Macbeth and Othello respectively when he fancies himself to be in identical situations. Girish Chandra Ghosh, mentioned earlier, who was theoretically opposed to the element of terror in Shakespearean tragedies, nevertheless chose for his social drama their themes, viz. revenge, madness, tyranny, intrigue, jealousy, lust, etc. He also introduced, in Shakespeare fashion, the supernatural element in some of his semi-historical plays in order to infuse a sense of mystery in the action and to make the dramatic effect impressive. Rabindranath Tagore did not write his mature plays in the Shakespearean manner but yet, as he himself has confessed, in his youthful days, Shakespeare's plays were taken as the ideal to be emulated. And Rabindranath did emulate him, especially in some of his early plays such as Bisarjan, Rājā O Rāni, Prakritir Pratishodh, so much so that portions of dialogue in the second-named play appear to be clear echoes of the words of Lady Macbeth. Rabindranath scrupulously followed the Shakespearean technique of using poetry in the expression of high passion, and prose for commonplace conversation. Here also poetry has been given to those belonging to the nobility and prose to the commoners who see themselves, as it were, in a Shakespearean mirror.

But the dramatist to be most influenced by and indebted to Shakespeare was Dwijendralal Roy, popularly known as D. L. Roy (1863-1913). It will be stupid to maintain that he ranks with Shakespeare as a dramatic artist. He does not have the genius for the rank. But, within limits, and in both theory and practice, he did try to seize the Shakespearean atmosphere and grandeur for the Bengali drama; for example, in Shāhjāhān and in some other less successful plays such as Noorjehān and Tārābāi. In Shāhjāhān, Aurangzeb, the fratricide, experiences Macbeth-like hallucinations, while the speeches of the old Shahjahan have the poignancy of Lear's utterances. It may also be noted *en passant* that the hero of his historical play Chandragupta at one place vividly echoes the high-strung words of Shylock ('Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands', etc.) Contemporary Bengali drama is different, both

in texture and temper. Shakespeare's presence is now felt rather in the deft employment of verbal music and imagery in our poetry. The study of Shakespeare has also led to some fruitful criticism, especially in the direction of comparative criticism, comparison between Indian and Western traditions of drama and ethical premises. The great Bankim Chandra Chatterjee discusses the excellences and achievements of Bhababhuti and Shakespeare, and Kalidasa and Shakespeare. Tagore's observations on Shakespeare in his expostulatory essays on literary theory are always important, while Balendranath Tagore has some good things to say on the treatment of nature in Shakespeare and Kalidasa; in the essays of Purna Chandra Bose we have a vehement denouncement of Shakespeare's tragic values. There are several other works of criticism and biography but I am not sure if we can find much that is original and systematic. ✓✓

To a resurgent Bengal, Shakespeare proved to be a powerful and vital source of inspiration. The love of Shakespeare, in the nineteenth century, was part of an intellectual's Anglophilism. This is perhaps why Keshab Chandra Sen declared in an address, while in England, that India had as much claim on Shakespeare and Newton as England. About a hundred years have elapsed since this claim was made by a son of Bengal, but it rings as true today as it did then. ✓

# IMPACT OF SHAKESPEARE ON GUJARATI LITERATURE

BY C. C. MEHTA

*M. S. University, Baroda*

IF the stage has anything to do with literature, or vice versa, and we believe that the relationship is mutual, Shakespeare's impact on the Gujarati stage and literature is not only outstanding, but one can say that it may be lasting. This remark is to be confined only to the literary drama and the stage plays, if at all there is a distinction between the two. The novel is independent and as far as poetry is concerned, there is the influence of other English poets, Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, even Burns, but not of Shakespeare. During the middle of the 19th century, a number of performing Companies visited Bombay, staging Shakespeare's plays when the Gujarati stage was just taking shape. A small community of Parsees, enterprising by nature, grew interested in the plays and started performing Shakespeare either in English or in translations in Gujarati, devising their own methods and style.

For rather more than a hundred years, Shakespeare's influence has waxed on the Gujarati stage. Indeed, were it not for the fact that the bulk of Gujarati plays staged were never published, several volumes full of particular examples of his influence would not have been hard to fill.

Between the years 1865 and 1915, a few scripts were printed out of the many plays staged; and out of the scripts that were preserved, a few were lost or unutilised. The chances of their preservation were not enhanced by the changes in location of Gujarati theatre-activity which centred successively in Surat, Bombay and Ahmedabad and later on in Saurashtra with the consequent losses which took place during transit.

A play called *Nathari Firangiz Thekane Avi* was staged in the Andrews Library in Surat in November 1852, telling of 'How a bad Firangiz woman was brought to her senses'. Evidently a Parsee version of the *The Taming of the Shrew*, this play, by one Dinshah Ardeshir Talyarkhan, is the earliest adaptation known of Shakespeare in Gujarati. A book entitled *Parsi*

*Natak Takhtani Tavarikh* by Dhanjibhai Patel, an important documentary record, refers to some twenty dramatic clubs being in existence in Bombay by the 1860's, the Shakespeare Natak Mandali finding a place among those with the rather more flamboyant names of the Iranian, the Baronet, the Albert, the Oriental, the Gentlemen, the Amateurs and the Elphinstone.

It is recorded that the Gentlemen Amateurs Club staged Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* in Bombay after a grand rehearsal in the drawing room of the bungalow of Nana Shanker Sheth. In 1858, one Mr. Dosabhai Randeria translated Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* which was staged that year and revived again in the 1870's. It is a known fact that Kaikashru Kabraji, a 'boy editor' of the Gujarati paper *Jam-e-Jamshed*, both produced Shakespeare and wrote under his influence. He was one of the pioneers along with Ranchhodbhai Udairam to start a theatre movement in Bombay.

The most remarkable of all pioneers in the theatre was Jehangir Khambatta. In his autobiography, *My Experiences on the Stage*, he tells us that in his keenness to see Shakespeare performed in London and to act with a Company there he stowed away on board a ship. Unfortunately, the ship he had stowed away in, sailed eastwards instead of westwards and finished up in Java. Undeterred, the irrepressible Khambatta found an Australian Company performing *Othello* in a well-built theatre there. Later, back in Bombay, he started his own Company and produced Shakespeare in both Gujarati and Urdu. It is indicative of Shakespeare's influence that when the famous Victoria Natak Mandali was formed, the Company decided that the choice for their first ever production should be *Much Ado About Nothing*. It was called *Khodyo Dunger any Kadhyo Under*, i.e. 'Dig a mountain to bring out a mouse'. Later on, some of these plays were rendered into Hindustani and with 35 plays the Company later toured all over India and throughout the Far East, Mandalay, Rangoon, Akyab, Bangkok and Java and then West to London.

There is no doubt that in those halcyon days of the Parsee Theatre, Shakespeare held a place second to none as far as scripts were concerned. In the field of acting and direction the histrionic style prevailed—a result of Victorian flourishes of

the English touring companies, who invariably produced Shakespeare's plays in Bombay.

Ranchhodbhai Udairam, a great Sanskrit scholar, compiled a book entitled *Translation of Stories from Shakespearean Plays*. Even towards the end of the century, when the Gujarati theatre began to develop a distinctive style of its own, the evidence of Shakespeare's influence was still great. The plays of Dahyabhai Dholshaji, a talented and original playwright, provide a good example of this. The plotting in his plays, many of which were performed by his own Company, the Deshi Natak Samaj, which he formed in 1890, follows Shakespearean patterns and several of his short scenes have strong Shakespearean overtones. Scenes from *King John*, the court scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, dialogues between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the discourses between King Lear and his daughters, are clearly the sources of scenes in *Ashrumati*, *Umadevadi* and *Vinaveli*, some of his very popular plays.

Attempts to get the texts of these plays printed are now being made by Mr. Jayanti Dalal who informs us that among the 25 plays Dholshaji wrote, there are others which contain portraits based on Desdemona, Othello and Iago. Obviously, *Othello* was a favourite play of the young playwright who died at the early age of 35 just when his style was asserting itself and the stage is probably a good deal poorer for that premature loss.

Apart from Dahyabhai and his Deshi Natak Mandali, there were stalwarts like Vagjhibhai Asharam under whose administration the Morabi Natak Company staged *Champraj Hando* based on *Cymbeline* in 1900. Like the Morabi, there were the Vankaner the Gujarati, the Subodh and many other professional Natak Mandalis who produced plays in which either the scenes were borrowed outright or characters transplanted cleverly and all proved stage-hits. *Chandrasahsa*, *Jagatsinh*, *Malavketu* and even *Saubagya Sundari* are a few examples.

*Kanta* by M. N. Dwivedi and *Raino Parvat* by Ramanbhai are considered classics as literary plays written after Sanskrit patterns and yet, as Prof. Anantrai Raval points out, both are considerably influenced by Shakespearean characterization; Rai and Jalaka, the hero and the heroine in *Raino Parvat*, have their bases in Hamlet and in Lady Macbeth respectively.

Quite apart from wholesale borrowing and adaptation of scenes and soliloquies from Shakespeare, any number of the common clichés which Shakespeare originated and which now enjoy universal usage can be seen in Gujarati plays. On stage, as in life, characters turn away muttering 'Frailty, thy name is woman', and 'all the world is a stage'. They are not easily picked out except after a careful reading of the manuscript since their usage is so common today that we hardly realise that Shakespeare was their originator.

Only the songs of Shakespeare have remained relatively undisturbed. They are not easily given to translation with their unfamiliar tunes and intricate rhymes. Similes and metaphors and the frequent use of the personification of non-human bodies however were often borrowed from Shakespeare. And the popularity of his soliloquies ensured that Gujarati playwrights would give plenty of scope to that form of expression.

Shakespeare's influence may be also traced to the literary drama, the plays that are printed but are too academic for popular production. Scholars like Diwan Bahadur K. H. Dhruva who successfully rendered almost all the best known classical Sanskrit plays into Gujarati would not leave out Shakespeare. Neither a playwright nor a producer but a gifted poet, he experimented with Shakespearean blank verse to find an equivalent Gujarati metrical form. Dhruva succeeded in translating a piece from *Julius Caesar* into his newly invented metre called 'Vanveli'. This has a freedom ordinarily not allowed by strict metrical composition and yet has a rhythm smooth enough to flow with a remarkable charm of its own. Fluidity is its main characteristic. When he was alive, the poet demonstrated it in an open session at one of the bi-annual conferences of Gujarati littérateurs. There was a lively discussion on its merits and defects and soon after, another scholar-poet Ramanarayan Pathak attempted to use this fluid 'Vanveli' verse in translating a part of *Romeo and Juliet*. He was eminently successful. He was followed by Hansa Mehta who had translated the entire Ramayan in Vedic *anustup* and who exploited the freedom of verse in full length translations of *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

Kabraji's translations have been mentioned above. But a

book *Shakespeare Natak*, published in 1865, containing two plays translated by Nanabhai Rustomji Ranina, reveals how widespread was Shakespeare's influence. *Chandru Raman* or *Premni Anti Ghumti* by Narbharam P. Dave is *All's Well that Ends Well*. He also published *Measure for Measure*, retaining its original title. *Othello* became *Venice no Habsi* and was obviously intended to be a companion play to *The Merchant* which he called *Venice no Vepari*.

There is a good solid prose translation by Apabhai M. Patel of *As You Like It* (*Kanan Kalol*); *Malavketu* is a translation of *Macbeth* by Thakur Narayan VasANJI with a number of songs interpolated and was staged by a professional Gujarati Company. Bamanji, brother of Kaikashru Kabraji has published a version of *Cymbeline* with the catchy title *Vafa per Jafa*.

Shakespeare's influence has undoubtedly been stimulating to the Gujarati theatre in the many forms it has taken. As long as it continued the theatre remained rich, active, convincing, entertaining and financially sound. Nowadays, the cheaper influence of Shaftesbury Avenue is more in vogue and the theatre has struck a lean phase.

# SHAKESPEARE AND HINDI LITERATURE

BY O. P. GOVIL

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✓ *Indian Empire, or no Indian Empire; we cannot do without Shakespeare; Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts for ever with us; we cannot give up our Shakespeare.* ✓

(Carlyle, *The Hero as Poet*)

THE impact of Shakespeare on Hindi literature has no doubt been part of the wider contact the latter has had with the letters and culture of the West for over a century, but coming, as it did, in the formative stage of modern Hindi language and literature, it has been particularly effective and deep. The study of Shakespeare's plays provided an incentive to Hindi drama—which has been the principal sphere of his influence—to come into its own through a series of imitative writings leading up to inspired original works, and helped the Hindi stage to pass from the crude farcical theatre of the folk tradition to a more respectable stage with proper dramatic effects. The poet in Shakespeare too, as revealed more in the plays than in the poems, stimulated the romantic and imaginative sensibilities of Hindi poets to find expression in new lyrical forms with a new language and idiom to match. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare's influence on Hindi writers—mostly dramatists and poets—has been so pervasive and profound that although at times its presence is felt in the form of an echo or in the turn of a phrase, it defies analysis.

Before Shakespeare came to be known in the Hindi world, he had already invaded Bengal through the newly introduced system of education with English as the medium and Shakespeare's plays as an inalienable feature of the syllabuses for the higher classes and through the recently established aristocratic theatres where Western plays, mostly of Shakespeare, were being regularly staged before select audiences. Not merely this, efforts were already under way to assimilate Shakespeare into Bengali drama. The works of Michael Madhusudan

1) <sup>2)</sup> Dutt, <sup>3)</sup> Girish Chandra Ghosh, <sup>4)</sup> Dinabandhu Mitra, D. L. Roy, all patently bearing Shakespeare's impress, had already become very popular. The success of these writers inspired Hindi writers in the periods of Bhartendu and Dwivedi (1850-1910) to take up the work of rendering Shakespeare's plays into Hindi. The first translation of a Shakespeare play into Hindi—Munshi Imdad Ali's Bhram Jalaka—a close rendering of The Comedy of Errors, appeared in 1879 and it was followed by a host of translations and adaptations extending to our own times. Shakespeare continued to dominate the field until 1912 when other European dramatists too emerged on the scene. So far more than 200 translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have been published. Of these, the adaptations outnumber the translations, their ratio being two to three. This tendency towards adaptations or independent renderings, so marked till Prasad, seems to have been motivated by the urge to popularize Shakespeare even among the non-English knowing, less sophisticated audiences and readers, by creating as far as possible the illusion of a story against a familiar Indian setting. Of all the plays of Shakespeare, comedies and tragedies have been most popular, some of them having gone through more than four renderings; comedies because they recall the familiar romantic comedies of the classical Sanskrit and vernacular folk traditions, and tragedies because of their gripping novelty and 'high seriousness'. The histories, except Richard II which has a good many passages evocative of the patriotic sentiment, and the Roman plays, have comparatively found less favour. Most of the renderings of the pre-Prasad period were made in strong reaction against the offensively arbitrary adaptations of Shakespeare, meant specifically for the Parsi stage, which twisted character and event and employed at will vulgar and obscene expressions and crude jingling rhymes for the sake of cheap popularity. Although aiming at decorum and decency, these versions too, mostly in prose, depended on, much like the Parsi theatre's, a dash of Persianised Urdu and, like them too, sought to change the spirit of the original more or less by Indianising the names of characters and places and even mythological and historical allusions. These translations and adaptations did much to popularize Shakespeare and

also helped Hindi prose to develop its dramatic idiom. Lala Sita Ram's series of renderings and Ganga Prasad's narrative versions of Shakespeare are the outstanding achievements of this period.

Since Prasad's time, i.e. during the last fifty years or so, Shakespeare-renderings have been few. The only mentionable attempts are the prose narratives of the plays by Usha Khanna (1950) and by Dharma Pal Shastri (1960), the series of renderings by Rangeya Raghav (1957) and the translations of Othello and Macbeth by Bachchan (1957 and 1959). All of these are without any doubt superior in language and style to those of the pre-Prasad era and are meant for a sophisticated audience. Rangeya Raghav's versions keep close to the original, retaining all the names and allusions and often even the characteristic turns of phrase with explanatory footnotes where necessary. But the continuous use of prose, and that too sprawling and often stilted, detracts from the poetic charm and dramatic effect of Shakespeare's sensitive style. Bachchan's approach is, comparatively speaking, more imaginative than any made so far and his versions have been successfully staged.

Here it may be relevant to examine how the Hindi writers have handled the problem of translating Shakespeare. The most notable of the many problems is linguistic and sonal. The iambic foot is the staple of English speech rhythm whereas Hindi words are sonally quantitative. Moreover, in Hindi, a slight alteration in the position of the verb affects the nature of a sentence: it can turn prose into verse. It is also customary in Hindi verse to omit the auxiliary verb, or else the line reads like bald prose. Thus while rendering Shakespeare, if the translator omits an auxiliary verb or alters its position in the line—from the end to the middle or elsewhere (except in expressions of surprise or emphasis)—his language becomes that of verse; if he uses the verb, as in ordinary prose, at the end, it may lapse into dull prose. There is also the problem of metre. Most Hindi translators have failed to devise a suitable equivalent for the iambic metre of Shakespeare's blank verse which has its own rhythmic sweep. Bachchan has however succeeded in reproducing the desired effect by the use of Rola—the traditional metre of classical

Sanskrit drama—with rhymes left off, having 24 *mātrās* or *mora*. In addition, the rendering of Shakespeare's word-plays can be a source of headache for the translator. ✓

Along with translations and adaptations, much of the creative dramatic work of the last hundred years of Hindi literature too bears the impress of Shakespeare. Bhartendu (1850-85), the father of modern Hindi literature, in his essay on drama, *Nātaka*, refers appreciatively to Western drama and its special achievements, particularly tragedy (though he narrows its meaning to a play ending with the death of the hero or heroine or some other type of catastrophe) and the subdivision of acts into scenes, a subdivision not known to Sanskrit drama; he advises the playwright to adjust his art to the tastes and interests of his audience; he lays stress on the individuality of characters; on the need for discarding what is 'out of nature' and out of date. Elsewhere, while surveying the growth and development of drama in the West, he pays tribute to Shakespeare's genius. In practice too, before translating *The Merchant of Venice* (1880), he had made a departure in *Vidya Sunder* (1868) from the classical Sanskrit tradition under the impact of Bengali writers like Bharat Chandra Ray, Yatindra Mohan Tagore and through them of Shakespeare. He discarded the conventional prefatory invocation to the deity (*Nāndi*), the prologue by the stage manager (*Sutradhār*), the choral poems before acts (*Vishkambhak*) and the moralizing epilogue (*Bharat-vākya*) and divided the play instead into acts and scenes in the manner of Shakespeare. In his later plays—*Satya Harishchandra* (1875) and *Neel Devi* (1880), he also endeavoured to spotlight the inner conflict in the protagonist's mind. He was the first to attempt tragedy with original plots in *Bharat Durbasha* (1876) and *Neel Devi* (1880). Bhartendu also recalls Shakespeare in the use of soliloquies in *Harishchandra*, *Bharat Durbasha*, and *Neel Devi*; in the manipulation of the supernatural, in the gradual working up of suspense in the reader's mind as well as in the contrivance of situations and characters close to real life. After Bhartendu, the practice of writing romantic plays on the pattern of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night*, already initiated by his *Vidya Sunder* was further strengthened by Shri Nivas Das's *Randhir aur Prem Mohini*, modelled on *Romeo and Juliet*. ✓

In the Bhartendu era, Shakespeare's romantic plays were popular because they suited the taste of both the élite who were steeped in the romantic spirit of classical Sanskrit plays such as Bhavabhuti's *Malati Madhav* and Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, and the unsophisticated who took delight in the love stories of 'Rasaks' and 'Nautankis' of the folk tradition. In the age of Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi that followed (1885-1910), dramatic activity received a setback from the critical temper of the new times which inclined to prose rather than verse, to consolidation rather than creation. The vogue of Shakespeare nevertheless continued through translations and adaptations made from the original or from current Bengali versions as well as through bio-critical essays that appeared from time to time in periodicals. ✓

When Prasad came on the scene, Hindi drama emerged from the stage of borrowing and dependence to that of original plays. The dramatists before Prasad, writing mostly in the traditional mode had approached Shakespeare for his novel themes and stories and some of his striking formal devices, it was left to Prasad to assimilate the spirit and manner of the master, without however breaking away from tradition altogether. Prasad chose his themes, like his predecessors, from historical sources, but unlike them and more like Shakespeare, treated them creatively, to invest them with significance in the context of his own times. He substituted the Shakespearean method of dividing a play into acts and scenes—though the number of acts varies from play to play—for the conventional structure of Sanskrit drama, and introduced certain items into his plays that were considered indecorous in Sanskrit dramaturgy, such as scenes of love-making, fighting, murder, suicide, burning pyre, etc. Hindi drama at his hands came into its own. His skilful handling of the interplay between the main plot and the sub-plots on the principles of contrast and parallelism, the use of dramatic irony, pathetic fallacy, the supernatural, the element of disguise, the play of chance, the deft employment of the comic and of dreams portending disaster, the functional use of songs—all these often recall Shakespeare. In all his plays, character dominates over action and all of his protagonists are sharply individualized, as Shakespeare's. His major characters—Ajatshatru, ✓

Skandgupta, Bhatarka, and Chanakya—are all split personalities, like Shakespeare's tragic heroes, constantly tossed by contrary impulses. Skandgupta's philosophical temper and occasional fits of pessimism recall Hamlet. Ajatshatru is ambitious like Macbeth; Bhatarka is malignant like Iago. Prasad's heroines—Vijaya, Devasena, Alaka, Koma, Surma and Anant Devi—are not tame, domesticated women, but like Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, they frequently plunge into the seething turmoil of life around them, displaying at the same time the inner storm of their hearts, the impact of some frustration in love or life. Prasad's comic figures too, are not simply the comic jesters of Sanskrit drama; they are witty fools, who are often set in contrast with foolish wits, as in Shakespeare.

When all is said to indicate Prasad's indebtedness to Shakespeare, the fact remains that nowhere does Prasad lose his individuality of approach, and originality of design. His heroes and heroines, despite the pull of conflicting forces in their minds, are more inclined to virtue than Shakespeare's. The ultimate triumph of good over evil too in his plays is more positive and more reassuring than in Shakespeare's tragedies, and more realistic and less idyllic than in Shakespeare's last plays, though in both the sense of evil is equally pervasive and profound. Most of Prasad's plays—this is their unique feature—end on a quiet note, the C Major, when life's sharps as well as flats are no more. They are neither tragedies nor comedies nor even tragicomedies, strictly speaking, in the Shakespearean sense. Moreover, although Prasad, like Shakespeare, wrote history plays to awaken patriotism, he endeavoured, more than Shakespeare, to recapture the spirit and flavour of the earlier periods of history he drew upon. The language and style, too,—poetic and dignified at their best, and avoiding the gallimaufry of the plays of his predecessors—were intended in their sustained refinement to revive the glory of ancient Hindu culture as well as to serve as a model for other writers. In Prasad's view, natural dramatic speech precluded the use of dialects or hybrid expressions, for they disrupted the homogeneous character of the language, although it implied adjusting the language to the mood and the situation, the culture and the status of the protagonist as

well as the time and place of the play's historical background. In the total effect of his dramatic style, Prasad's plays remind us more of the closet plays of the English romantic poets than of Shakespeare because, unlike Shakespeare, he did not write his plays for the contemporary stage, thinking, rather unjustifiably, that the stage should adjust itself to the play and not vice versa.

✓ Hindi dramatists after Prasad have shown a tendency to break away from the romanticism of Prasad's times, under the impact of the realistic problem-dramas of the West. Consequently, Shakespeare's influence on them has been indirect and less perceptible, making itself felt mostly in the wording of a dialogue, in the handling of a situation, or in the presentation of a character.

Before the advent of Shakespeare, Hindi drama unfortunately had no stage of its own. The only stage in vogue, mostly in rural areas, was the 'Rasak' or 'Nautanki'—a survival of the lower species of classical Sanskrit drama like 'Bhāna' and 'Prahasan'. This stage consisted of an improvised booth with no curtains and other devices to indicate a change in the scene of action. It was static and presented traditional themes with dialogues in doggerel, composed impromptu by the actors themselves. Interest in drama was eventually revived with the establishment of the Calcutta theatre in 1776 and other theatres elsewhere which staged plays in English. Struck mostly by the Shakespeare performances of these theatres, as well as by the immense popularity of Amanat's Indra-Sabha—an opera—on a similarly constructed stage of Nawab Wajid Ali Sha of Avadh in 1853, some rich Parsi businessmen established theatrical companies in Bombay and the other leading cities of India, in the last quarter of the 19th century. These companies had a well-set stage in imitation of the Western style of the Calcutta theatre, and had on their repertoires a number of romantic comedies adapted from or modelled upon Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies in Urdu by their own writers. Since 1913, the plays presented on the new but similarly constructed Hindi stage have had a greater variety of subject-matter and a higher dramatic appeal, but they have been seldom based on Shakespeare.

Shakespeare in Hindi has been seldom staged in the first

half of this century, mainly because educated people have preferred to witness Shakespeare performances in the original either on the screen or by various itinerary English troupes. Interest in Shakespeare was however revived in the early fifties when Prithviraj Kapoor thrilled large audiences with his Hindi plays, *Deevar*, and *Pathan*. Bachchan, a reputed Hindi poet, rendered *Macbeth* and *Othello* specifically for the Hindi stage in the later 'fifties. His *Macbeth*—the first Hindi play in blank verse to appear on the stage—was presented at the Fine Arts Theatre of Delhi in 1958 and widely acclaimed.

Outside Shakespeare's plays, the sonnets rather than the other poems have attracted some notice. Some efforts have been made to imitate them but more in form than theme. Two recent attempts deserve mention: one is a verse rendering of all of Shakespeare's sonnets by Rajendra Dwivedi, published in 1958; the other is a sequence of original sonnets modelled on Shakespeare by Yatendra Kumar, published in 1960.

Biographical and critical literature on Shakespeare in Hindi has been considerable but no outstanding and systematic assessment of his genius has been made so far. Besides the inadequate prefaces in the various Hindi renderings of his plays, briefly outlining either the popular view of his biography or the story of the play in question, a number of prose essays and a couple of books on Shakespeare have appeared from time to time. Bhartendu was perhaps the first Hindi writer to pay a tribute in his essay on Drama (*Dramatic Works*, ii, 425) to the genius of 'this jewel of God's creation' that 'outshone all the others on this earth', combining, as he did, within himself, 'poetic sensibility and creative genius of the highest order'. Until Prasad, a majority of the articles that appeared in the current periodicals—mostly *Saraswati*—offered short bio-critical studies of Shakespeare, reminiscent in some degree of Dr. Johnson, who was often quoted with approval. It has been customary to draw parallels between Shakespeare and well-known Sanskrit and Hindi poets—Kalidas, Tulsidas and Prasad—in their lives and circumstances and in their handling of plots and characters. These critics generally conclude by dwelling upon the fundamental difference of attitude between writers of India and the West. What Padum Lal Punna Lal Bakshi, a leading critic of the Dwivedi era, comparing Kalidas

and Shakespeare, observes, is a characteristic attitude of our critics:

Shakespeare's plays are nobly planned but his heroes are not men of outstanding virtue.... His main purpose is to display the disastrous consequences of weakness in character and disposition to sin.... To him, material power alone was tempting. He considered mighty knowledge, mighty revenge, mighty ambition to be the fit subjects for art.... There is no doubt that he has placed the greatness of character below power. Indian poets, on the other hand, valued Dharma most. Their highest goal was the glory of character. They could never accept the ranking of character below power. Hence they propagated the rule that the hero in drama should be invested with all virtues and no vices. Kalidas was an Indian poet. He endeavoured in his plays to elevate the character of the chief protagonist as best as he could.

(Vishwa Sahitya, 1924, pp. 89-90)

# THE IMPACT OF SHAKESPEARE ON KANNADA

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It is a strange irony of fate that Karnataka, renowned in history for deep-rooted traditions of drama, should have, at the present moment, no living stage of her own. The acuteness of the irony will better be understood if it is realized that the very positive existence of a past tradition is the *cause* of the present lack.

Kannada audiences and Kannada players have been famous since the days of Pampa. Indeed, this dramaturgical cultivation was the main mode of a cultural life for the widest commonalty. This native rural drama with its patient appreciative night-long audience, its wealth of dance, choric song and dialogue, and a very well-set mode of dramatic airs could have provided an audience that Shakespeare, Yeats and Eliot might envy. But this seasonal drama began to appear suddenly outmoded beside the up-coming 'commercial' (known as Company Drama), set after the pattern of the successful Parsi and Marathi theatres.

The first thirty years of this century, the golden age of Kannada professional drama, witnessed the rise of gifted actors like V. Varadacharya, T. Raghavacharya (a Shakespearean actor whose talent won attention from George Bernard Shaw) and showmen like Gubbi Veeranna. This was the one period when intellectuals like Kailasam, Pandit Taranath, Mudaveedu, Bharadwaj, A. N. Krishnarao, used to be in active touch with showmen like Gubbi, Garood and M. Peer. But alas, this golden age was not golden enough to offset a rift between the educated classes and the masses. Before it consolidated its position as a mode of entertainment cultured enough to draw educated acting and writing talent, and naïve enough not to alienate the primary audience, came the destroyer, the non-Kannada film. It diffused both tradition and profession. The result was a near-barren period off and on all through the forties and the fifties. This period witnessed the collapse of the play-house and the slow vanishing of

traditional modes from the countryside. It also saw sporadic theatrical effort among the educated. But even writers of such distinction (by any standard) as Kailasam, Adya Rangachar and Karanth have hardly succeeded in building up anything like a consistent theatrical tradition. The lack of a professional theatre is the major cause of this sorry state of affairs. The story of the 'modern' Kannada drama is one of really great individual pieces without any living stage. It lacks continuity either within itself or with the previous cultivation. And unfortunately, the one great Kannada playwright who is thoroughly conversant with the older drama, Adya Rangachar, is too great an individualist and 'rebel' to subject his art to the limits of a previous cultivation. His magnificent plays must for ever remain apart in their isolated grandeur; they must be for ever *his* plays, not the progressive products of a traditional theatre.

Where will Shakespeare come in into this chaos? The Elizabethan audience is still there, but in a dismembered condition. The forty odd translations from Shakespeare, most of which have never been staged, have hardly made any impression on the Kannada audience. When we talk of *Othello* or *Hambirrao* in Marathi, we inevitably remember Baburao Pendharkar. Do we remember any actor or playhouse of note in Kannada with the same persistent association? I do not think so. Isolated amateur performances on College Days and in Youth Festivals do not make a Shakespeare theatre.

The most frequently translated and produced of Shakespeare's plays in Kannada is *The Taming of the Shrew*! Over the last eighty years, around forty translations have come out. Such competent writers as Churmari in the eighties of the last century to Dr. K. V. Puttappa, have attempted translations, some of which, as translations, are admirable. A. Anandarao's *Ramavarma Leelavati Charitre* (*Romeo and Juliet*) is hallowed in its stage rendition by V. A. Varadacharya. Dr. L. K. Rao, the veteran actor who knew Varadacharya, tells me that an adaptation of *Othello* entitled *Nirupama* was another Varadacharya-favourite staged with his well-known vigour. It is not clear why the other plays translated by A. Anandarao, *Panchali Parinaya* (*The Merchant of Venice*) and *Hamlet* were

not taken up by Varadacharya. It is also interesting to note that T. Raghavacharya produced Shakespeare mostly in English but took up local plays for his Kannada productions. Translations from Shakespeare date back to the eighties of the 19th century and in all there are about forty translations. The remarkable feature of Shakespeare translations in Kannada is the employment of blank verse. That the distinguished poet K. V. Puttappa uses a powerful blank verse in his translation of *The Tempest* need surprise nobody. But other less-known translations, like G. Gundanna's *The Merchant of Venice* have used blank verse remarkably well which indicates that the metre has come to stay in Kannada. K. V. Puttappa has written an adaptation of *Hamlet* which admirably renders some monologues (but alas, Hamlet becomes passive and Ophelia dynamic in this adaptation!). Both his plays have been produced frequently with success on the amateur stage.

In recent years Masti Venkatesh Ayyangar, the great storyteller, has undertaken translating Shakespeare. He too employs blank verse. His translations are faithful. The blank verse he employs is limpid in its flow. But this advantage is offset by a lack of sense of stage delivery. He has already translated six plays, which, in their accuracy, set models even to teachers of Shakespeare. If syntax in Masti could discourage the players, so could D. V. Gundappa's archaisms. Gundappa in his able translation of *Macbeth* employs a very tight, very 'literary', almost archaic Kannada. He has translated the Jack Cade scenes from *King Henry VI*, and written a very acute political introduction to this little piece. G. Gundanna (*The Merchant of Venice*) has learnt a great deal from previous translators' use of the blank verse. He employs variation in consonant collocations between male and female rôles as consciously as K. V. Puttappa does. But he falls short of that flexibility which can make blank verse take in humour too but that is a problem yet to be solved by Kannada blank verse.

T. M. Shanmukhayya writes prose that is readable though a trifle 'literary'. His use of old Kannada metres poses an interesting problem. There were players who could sing stage songs set to these metres once. They sang in the Gamaka style, just the right one for the stage. Varadacharya was famous for his

rendition of 'Kanda's on the stage. Alas, such singers are too few these days! In this matter Shri Masti has shown the way by employing modern metres so as to make a lyrical interpretation possible.

It is here that the great prose translators of Shakespeare hold their own against the more sophisticated verse translators. G. K. Churmari (*Raghavendrarao, Othello*), Basavappa Shastri (*Shoorasenacharitre, Othello*—a play, Dr. L. K. Rao informs me, which was the only one touched by T. Raghavacharya), and Kerur Vasudevacharya, are all gifted with an equally beautiful mastery of Sanskrit and Kannada which makes Kannada prose come very near to poetry. It becomes a multi-lateral instrument, flexible enough to achieve at once the keenness of poetry and the bastinade of humour. These translations can be described as part of a single tradition. If Churmari wrote under the shadow of a slightly non-Kannada influence, Basavappa Shastri tended to be a trifle pedantic. The fullest flexibility was achieved by Kerur Vasudevacharya who kept a vigorous independence in translating the 'local' humour of Puck's doings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His impressionistic, if not accurate, renderings do greater justice to Shakespeare than the obsessive accuracy of some. He employs independent parallel idioms, similes and metaphors in translating Shakespeare's more down-to-earth passages. He translated *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*. In the latter, one is struck by that flexibility which can render both Lorenzo's speeches and Shylock's rant with equal ease. His plays are frequently staged by amateurs in Bagalkot, his native town. On the same lines, Shri G. H. Honnapurmamath translated *The Taming of the Shrew* under the title *Tratika*. As the name suggests, it is rather an adaptation of the Marathi version of the original, but it was popular on the stage and displays a vigorous prose style.

As regards adaptations, we have already referred to K.V. Puttappa's *Raktakshi*. It is a brave attempt to create a Hamletesque situation in the Bidnur state, but the change of locale changes the tenor of the drama to such an extent that barring a few freely rendered monologues (which his passive Hamlet does not deserve) there is little in common between the two. The price for creating a passive Hamlet is to remove the

sting of his hesitation, and to make him seem sentimental rather than tragic. Ophelia and Rudrambe have little in common; this could be an unfair comment but for the fact that Puttappa's Rudrambe is possessed by hysterics which are rather consciously poetical.

Parvatawani's *Bahudur Ganda* is one of many adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and has proved popular among collegians. It is adapted to a modern situation and makes a suitable youth-festival play.

✓ V. K. Gokak's *Jananayaka* is based on the Shakespearean conception of tragedy. I value this play because it has possibilities of continuing the Kannada stage tradition and at the same time of becoming acceptable to the educated. The main defect of the play is its thin action. But more disastrous is the fact that no professional players have taken it up. The same has been the fate of Samsa's *Vigada Vikramaraya*, which could come nearest to Shakespeare's Histories. Adya Rangacharya's *Parameshwara Pulikeshi* also has this quality. All these plays have suffered for the lack of a professional theatre.

There are several retellings of the stories of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare-criticism too is practised by scholarly writers in the Kannada language. Among the playwright-adaptors should also be mentioned the following: C. B. Dharwad (*Macbeth*, 1881), M. S. Puttanna (*Cymbeline*, 1881, *King Lear*, 1889), V. B. Bandiwad (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1881), R. Mudgal (*The Winter's Tale*), Shrikanthesh Gowda (*Macbeth*, 1895), S. S. Bellave (*The Taming of the Shrew* and *All's Well*), A. L. Malleshwar (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*), Chakrapuri (*Cymbeline*), K. Laxmanrao (*The Taming of the Shrew*), Narahari (*Romeo and Juliet*), V. G. Bidignawale (*The Merchant of Venice*), Hanumanta Gowda (*The Merchant of Venice*).

But the whole range of Shakespeare translations and adaptations in the Kannada language is under the same curse: the sad divergence between the educated and the uneducated, the futile rebellion of genius against the audience. Not until modern Kannada literary drama reaches back to the audience it has left behind, can it hope to come out of the limits of the printed page; it can at best be the possession of student actors for college-day performances.

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# SHAKESPEARE AND MALAYALAM LITERATURE

BY S. GUPTAN NAIR

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✓ 'SHAKESPEARE! Of course he is a world-poet, very great indeed, like our own Kalidasa. Don't ask me why he is great. I haven't read much of his writings.' ✓

This, I believe, would be the manner in which most young Indians would react to the magic of Shakespeare, and the average Malayali is no exception. Mind you, this average Malayali lives within five miles of a Junior College! He has had no time to read Shakespeare, and he is not likely to find time either. But he knows in a vague way that Shakespeare is great. And if, by chance, he has been to a college, he has only dreadful memories of his Shakespeare classes.

Shakespeare, for all his universality, is so much a part of the English language and English culture that unless you are fascinated by that language, unless you breathe the air of the intriguing Elizabethan world, you cannot enter into the spirit of the Shakespearean world. This necessitates a proper background and a proper training. The present intellectual climate in India is hardly conducive to a genuine appreciation of Shakespeare. ✓

Nevertheless, University-trained Indians have been grappling with Shakespeare for the past one hundred and odd years. They have studied him in class-rooms, with 'whispering humbleness', they have disguised themselves as Hamlets and Shylocks; they have declaimed long passages with 'sound and ✓ fury'. In this agreeable pastime, they have been encouraged and patronised by several enthusiastic English professors. ✓ They were able to produce a few Shakespearean actors everywhere in India, especially in the big cities. We too had our coaches and our actors, particularly in Trivandrum, Ernakulam and Palghat where European principals invariably presided over the fortunes of premier colleges. A few of those actors are happily still with us; C. I. Parameswaran Pillai, L. M. Pailee and T. C. Balakrishna Menon.

But these old-timers, even if they have the mind, have no chance to don the actors' apparel since Shakespeare is gone completely out of fashion. Even a quater-centenary could not induce very many to try a full-length Shakespeare production in this part of the country. So much about Shakespeare on the Kerala stage. What about Shakespeare as literature? Has the great Bard of Stratford got into the ligaments of our literary taste? I doubt. He has reached us only second or third hand through imitations or imitations of imitations. ✓ D. L. Roy, the great Bengali dramatist who was influenced by Shakespeare, was a considerable force in our drama during the nineteen-twenties and the thirties. Many of those colourful historicals produced by our professional theatres, such as *Anarkali* and *Ajnaataputhri* had the unmistakable imprint of D. L. Roy's craft. I cannot here assert with confidence that the late E. V. Krishna Pillai (1894-1935) who set the pace for historical dramas in Malayalam consciously assimilated Shakespeare or D. L. Roy, because E. V. was no serious student of literature. He relied on his own mother wit (which was riotous) and creative energy (which was impromptu). But in Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai's two impressive historical dramas (*Velu Tampi* and *Calvary*), we can listen to distant echoes of Shakespearean art and technique or perhaps more of Marlowe. But these are only the exceptions, not the rule. It is perhaps strange that our earlier playwrights, who went crazy about Molière and Sheridan were disinclined to squeeze the juice out of Shakespeare. Was it because they were averse to serious dramas? No. It was because Shakespeare was, to change the metaphor, a hard nut to crack. He was inaccessible in various ways. His total otherness, his consummate craft, his word-music—all these were beyond the range of our translators and imitators. Even with a scholar's knowledge of Shakespeare's language and a vigorous and colourful style of one's own, such passages as

seal with a righteous kiss

A dateless bargain to engrossing Death

do not lend themselves to similar effects in any Indian medium.

Our early translators circumvented this difficulty by narrat-

ing in their own way or leaning heavily on Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. The first Shakespeare drama thus rendered into Malayalam was *The Comedy of Errors* (*Aalmaa raattam*, c. 1886). Not much is known about the author (Oommen Philipose) except that he was associated very closely with the oldest English newspaper of Kerala—the *Western Star* of Cochin. Some historians of literature consider this slender narrative as the first Malayalam novel. This trend of free narration continued for a long time. There is perhaps no need to add that the stories were Indianised or, to be more precise, made exotic. No one, the writers thought, would quarrel over happenings in such unmapped lands as Vikramapuri or Alakaapuri. One author begins thus: 'About one hundred and fifty years ago there lived a reputed royal family by name Nedumkolathu Swaroopam. Iravi Raja Varman was the 9th King in the line' etc. He does not say where this Royal family existed.

Those were days when a text-book committee was being organised in Travancore. Books had to be written, not merely scrutinized and selected, and prose was having its teething troubles. The Prince Consort, Kerala Varma and Prince Visaakhom Thirunaal encouraged aspiring authors to produce standard books to suit the primary and secondary classes. Shakespeare's stories came in smoothly. K. Chidambara Vaadhyar K. Pappu Pillai, K. Paramu Pillai—those early university graduates—were only too eager to help Kerala Varma in this new venture. But these well-meaning people gave us, not Shakespeare, but specimens of prose which now have no more than antiquarian interest. Then came Kandathil Varghese Maappila, the famous founder of the *Malayala Manorama*. Strangely enough, he pitched upon that overblown comedy of the early Shakespeare—*The Taming of the Shrew*—as a worthwhile piece (1894). He translated the work with considerable fidelity though later he succumbed to an inner compulsion to reduce the proportion of poetry to a minimal dose. Critics and connoisseurs who were fed on *Sakuntalam* and *Uttara Rama Charitam* did not take to this work kindly. They were not yet ripe for Western models and not at all willing to digest dramas without an over-balance of slokas in them. And so Varghese Maappila's work did not get the attention it deserved.

Dewan Bahadur Govinda Pillai (1849-1925), a judge of the High Court of Travancore, then entered the field with greater determination than all those who went before him. A fluent versifier, though full of idiosyncrasies he was faithful beyond a doubt. His love of the mother tongue led him to the classics of all countries. To have chosen the *Bhagavad Gita*, Tirukkural, Marcus Aurelius and Shakespeare all in a sweep, one must have had immense catholicity and undaunted courage. Yes, Govinda Pillai was that sort. Of Shakespeare he translated the four major tragedies and *The Merchant of Venice*. The plays appeared in quick succession. (I am unable to trace the exact dates of publication.) They were ostensibly correct though mechanical. There was no mark of the creative translator in his works. He was not an inspired poet but only a methodical writer with a great capacity for versification. Shakespeare's poetry was dressed up in stiff 'upajaathi' metre which often looked quaint with the proper names jutting out uneasily from several points. There was nothing at all of Shakespeare's word-music in these translations. It was too strait-laced, too arithmetically precise to carry literary excellence. It was, in short, a tragedy of good intentions.

The illustrious translator of *Mahabharatam*, Kodungalloor Kunhikuttan Tampuran, though he did not know English, was fascinated by Shakespeare and with the help of a good friend made an attempt to render *Hamlet* and *Othello* (1896-97) into Malayalam. The former was published while the latter still lies hidden among his many unpublished works. He frankly admitted that the form of Shakespearean dramas went against the grain and that he was not happy about his own work.

Years later, Sardar K. M. Panikkar translated *King Lear* (1959) using Dravidian metres for the poetic portions. This also was not much of an improvement. Shakespeare's inspired lines were damaged beyond repair by almost all these translators. Perhaps we have now reached a stage when none would think of putting Shakespeare into metrical or blank verse. Malayalam Poetry with a dress suit on would fascinate none. Prose, rhythmical, inspired and muscular prose alone would catch something of the magic of Shakespeare's eloquence. Kainikkara Kumara Pillai, Sanjayam (M. R. Nair)

and K. Ramakrishna Pillai have in varying degrees succeeded in giving an almost equivalent effect 'while keeping within the bounds of dramatic effectiveness'. We do require more translations of this type and let us hope, we will get them in due course. But mere translations, alas, would not take us far. The present writer once attempted to draw up a list of translations. Though by no means complete, it was quite an impressive one, with thirty-six volumes of translations, adaptations, and stories retold. But the tragedy is that most of them are now forgotten—perhaps deservedly. Who is interested now in those high school primers in stilted prose or those laborious exercises in versification? They are neither literature nor grist to the theatre. Harold Downs somewhere speaks of 'plays we hear about, but too seldom see'. To us Shakespeare is just that. We hear and learn a good deal about his plays, but have no idea how they look like on the stage. Unless we take them on to the stage, there is no hope for sustaining a lively interest in his works. The college professors of the present age or the future cannot enhance his importance or enthrone his image by lecturing at length to their students. But if *Othellos* and *Hamlets* in their original costume and compound appear on the Indian stage and talk Malayalam or Bengali, then there is I believe a possibility of reviving Shakespeare in our country.

## SHAKESPEARE'S CONTRIBUTION TO MARATHI DRAMA

BY W. B. KULKARNI

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THERE is a period in the history of Marathi Drama known as the period of 'Bookish Plays'. This is roughly the period between 1860 and 1880. The University of Bombay was founded in 1857; its first graduates read not only Kalidas and Bhavabhuti but also Shakespeare. As a matter of fact, even prior to the founding of the University, English was taught in schools and semi-collegiate institutions and senior students were acquainted with Shakespeare's writings; but it was with the founding of the University that the study of Shakespeare came to be a regular part of the curriculum. Most of the professors who taught English in colleges in Bombay and Poona in those days were Englishmen and they not only taught Shakespeare to their students but also helped them in producing Shakespeare's plays at annual social gatherings. Shakespeare's plays were staged in Bombay and Poona by some of the English touring players and they were on many occasions invited to colleges to coach students in the production of Shakespeare's plays. There is evidence to show that students in Poona gave public performances of *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice* and other Shakespeare plays. It is therefore no wonder that we witness a definite change in outlook towards drama in the sixties and seventies of the last century; the plays of Vishnudas Bhave and his followers steadily lost their vogue in Maharashtra and lovers of the theatre came to develop a taste for drama roughly modelled on both Kalidas and Shakespeare.

The times also witnessed a spurt in the adaptations of Shakespeare. This enthusiasm for adapting Shakespeare lasted till the end of the century and even outlived it. More than 20 plays of Shakespeare were adapted into Marathi. These adaptations of Shakespeare and the first attempts at original play-writing inspired by Shakespeare are what are known as 'Bookish Plays'. The enthusiasm for Shakespeare was so

great that we come across two, three and sometimes four Marathi adaptations of a single Shakespeare play. For instance, it was Mahadeoshastri Kolhatkar who first translated *Othello* in 1867 and this was later on followed by Zunzarrao in 1890, the famous adaptation of *Othello* by Govind Ballal Deval. There are three well-known adaptations of *Hamlet* which come from those times: *Himmatbahadar* by A. R. Varde, *Veersen, the Prince of Vichitrapuri* by Govind Vasudeo Kanitkar and *Vikarvilasita*, the famous adaptation by the great Agarkar which is still performed on the Marathi stage. Two adaptations of *Macbeth* come from the same times: one called *Malavaketu Kinwa Mayaprabhava* by Thakur and the other *Manajirao* by the veteran Shivarampant Paranjpe. Four adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* are available from these times: *Shashikala Ani Ratnapala* by Narayan Bapuji Kanitkar, *Shalini* by Karmarkar, *Prataprao Ani Manjula* by Musale, and *Mohantara* by Chaphane. Some of the important adaptations of Shakespeare which come from these times are *Vijayasing*, an adaptation of *Julius Caesar* (1872) by Kashinath Govind Natu, *Atipeedcharit* (1880), an adaptation of *King Lear* by Shankar Moro Ranade, *Tratika*, and *Veermani vā Shrangar Sundari*, adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Antony and Cleopatra* respectively by Professor V. B. Kelkar. There is another adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra* known as *Shringar Manjari* available from these times. It is interesting to note that even some of the less known of Shakespeare's plays like *King John*, *Pericles*, *Timon of Athens* came to be adapted into Marathi. The better known plays were presented through adaptations to the Marathi audience during these days; of these the following are certainly noteworthy:—the adaptation of *The Tempest* by Nilkanth Janardhan Kirtane done in 1875, *Bhrantikrit Chamatkar*, an adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* by Bajaba Ramchandra Pradhan done in 1870 and Vishnu Moreshwar Mahajani's adaptations of *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *All's Well that Ends Well* known as *Tara*, *Mohabilas* and *Vallabh-anunaya* respectively.

These adaptations of Shakespeare were not only read but also produced on the Marathi stage. Touring companies like Ichalkaranjkar Natak Mandali, Sanglikar Natak Mandali, Poonekar Natak Mandali, staged many of them in

the towns of Maharashtra. These adaptations were seriously reviewed by learned journals like *Vividhadynanavistara* and the popular press. We find the great novelist H. N. Apte writing a series of articles on the works of Shakespeare. Thus interest in Shakespeare grew steadily right from 1860. In 1861 Vinayak Janardhan Kirtane wrote his *Thorle Madhavrao Peshave* which is considered to be the first original play written in Marathi in the 19th century. This was followed in 1865 by the same author's *Jaipala*. On careful examination of these plays we realise how much the author owed to Shakespeare in respect of characterization and plot. These first plays which came to be written under the direct influence of Shakespeare were not only produced on the stage but were also welcomed by the critical talent of the times. We find Krishnashastri and Vishnushastri Chiplonkar and Kashinath Balkrishna Marathe, the writer of the famous critical essay on 'Novel ani Natak', recommending Kirtane for his dramatic achievement. It can be thus seen how the study of Shakespeare in the university was influencing the course of Marathi Drama. But the credit of making Shakespeare popular in Maharashtra goes mostly to the dramatic troupe which was known as Shahunagarvasi Natak Mandali. This dramatic troupe had the support of Prof. V. B. Kelkar, the author of *Tratika*, an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* and that of Shankar Moro Ranade who had adapted *King Lear* into Marathi. They were a great help to the Company in training the young actors and in directing the production of Shakespeare. This dramatic troupe was captained by the great Marathi Shakespearian actor, Ganpatrao Joshi who was ably supported by the veteran Balvantrao Jog. These two, especially Ganpatrao Joshi, made Shakespeare popular in Maharashtra. Ganpatrao Joshi's characterization of Hamlet is a glorious legend of the Marathi stage. He was acknowledged to be a great Shakespearian actor not only by the Marathi Press but also by the enlightened British Press of the times.

It was in 1880 that Annasaheb Kirloskar ushered in the era of Marathi musical plays. This Marathi Sangeet Natak was a creation of the Marathi stage and apparently owed little to Shakespeare; but if we examine it closely we find that it too owed not a little to Shakespeare. Though musical,

it was a play and Shakespeare came to have a hand in the shaping of it. Besides Kirloskar and Deval, it was Khadilkar, Kolhatkar and Gadkari who really brought glory to the Marathi Sangeet Natak; and if we examine the dramatic writings of these three veterans, we realise how much they owe to Shakespeare. Of these three, Khadilkar was by far the best dramatist. His musical and non-musical plays were equally successful on the Marathi stage, but it was Shakespeare who moulded the dramatic genius of Khadilkar. As a student, Khadilkar had studied *Hamlet* and *Othello* and the impression they had created on his mind was so deep that he tried to bring Hamlet and Iago together in the historical play *Sawai Madhavaraocha Mrutya* (1893). The influence of Shakespeare on Khadilkar increased as time went on. We can witness this in his non-musical plays like *Kanchangadchi Mohana*, *Bhaubandaki* and *Savatimatsar* and his musicals like *Vidyaharan* and *Menaka*. Like Shakespeare, Khadilkar also went for his plots mainly to history and mythology. Khadilkar's Raghobadada reminds us of Macbeth whereas his Anandibai is Lady Macbeth. Khadilkar, like Shakespeare, has an attraction for great characters with a tragic flaw. Khadilkar borrowed even the structure of plays from Shakespeare. His plays have a sub-plot besides the main plot: this two-fold structure of the plot which later on became a regular feature of the Marathi drama was an inheritance not from the Sanskrit drama (which has always a single-plot structure) but from Shakespeare's plays.

Kolhatkar was a contemporary of Khadilkar. His was a different literary make-up. It was not easy even for Khadilkar, with his keen sense of the dramatic, to master Shakespeare; it is therefore no wonder that Kolhatkar who had more wit than imagination, could not get at the essence of Shakespeare although he made the plots of his plays as complicated as those of Shakespeare. Kolhatkar, like Khadilkar, also borrowed the two-fold plot-structure from Shakespeare and, following the Shakespearian manner, his plays abound in characters that change names and dresses and have some mystery about their birth. In complimenting Kirtane on his achievement in *Thorle Madhavrao Peshve*, the great Vishnushastri Chiplonkar had congratulated him on introducing to Marathi audiences

the Shakespearian type of tragedy. It was the study of Shakespeare that really inspired Marathi dramatists to write tragedy. This can be seen if we examine the nature and structure of well-known Marathi tragedies such as *Kanchangadchi Mohana*, *Sawai Madhavraocha Mrutyu*, *Vidyaharan*, *Totayche Band*, *Eakach Pyala*, *Rajsannyas*. They are all modelled on Shakespeare: the fall of a towering personality with a tragic flaw is practically the theme of each of these plays. Ram Ganesh Gadkari, the author of the famous *Eakach Pyala* and *Rajsannyas* was considerably influenced by Shakespeare. The plot-structures of his tragedies, the portrayal of his villains and the soliloquies he wrote show how much he owed to Shakespeare. Marathi tragedy still continues to be modelled on Shakespeare. This can be seen as much from Aundhakar's historical *Bebandashahi* as from the comparatively recent *Dusra Peshva* and *Kauntaya* written by Shirwadkar.

The Marathi theatre has during recent times witnessed innumerable adaptations of English, American and European plays but its love for Shakespeare has not lessened. There have been more performances of the adaptations of *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* in recent years than all through the twenties and thirties. Very recently *Macbeth* came to be adapted again into Marathi, *Rajmukut* by the famous Shirwadkar, and its performance on a stage similar to that of Shakespeare was enthusiastically received by Bombay theatre-goers in 1954. This was followed in 1959 by the staging of Nana Joag's *Hamlet* which is an adaptation of the original into three acts. All these years Marathi theatre-audiences have witnessed *Zunzarrao*, Deval's adaptation of *Othello* done in 1890; very recently, in 1962, Shirwadkar wrote a fresh adaptation of *Othello* and it is now being performed on the Marathi stage. What we need now is an authorized translation—not adaptation—of all Shakespeare's plays. Taking into consideration the vast resources now at our command, I believe this should not be an impossibility.

# 'THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE ON ORIYA LITERATURE'

BY B. DAS

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✓ THE influence of Shakespeare has never been remarkable at any time on the growth of modern Oriya Literature. This growth started from the third quarter of the 19th century when an English-educated generation grew up in Orissa. The three major writers of the time—Fakirmohan Senapati, the novelist, Radhanath Roy, the poet, and Ramsankar Roy, the dramatist—were born between 1845 and 1860. All three had studied English literature. Radhanath Roy, especially, was the leader of modern education in Orissa and the moulder of literary taste in the Orissa of the later 19th century. Though he did not actively formulate this taste, his influence was pervasive and his likes and dislikes decided the preferences of others. This preference was mostly for the Romantic literature ✓ of 19th-century England, and for Shakespeare to some extent. ||

Radhanath Roy's own poetry shows interesting examples of Shakespeare's influence. The most well-known case is his transplantation in Oriya soil of 'The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Roy's poem 'Kedar Gauri', based on this story and with a conclusion that strongly reminds us of the conclusion of *Romeo and Juliet*, was based on a widely known legend that grew up around a small temple at Bhubaneswar. Elsewhere in Roy's poetry Shakespeare's influence is more indirect. In 'Parvati,' a long narrative poem, Roy seems to have adopted the supernatural suggestion of *Hamlet*. Parvati, an Oriya queen, kills her husband, the king, who was alleged to have violated his daughter's virginity and was the cause of her subsequent death. The allegation was made by the daughter's ghost who appeared to her mother in the darkness of the palace and demanded to be avenged. There may be other possible sources also. In the long history of ✓ modern Oriya poetry that starts from Roy in the last century, the influence of Shakespeare is, therefore, almost negligible.

Shakespeare as a poet or Shakespeare as a source of enrichment for Oriya poetry has hardly been exploited. The solitary exception is possibly Mr. Guruprasad Mohanty, a powerful contemporary poet. Mr. Mohanty's sonnets can never be considered as translations from, or adaptations of, Shakespeare's sonnets, but in their organisation and metaphysical complexity they suggest a deep affinity with the latter. Earlier than Mr. Mohanty, Madhusudan Rao, a contemporary of Radhanath Roy, tried to follow Shakespeare in his sonnets. But the similarity is only confined to certain particularities. There are, however, other younger poets today who having studied Shakespeare have come to regard him as the repository of great poetry. But it is difficult to trace any direct influence except in technical matters.

The lack of serious interest in Shakespeare is also seen in the few translations one comes across in Oriya. There are only three so far, and only one is a direct translation. It is Hamlet, translated by A. K. Bandyopadhyaya. The other two are Siba Das (King Lear) and Atāla (Othello) done by B. K. Kar and M. Mansingha respectively; in both, the translators have given Oriya names, and local Oriya setting. In all three, the quality of translation is not high. They fail to communicate the 'feel' of the original, and it is also difficult to accept them as genuine Oriya books. The translation of Othello was financed and published by the Bharatiya Sahitya Akademi.

The students of Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, staged Julius Caesar on 27th April, 1895. It was perhaps the first ever production of Shakespeare's play in Orissa. It was followed by The Merchant of Venice. The productions were in English and could be understood by a select audience. This happened after fourteen years of the production of the first Oriya play Kanchi Cavery, and after 92 years of British administration in Orissa.

Kanchi Cavery was first staged on 7th February, 1881, at Cuttack. In the second performance, the writer, Ramsankar Roy, himself acted in the play. It was written when the writer had just passed his F.A. from Ravenshaw College and in the background of the play one can discern four broad influences. The most important, of course, was the influence of Sanskrit dramatic literature, but there were also distinct elements of

contemporary Bengali plays, indigenous folk-plays of Orissa, and the influence of English drama, especially of Shakespeare. Roy took the story of *Kanchi Cavery* from two earlier poems, one Oriya, and the other Bengali, of the same name. It relates to an ancient king of Orissa who, in order to achieve glory and avenge an insult, led his army against a powerful neighbouring kingdom known as Kanchi, won victory, and finally married the daughter of the enemy-king. The similarity in the outline of the story with *Henry V* is interesting. The event is considered as a glorious event in Orissa history, comparable to the victory of Henry V over France, and Purusottam Deb, the king, like Henry V, is a popular hero. There are also details in the play that suggest a possible indebtedness to Shakespeare. Thus, the play is divided into five acts with the main emphasis coming in Act III. The dramatis personae-pattern is like the one found in *Henry V* where the main characters with their associates are evenly balanced. The main lines of the development of the play are discussed and suggested in the first scene of the first Act. The director opens the play; he talks to the audience and introduces the story, and in this connexion one remembers that *Henry V* is one of the few plays of Shakespeare to open with a Chorus. There is also the use of soliloquy though its use in the play is not particularly notable. Finally, the frequent use in the play of blank verse and rhymed verse with prose is a well-known Shakespearean device.

Roy's second play *Banabala*, written and staged in 1882, shows Shakespeare's influence more prominently. The story is imaginary and complicated; but the influence of *The Tempest* is obvious in many scenes and characters. Chitrasen, the main character, is modelled on Prospero, and his aide Satabuddhi, on Ariel. Similarly Banabala, who enjoys the protection of Chitrasen, resembles Miranda, and the hero Birachandra has similarities with Ferdinand. The two scenes that come closest are Act II, Scene III in *Banabala* and Act I, Scene II in *The Tempest*. In both, the hero talks to his magician aide, and the young pair fall in love with each other.

Ramsankar Roy wrote ten plays, and Shakespeare was always a casual influence on him. This was also the case with two other later playwrights, Godavaris Misra, and Kampala Misra. The former's *Purusottam Deb* (1910) deals with the same

story as Roy's *Kanchi Cavery*. In the accounts of the war and in the passage (Act IV, Scene VI) where the characters speak of an unearthly darkness during the day, the play possibly borrows from *Julius Caesar*. But in Act IV, Scene III, where one of the characters of the play writes his name on the leaves of the trees, the suggestion is obviously from *As You Like It*. In Kampala Misra's *Basanta Latika* the king unjustly wants to kill his faithful wife and baby-son. But they, with the help of a servant, manage to escape to a distant land, where the child grows up to be a fine, brave young man. Gradually, the king realizes the full implication of his unjust act, and thinking that his wife and son are dead, he plunges into great sorrow and repentance, and almost renounces his kingdom. Finally, his repentance ends when the king, to his great happiness, gets back his wife and son. But, as already noted, Shakespeare has never been a vital force for the Oriya dramatist. It is only by close scrutiny, and distant association that one can possibly gather echoes and resemblances. But the Oriya dramatists who have grown up in the last three decades have completely ignored Shakespeare.

Academic discussion on Shakespeare is rare in Oriya. The one which is just a popular estimate, and popularly known, is by Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh, written more than fifteen years ago. Stray, aphoristic passages from Shakespeare have found their way into Oriya literature, and a well-known example is in *Sarmistha*, a long narrative poem by Nanda Kishore Bal. It is a discourse on mercy, translated from Portia's court-speech in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Today thousands of Oriya young men and women read Shakespeare as a compulsory subject in their colleges. But for them Shakespeare is just an examination subject, and the great creative artist, the source of rich and vital life, is either missed or lost in the weeds of annotated books. An intelligent acceptance of Shakespeare is yet to start in Oriya literature. It is occasionally glimpsed in the writings of the young poets and critics who understand the greatness of Shakespeare's poetry, his magical use of language and above all, his perennial vision of life that prompted Arnold to say, 'Others abide our question. Thou art free.'

# IMPACT OF SHAKESPEARE ON TAMIL DRAMAS

BY M. VARADARAJAN

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TAMILNAD had no dearth of theatres and actors in the past, but Tamil literature, very rich in other aspects, had been at a low ebb as far as literary works of drama are concerned. The influence of Western literature had not made any appreciable improvement in this field. Translations and adaptations of other literary forms such as novels and short stories are found to be numerous, but dramas are very few.

English education acquainted the Tamil scholars of the last century with Shakespeare and other Western playwrights and stimulated new thinking in the art of creating dramas. The first drama thus written was *Prataba Chandra Vilasam* by Ramaswami Raja in 1877. Dramas written before this date were not divided into acts and scenes. This *Prataba Chandra Vilasam* was the first drama to have acts. This had twelve acts. Though acts were known to Sanskrit playwrights, the division of each act into some scenes was quite unknown. The Tamil scholars of the last century became acquainted with Shakespeare's plays and introduced this device of many scenes in each act.

The few works of drama that Tamilnad had in the last three centuries, viz. 'kuravanci', 'pallu', 'nondintakam', etc., were conventional and stereotyped with typical heroes and heroines. They were unrealistic in their themes, though made vivid and interesting by the artistic talents of some of the playwrights. In images and diction also they were artificial. Only the names of places and characters were changed and the themes and forms remained the same without any variety or novelty. No play was written exclusively on social themes, though there was an attempt in the type called 'pallu'. The playwrights use to write dramas mainly on mythological and religious themes. Some of them wrote on themes from the stories found in the epics. There were no social dramas, as such, though social problems were dealt with here and

there in the dramas on other themes. It was only in 1871 that Kasi Visvanath Mudaliar began to write dramas on purely social themes, viz. *Dambachari Natakam*, *Tahsildar Natakam* and *Brahma Samaja Natakam*. All such social plays owe their development to the impact of Western dramas, especially Shakespeare's plays.

The direct influence of Shakespeare on Tamil playwriting is obvious in many of the adaptations as well as translations of his plays. The first translation of a Shakespearean play into Tamil is that of *The Merchant of Venice* by Venugopalachariar. Sankara Dass Swamigal who was the spearhead of the renaissance of Tamil drama and who wrote about forty plays mostly on mythological and epic themes, has left us adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cymbeline*. The versatile genius among Tamil playwrights, P. Sambanda Mudaliar, was not satisfied with the first translation of *The Merchant of Venice* and so improved it in his *Vanipura Vanigan*. According to him it is more difficult to translate a drama from another language than to write an original play in one's own language. Yet he was so much interested in introducing the master playwright Shakespeare to the Tamils that, besides writing about sixty original plays, he translated and adapted some of Shakespeare's plays, e.g. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *As You Like It*.

Sambanda Mudaliar has stated that it took him six years to write the adaptation of *Hamlet*. He took pains to study all the critical works on that great work. He himself acted in the rôle of the hero, Hamlet, and tried his best to be true to Shakespeare's imagination.

Besides *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice* seems to have attracted the imagination of Tamil playwrights more than other plays. It had many translators. Even after Venugopalachariar and Sambanda Mudaliar's translation, it was translated by S. V. Kannapiran Pillai. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Othello* were translated by S. Narayanaswami Iyer and A. Madaviah respectively. P. Doraiswami Iyengar wrote an adaptation of *Othello*. *Hamlet* had a translation from the pen of K. Venkatarama Iyer. *King Lear* and *The Comedy of Errors* are the other dramas that were enjoyed by the Tamils in translation.

The interest of the English-educated scholars in translating

Shakespeare's plays is still increasing. But there seems to be not so much interest now in writing adaptations of his plays. Even now college professors continue to produce translations of his works e.g., A. S. Narayanaswami's *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*, Dr. A. C. Chettiar's *Othello*, K. R. S. Iyengar's *Macbeth*, S. Maharajan's *Hamlet*, A. K. Adittar's *Julius Caesar*, Mayileru's *Othello*.

About 20 stories of Shakespeare's dramas have been rendered into Tamil prose and published by Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Madras. There are also others who have published the stories of Shakespeare in Tamil.

There are amateur dramatic associations which occasionally stage Shakespeare's dramas translated or adapted in Tamil. For example, the Madras Sangeetha Nataka Akademi staged the translation of the *The Taming of the Shrew* and it was a great success. It would have been better if such renderings are also printed and published by these institutions or other publishers.

Many changes have been introduced by the Tamil scholars in modern plays and most of them are due to the influence of Shakespeare. For example:

Supernatural elements used to be introduced in the ancient Tamil plays, but they were used to determine human actions directly. But Shakespeare's dramas taught the Tamil playwright the subtler and more important method of employing those elements, to intensify human action without directly changing the course of events. For example, a dream is introduced in the play of Sundaram Pillai and its purpose is to intensify the love of the hero and the heroine. It does not alter the condition of natural working in the course of events but only stimulates and intensifies it as the oracles and other supernatural elements do in Shakespeare's plays.

Another noticeable change in Tamil drama caused by the influence of Shakespeare's plays is the elimination of the invocation song in the beginning of the drama called 'tipati' or 'totayam'. Almost all the dramas of the nineteenth century contain this invocation as an integral part of the drama. Now the modern playwrights have ceased to introduce it. Another feature in the old Tamil dramas is the introduction of a song called 'taru' wishing prosperity and happiness to humanity.

This may also be said to have disappeared on account of the influence of Shakespeare's dramas read and appreciated by the scholars in Tamilnad.

Old Tamil dramas invariably had a character called 'Kattiyankaran' similar to 'Sutradhara' in Sanskrit plays. Kattiyankaran appeared in Tamil dramas frequently from the beginning to the end of the play, whereas 'Sutradhara' appeared only at the beginning of the Sanskrit plays. The rôle of Kattiyankaran in Tamil dramas is to announce to the audience the characters as they appear on the stage and also to offer his remarks on them. Even in the gypsy play called *Kuravanci*, he was felt to be an essential character for this purpose. It is this character that indicated, not by curtains but by his words, the change of acts and scenes. But, after the introduction of many translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Tamil, this character was felt to be unnecessary in the new Tamil dramas written on these new models and has disappeared from the stage.

The art of holding back from the audience essential particulars relating to characters, motives or incidents till a particular stage in the drama and producing a telling effect when they are disclosed suddenly, is an art not so familiar to Tamil dramas of the past. It is through Shakespeare's dramas, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Cymbeline* and *Twelfth Night*, that Tamil playwrights came to realize the value of this device and began to introduce it in their writings. For example, Sundaram Pillai has introduced sex-ambiguity in *Civakami Caritam* in his *Manonmaniyam*. We think that the person who follows the hermit in this scene is really a youth but we are surprised to find that it is only a girl and that the hermit is really her lover, not a hermit as he appears to be. This element of concealment to please us with a sense of surprise is due to the influence of Shakespeare. It is found in many other Tamil plays like S. D. Sundaram's *Kanniyin Kathali*.

Also in the characterization of villains, Shakespeare seems to have influenced modern Tamil playwrights to a great extent. The villains in *Manohara* of Sambanda Mudaliar and *Manonmaniyam* of Sundaram Pillai can be cited as examples. Like Shakespeare, modern Tamil playwrights try to portray

their villains at their best and endow them with high intelligence and remarkable ability in scheming and carrying out their plans.

Thus it is obvious that Shakespeare, more than any other Western playwright, has influenced Tamil writers who have made use of many of his techniques and devices in Tamil drama.

# SHAKESPEARE IN TELUGU

By D. V. K. RAGHAVACHARYULU

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SHAKESPEARE'S entry into the Andhra literary scene—a somewhat delayed reaction—was the direct result of the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges, in which the curriculum was heavily oriented towards English language and literature studies. No literate Andhra since the 1860's left school or college without at least a nodding acquaintance of Shakespeare's plays, which have always been prescribed study. Savants and teachers, like Sir Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu, Sir C. R. Reddy and Rental Venkata Subba Rau, involved an entire impressionable generation at the beginning of the present century in their own swirling enthusiasm for Shakespeare's works. Earlier, in the late eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, British missionaries and administrators, like C. P. Brown, William Cary, R. Caldwell, A. D. Campbell, and Colin Mackenzie,—who had rendered unforgettable service to the cause of linguistic, literary and historical research in Andhra—had indirectly prepared the ground for the cross-fertilization of the English and vernacular traditions. And finally, the Telugu writers of the later half of the nineteenth century—Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Vavilala Vasudeva Sastri, Kolachalam Srinivasa Rao, Gurujada Srirama Murty, Gurujada Appa Rau, Dharmavaram Ramakrishnamacharyulu and Vedam Venkataraya Sastri, followed by Panuganti Lakshminarasimha Rao and others into the twentieth century,—gave a varied projection to the early mingling of traditions in their translations, adaptations and technical and imaginative assimilations of Shakespearean drama. Quite frequently, the Shakespearean influence was transmitted into Telugu through the overwhelming impact of the Bengali literary Renaissance, represented in particular by the work of Rabindranath Tagore and Dwijendralal Roy. And then came, after the dim twilight beginnings of an earlier era, the discernible sunshine of the twentieth-century Romantic movement and the modern Enlightenment which, whatever

its actual achieved output, did have a wider understanding and a deeper knowledge of the Shakespearean imagination and of Shakespearean studies. A latter-day manifestation of this growing knowledge of Shakespeare, his work, his times, his art and his world has been the post-independence renewal of the attempts to translate Shakespeare into Telugu by writers such as Vavilala Somayajulu, Durbha Srirama Murty, Amarendra and K. Viswanathan.

[Telugu drama was born in the latter part of the nineteenth century, under the impact of various social, intellectual and cultural forces, among which English literature was undoubtedly an important factor. In the past, the Prabandha—with its leisurely exuberance of rhetorical stereotypes—exercised an unremitting tyranny over the Andhra imagination, and drama was jettisoned momentarily out of respectable literature. Industrious translators that Telugu writers have always been, they duly flattened out even the drama of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti in the Procrustean straitjacket of the Prabandha. What drama there was before 1860, lingered on in its marginal existence in folk-art as Vidhi-Bhagavatam, Yaksha-Gana, the Burra-Katha and the Harikatha-Kalakshepam. With the growth of English education and the spread of new ideas, drama too made its début on the literary scene. The touring Dharwad and Parsi theatrical companies took by storm the Andhra country from town to town, and an eager public awaited the arrival of an authentic vernacular drama. When the Telugu writers turned to dramatic creation they were faced with a crucial choice of models. On one hand was the traditional Sanskrit drama of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and Bhasa; on the other hand was the Western drama represented by Shakespeare, Molière and the Restoration dramatists. As a matter of fact, the Telugu dramatists converted their choice into an eclectic strategy of fusing the traditional Sanskrit and Western dramatic prototypes—a fusion that is best represented by Gurujada Appa Rau's *Kanyasulkam* (1897) which, some 70 years after its publication, still continues to be the unsurpassed masterpiece of Telugu drama. By and large—as witnessed by the work of Kandukuri Veeresalingam—they discovered that Restoration Drama, the Comedy of Manners of Congreve, Wycherley, Farquhar, Etherege and Sheridan,

was not only closer to their purpose but also more easy of adaptation and more congenial to the needs of their genius than the untranslatable magnificence of Shakespeare. Nevertheless, the impact of Shakespeare was far-reaching and exceptionally fruitful in creating a vogue for tragedies and historical plays—for which there were hardly any conventional models. Dharmavaram Krishnamacharyulu's *Vishada-Saragadharamu* and Vedam Venkataraya Sastri's *Bobbili Yuddha Charitramu* and *Pratapa Rudriyamu* represented the real fruitage of the Shakespearean influence at the time.

The Shakespeare phenomenon in Telugu can be studied under three convenient heads: translations, adaptations and imitations. One may safely venture the generalization that all Telugu translations of Shakespeare make dismal, almost obsequious, reading—and are still worse in performance on the stage as this writer discovered, when he sought to project under ideal theatre and audience conditions, during the current Shakespeare quater-centenary celebrations, a highly knowledgeable, if severely faithful, translation of King Lear by K. Viswanathan.

Vavilala Vasudeva Sastri in *Seezar Charitra* (1875) (*Julius Caesar*), the first known Shakespeare translation in Telugu, claims to have made an impressive job of it, for, had he not discovered the exact metrical equivalent of Blank Verse in the Telugu Teta-Gita? In fact, the Teta-Gita only adds unrelieved monotony to the pathetic banality of the entire translation—which is neither Telugu nor Shakespeare. The Telugu reader of today will feel both amused and scandalized when he makes even a random sampling of the 'first metrical translation' of Shakespeare. For example, the original

I kiss thy hand, but no flattery, Caesar,  
Desiring thee that Publius Cimber may  
Have an immediate freedom;

becomes transmogrified as follows in a literal retranslation from Telugu into English:

Caesar, place thine hand's kiss;  
But, this no flattery is, mind you;

The banishment abroad, that befell Publius Cimber,  
That to revoke forthwith, and there be no delay,  
Thee I implore again and again.

In another passage, Shakespeare's stricken deer is metamorphosed without warning into the rampant tiger:

How like a deer, stricken by many princes,  
Dost thou here lie! (*Shakespeare*)

Confused by the sporting pun in the original, the translator perpetrates his evolutionary outrage against the nobler of the species:

Like the Tiger felled beside the hill-side,  
Hast though fallen here in dire defeat. (*reverse translation*)

Another early translation of Shakespeare was Gurujada Srirama Murty's *Venisu Vanjia Natakamu*, or *Suhrut Subhashitamu* (1880), a diversified metrical-cum-prose rendering of *The Merchant of Venice*, which, although closer to the native Telugu idiom than Sastri's, produced such intolerable howlers, as 'Budide-Budhavaramu' for 'Ash Wednesday,' and such prurient metabolisms, as 'Nalika-Vadana' (Lotus-Faced-One) for 'she is fair.' The figures of Portia, Shylock and others become in the Telugu version hopeless travesties of their quick, full-blooded originals. The reasons for this are: the translator's linguistic acrobatics resulting in malapropisms, and his total incomprehension of the non-lexical ingredients of Shakespeare's poetry and of his plot-structure and his methods of characterization and psychological motivation.

Adibhatla Narayandas—a connoisseur in many languages and literatures and art-forms and better remembered now as Andhra's greatest Harikatha artist,—has left behind him an interesting anthology of translations from Shakespeare and Kalidasa, *Navarasa Tarangini*, which purports to compare the masters on the common ground of the nine rasas, Love, Wrath, Pity, Terror, etc., by means of selected illustrative passages rendered into Telugu. Narayandas has the distinction of having rendered both Shakespeare and Kalidasa utterly unreadable.

The early translators of Shakespeare were mostly professional writers and scholars, and they took to translation as an experimental pastime. The few notable translations that have appeared since 1940 reflect a shift in the direction of literary sensibility as well as in the critical pursuit. The new generation of translators were brought up in an atmosphere of growing Shakespearean scholarship—when Bradley, Stoll, Eliot, Dover Wilson and Wilson Knight were being quoted by teachers and students and *their* students. More and more English graduates were turning into Telugu writers, and some of them began making fresh assaults on the Shakespeare Everest. The Sahitya Akademi and other institutions have by official sanction rendered the business of translation almost an indirect status-symbol for the modern writer. Of the four recent Shakespeare translations, three have been done by English teachers, and the fourth by a writer with a wide knowledge of several literatures. Durbha Srirama Murty's *Hamlet*, Amarendra's *Macbeth*, Vavilala Somayajulu's *Antony and Cleopatra* and K. Viswanathan's *King Lear* represent the new effort to make Shakespeare available to the Telugu reader. Of these, Viswanathan's *King Lear* is easily the most impressive scholarly rendition; unfortunately, however, the translation—as a Telugu play—is mercilessly stiff, immobilized by its own massive literalness and variorum-crammed diligence. Amarendra's *Macbeth* and Durbha's *Hamlet* fall short of perfection; but they do not suffer from the recoil of any dogmatic monism in respect of translational theory. They are both honest and spirited renderings of the Shakespearean quintessence rather than copy-book declensions of the trustful letter. Vavilala Somayajulu has rendered Shakespeare into good Telugu more consistently than many others, and the result has been altogether salutary, for he has come to know Shakespeare from inside, as it were, through translation. His translations, as illustrated by his *Antony and Cleopatra*, are free and natural and are gracefully adapted to the subtle locutions of the Telugu sensibility, and are attuned in their style to the rippling, fluted cadences of the Telugu language. But Somayajulu frequently tends to sacrifice fidelity to Shakespeare in favour of fidelity to himself and, in the result, *Cleopatra* looks at times more like Somayajulu's vernacular *Nayakuralu* (the

heroine of an original play) than Shakespeare's Serpent of the Nile.

Telugu adaptations of Shakespeare have failed only by a lesser degree than the translations. Kandukuri Veeresalingam, the Father of Modern Telugu Literature, was a pioneer whose versatility was unhampered by inflexible linguistic or literary postures, and he was realist enough to recognize the pitiful futility of translating Shakespeare. He began by translating sixteen of Charles Lamb's Stories from Shakespeare into simple, elegant Telugu prose, adapting the names of characters as well as the local customs to suit the Telugu environment, thus sustaining throughout the illusion of reality without destroying the reality of the Shakespearean illusion. He adapted two plays of Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* as *Chamatkara Ratnavali* (1880) and *The Merchant of Venice* as *Venisu Vartaka Charitramu*, left in a fragmentary form. Veeresalingam's renderings of Shakespeare are eminently readable; and they never fail to involve us in the exciting abundance of the narrative action, as the drama moves through the Shakespearean plot-structure with all its twists and turns. In 1900, Panappakam Srinivasacharyulu published his play, *Kanakangi*, in which he followed, as he says, 'the best tragedies of the immortal Shakespeare to guide me in the development of characters.' But the play finally tapers off into a happy-ending medley of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In 1909, B. Srinivasa Rao brought out an adaptation of *Othello* under the title *Pulinda-Susilamu*, in which Shakespeare's characters are ingeniously Sanskritized: Othello becomes Pulinda; Iago, Ugra; Desdemona, Susila; Emilia, Kamala; and Cassio, Krishna. In 1911, Rentala Venkata Subba Rau published his adaptation of *Othello* as *Athila-Bimbamu*. Subba Rau was the author of two expositions in English entitled *Othello Unveiled* and *Hamlet Unveiled*, but his adaptation of *Othello* is corny and insipid, and reflects little of his perceptive brilliance as a critic. Subba Rau, in his prefatory note to *Othello*, composed three stanzas all made up of his own Telugu rendering of the titles of Shakespeare's plays. *Othello-Athila*; *Hamlet-Amlatha*; *King Lear-Layarka*; *Romeo and Juliet-Ramyaka*; *Timon of Athens-Timanyathina*; *Julius Caesar-Sizaru*; *Macbeth-Mahapatha*; *Pericles-Praklesaka*; *Cymbeline-Simhalianka*; *Antony and*

*Cleopatra-Kalapatra; Troilus and Cressida-Trayollasa Krasayatha; Coriolanus-Karyalanasa; The Tempest-Pralaya; Measure for Measure-Pratikriya; Twelfth Night-Bhranti-Vivaha; Much Ado About Nothing-Vivahabhangha; The Taming of the Shrew-Dhurtalalana; The Merry Wives of Windsor-Kamukapajaya; The Comedy of Errors-Bhrantivilasa; All's Well that Ends Well-Satijaya; As You Like It-Pravasalalita; The Two Gentlemen of Verona-Mitravanchana; A Midsummer Night's Dream-Vasantavinoda; The Winter's Tale-Pativrata; Love's Labour's Lost-Samaranala-Viphala.* One heaves a sigh of relief that Subba Rau's titular fancies were limited to these three poems; the Shakespearean canon was mercifully saved from a total engulfment. An impressive, but now almost forgotten, Shakespeare adaptation was D. Kondamacharyulu's rendering of the Trial Scene in *The Merchant of Venice* as *Daya-Nidhi*, which was given a scintillating performance at the Stall's Girls High School, Guntur, in 1946-47. Mention should also be made of Pokala Venkata Narasimha Nayani Garu's delightful prose retelling of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* in his *Kamalavati Parinayamu* (c. 1895).

When one turns from translations and adaptations to imaginative works in which the influence of Shakespeare is genuine, the experience is altogether refreshing. In the creative assimilation of the Shakespearean principles of dramatic structure, characterization, motivation and symbolic action, Telugu playwrights such as Dharmavaram Ramakrishnamacharyulu, Kolachalam Srinivasa Rao, Vedam Venkatararaya Sastri, Gurajada Appa Rau and Panuganti Lakshminarasimha Rao, reveal an enviable grasp of the master's craft—in particular of the Shakespearean unity of action as the unity of character. Dharmavaram Ramakrishnamacharyulu, known as Andhra-Nataka-Pitamaha, is associated with the introduction of tragedy into Telugu literature, and his *Vishada Sarangadharamu* (c. 1918) is an important landmark in the growth of Telugu drama. The play combines several Shakespearean tragic prototypes; the heroine, Chitrangi, takes after Lady Macbeth, while the hero, Sarangadhara, is fashioned after Lear and Hamlet. Into the dramatization of Sarangadhara's tragic conflict and his tragic predicament and destiny, have gone in varying proportions, but always making a homogeneous totality of impression, Hamlet's indecision, Othello's jealousy, Lear's

pride and Coriolanus's self-righteousness. Dharmavaram's *Chandrasahā* (c. 1918), although it went through endless revisions, first as tragedy, then as comedy, and finally as tragedy again, is another strongly Shakespearized work whose villain Dushta-Buddhi is obviously drawn from Shakespeare's Iago. Kolachalam Srinivasa Rao's historical tragedy, *Ramaraju Charitra* (1888), is a highly imaginative work, which reflects a sensitive insight into Shakespeare's technique of dramatizing the grand impersonal structures of history by letting them operate on the overwrought textures of human consciousness under the stress of will and circumstance. Ramaraju, in his self-willed catastrophe, in his deluded political exuberance, and in his miscreant runaway vitality, is a combination of Richard II and Richard III. Vedam Venkataraya Sastri wrote one of the most popular historical plays in Telugu, *Prataparudriyamu* (1897), which reflects the author's indebtedness to Shakespeare. In the low-comedy scenes, the play closely follows Shakespeare's *Henry IV*; in its more serious aspects, it imitates the Shakespearean tragic ethos. Yugandhara, the patriot Prime Minister, in his political feigning of madness as well as in his shattering terminal presence at the graveyard, resembles Hamlet, while he also recalls the bedraggled storm-punishing Lear on the bedlam heath. Yet, Yugandhara is a profoundly authentic vernacular hero whose dynastic line goes back to Kalidasa's *Mudra-Rakshasam* and Bhasa's *Swapna Vasavadatta*. Sastri's *Bobbili-Yuddha Natakamu* has echoes from *Henry V*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. D. Kondamacharyulu's *Andhra Vijayamu* (1930), a historical comedy, achieves a successful fusion of native and Shakespearean elements in the characterization of Nagaraju, who is an amalgam of Uttara-Kumara and Sir John Falstaff on the battle-field.

Panuganti Lakshminarasimha Rao, known as the Andhra Kalidasa, and Abhinava Shakespeare, was the author of many plays with a Shakespearean range and diversity—histories, mythologies, tragedies, comedies and romantic comedies. His *Kokila* (1907) is a bouquet of the mingled flavours of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Comedy of Errors*. Intrigue, disguise, fantasy, humour and poetry combine into a rich vintage of romantic comedy.

*Prachanda-Chanakyamu* (1909), a historical play, closely imitates and enacts the complex psychological mechanisms of *Othello*. His comedy, *Kanthabharanamu* (1917), adds to its Shakespearean dimension the dazzling conversational brilliance of Restoration drama and the purposive social realism of Ibsenian drama.

In many ways, Gurajada Appa Rau's *Kanyasulkam* (1897) represents a characteristic synthesis of the two great traditions of drama which have shaped Telugu drama since its emergence as an autonomous art form about a hundred years ago. When *Kanyasulkam* was first published, it had unconsciously directed the infant art of Telugu drama towards a many-sided growth, assimilating the tonic strength of the Indian classical and the Andhra folk traditions, the Western traditions of Shakespeare, Molière and Congreve. Surprisingly enough, the play had also, without the author's knowing, responded to the demands of social realism on the international stage, even as Ibsen and Shaw were emerging into their famed existence as masters of the modern drama. More than any other Telugu dramatist, Gurajada Appa Rau understood deeply and compassionately, without ever losing his aesthetic detachment, or his negative capability, the complexity, the unpredictability, and the inevitability of human character and behaviour as Shakespeare reveals in his creations. Gurajada's Gireesam is a multivalent projection of the Andhra personality; Gireesam is Falstaff and Hamlet, he is Feste and Lear's Fool, he is Iago and Macbeth, he is Claudio and Angelo, he is a polysymbolic unity in which all become each.

With becoming self-irony, which is a characteristic Andhra trait, Gireesam addresses his disciple, Venkatesam: 'How come you've put on that Shakespeare Face' and thus sums up what Shakespeare is to the Telugus and Telugu is to Shakespeare.

# THE IMPACT OF SHAKESPEARE ON URDU LITERATURE

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THERE is no denying the fact that the genius of Shakespeare has evoked the deep admiration of the Urdu literati over the last few decades though it must be conceded that an intelligent and fully informed appreciation of it is a phenomenon of only very recent origin. It should be interesting to note that Shakespeare was introduced as early as 1796 by no less a person than Gilchrist who included translations of fragments of *Henry VIII* and *Hamlet* in his well-known book on Urdu grammar. It has been established by the latest research work done in this field that as many as one hundred versions—adaptations and translations—of Shakespeare's plays are available in Urdu. Chronologically speaking, Ahsan of Lucknow may be credited with making the first sustained effort in rendering some of these masterpieces into Urdu. He was the grandson of Mirza Shauq—a well-known classical poet—and had thus inherited and assimilated the rich tradition of Urdu poetry. He composed plays based on the materials of the plots of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet* and recast the originals with a certain felicity of expression and in his own distinctive style. He did not care to be scrupulously faithful to Shakespeare's text but made it an excuse for writing plays of his own. Betab Narayan of Delhi later on rendered *The Comedy of Errors* with the title *A Labyrinth* and tried to recapture the spirit of the original, though only with dubious success. He also made such drastic modifications in his version of *The Tempest* as to make an entirely different thing of it, and this was staged by the Parsee Company in 1891. Munshi Mehdi Hasan brought out his versions of *Hamlet* and *Othello* and these were staged by the theatrical companies of Bombay in 1897 and 1898 respectively, and his version of *Twelfth Night* was enacted by the New Alfred Company in 1905. Mohd. Azhar Kakorvi composed a play entitled *The Goblet of Love* in which he tried to rework the

plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This was done in the verse pattern of Masnavi (a well-known poetic *genre* in Urdu) and consequently failed to suggest the full dramatic tension though the defect was partly redeemed by the limpidity and sonority of the songs interspersed here and there. Willayat Husain tried his hand at *As You Like It* and substituted Indian names for English characters but did not succeed very well in retaining the flavour of the Shakespearean humour and the deft handling of linguistic devices so characteristic of that play. Agha Hasher Kashmiri, an important practising playwright, rendered *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure For Measure*, *King Richard III* and *King Lear*, and all these versions were staged by The Alfred and The Parsee Theatrical Companies of Bombay in 1900, 1905, 1906 and 1907 respectively. His version of *The Winter's Tale* became very popular on the contemporary stage, and that of *King John*, produced by the Parsee Company in 1905, attracted no less attention. It may be observed, though, that the total effect of the play was mangled by an improvised ending. Even greater liberties were taken with *Hamlet* so that in the Urdu version horrors were piled upon horrors and Hamlet's reflective temper and searching analyses of his own predicament were simply ignored. To crown all, both *Lear* and *Hamlet* were turned into comedies and one is thus inevitably reminded of the mutilation Shakespeare suffered at the hands of Nahum Tate in England. A version of *Antony and Cleopatra* entitled *Kali Nagana* was produced by Moulvi Anwaruddin Mukhlis in collaboration with Munshi Mahshr and appeared in 1906. The very title suggests that the collaborators were primarily concerned with the seductive appeal exercised by the heroine over the protagonist and with little else. All these different versions—and there are many others of varying degrees of excellence—are adaptations and were not meant to approximate to the design and spirit of the original Shakespearean plays. The changes introduced reflect the level of the literary sensitiveness of the adapters and were also governed by the fact that the ordinary theatre-goers, including all classes, could stomach only a particular kind of stuff. The original plays were heavily tampered with and adapted versions bear only a very remote resemblance to their models.

This phase was followed by one of literal translations. Taffazul Husain Nasir translated *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar* into Urdu prose. This prose is marked by such flexibility and force that it seems to be a fit enough medium within the context of this translation. *Henry V*, which appeared under the caption *The Conquest of France*, was serialized in the literary Journal *Al Nazir* from July to December, 1913. A more ambitious plan for rendering Shakespeare accessible to the Urdu-reading public was undertaken by Inayatullah of Delhi and his version of Shakespeare's plays continued to be published in the monthly periodical *Saqi* (Delhi) between 1935 and 1944. Though these were done in simple and chaste Urdu yet they fail to suggest, on that very account, the dramatic vitality and creative depth of the original. [A few years ago, Aziz Ahmad, on the suggestion of C. J. Sisson and Moulvi Abdul Haq, translated *Romeo and Juliet* in *verse libre*.] This translation, done with scrupulous care and sensitiveness, is a marked improvement on all earlier attempts and tends to reach up to the freshness and distinction of the original. Shanul Haq Haqqi, a young Urdu poet and critic, has so far published only fragments of *Antony and Cleopatra* rendered into Urdu and has employed the medium of the closed couplets. This is by far the best Shakespeare we have had so far in Urdu and it conclusively proves the potentiality of the Urdu language for capturing the magic and felicity of the Shakespearean line to some extent.

Shakespeare's impact on Urdu drama has not been so far-reaching as one could wish. The obvious reason is that there has been no indigenous stage tradition in Urdu which could readily respond to and assimilate the European influences. What retarded the growth of dramatic tradition was by and large the fact that any kind of theatrical impersonation and worship of images and idols goes against the spirit of Islamic doctrine. Moreover, the various theatrical companies in India, especially those in Bombay, which staged the Urdu or Gujarati versions of Shakespeare's plays, were mainly commercial ventures. The proprietors were, therefore, interested more in getting profits than in the quality of the plays that were produced, and hence adaptations from Shakespeare were made with a view to satisfying the expectation of the

spectators. The conventions of the earliest Lucknow stage, abounding in gorgeous setting, brilliant spectacle and striking musical effects, and the canons of dramatic writing that governed the composition of the first Urdu play, *Indersabah*, continued to be followed by subsequent generations. We may sum up the situation by saying that the dominant trend in Urdu drama was towards the sentimental and the romantic and little or no attention was paid to either firm characterization or to convincing dramatic conflict. The audiences looked forward to hilarity, sensational thrills, grotesque incidents, the confusion arising out of mistaken identities, over-abundance of songs and insipid and banal humour. In tragedy, on the contrary, emphasis was placed on the evocation of the macabre, diabolical intrigues, occasional preaching, administration of poetic justice, and all this led to a melodramatic close. There was a general craze for the composition and staging of comedies in preference to tragedies though it must be added that the playwrights had neither any awareness of the civilizing function of the comic nor of the existence of the mighty opposites in the universe and in man and the ancient mystery of evil against which human beings wrestle and thus become the subject of tragic writings. Thus what is most characteristic of these plays is that they are concerned with the bare bones of the plot—the externals of action—and not with the portrayal of human psychology. Hence the subtleties of human behaviour and the inwardness of approach, the little fugitive hints about the motivation of characters and their emotional involvements have been entirely neglected.

In the earliest phase of the Shakespearean impact, plays were adapted in Urdu primarily with a view to producing them on the stage. From 1935—the year in which the Progressive Movement in Urdu literature was inaugurated—down to the present times, a continuous stream of authentic translations has been flowing. These have been undertaken by more or less well informed and devoted students of Shakespeare who have based them on close and scrupulous reading of the texts and have some knowledge of the temper of the times in which the poet lived. These translations are superior to the adaptations because the latter were in most cases merely a rehash of little bits of information gained from hearsay

about the essentials of the plots of Shakespeare's plays. Some deviation from this arbitrariness was made by Inayatullah of Delhi whose versions of Shakespeare's plays remind us of *The Tales from Shakespeare* told by Charles and Mary Lamb, but even these fail to suggest the force and profundity of the originals. In more recent years, a few verse translations, notably those by Aziz Ahmad and Shanul Haq Haqqi, have aimed at restoring the balance and provide some inkling of the sublime poetry and rhetoric and the subtle and moving character-drawing of Shakespeare. The two major factors that have so far inhibited the full infusion of the Shakespearean spirit into the Urdu reader's mind are firstly the absence of any stable tradition of the Urdu stage and secondly the almost insuperable difficulty encountered by a non-specialized reader in mastering the idiom of Elizabethan English. It may also be mentioned *en passant* that the Aligarh movement which fostered the growth of many other forms of Urdu literature sadly neglected the dramatic art. In the earliest phase of the Indian Renaissance it came to be erroneously believed that Shakespeare was a Christian apologist, deliberately sponsoring Christianity through the medium of a literary form, and hence the resurgent nationalist tendencies prevented the Urdu-speaking person's mind in general from being particularly responsive to his art. Though Shakespeare has been loved, admired and acted and held in much greater esteem than any other European playwright, yet all this devotion to him has failed to provide impetus to any definite literary movement which could diversify and enrich our cultural heritage. It may also be added that verse translation from one language into another is beset with enormous hazards because poetry is the most sensitive mirror of the genius of a people and poetic subtleties and nuances suffer heavy loss in the process of transference. A translator of the dramatic poetry of Shakespeare into any Indian language has to accept a more than usually heavy responsibility on account of the many-sided richness of Shakespeare's vision and the ambiguity of the verbal structure of his plays. The earliest Urdu versions have only the vaguest resemblance to the original plays and cannot, therefore, claim any abiding literary value. With the dawn of independence and with the pursuit of English studies undertaken in a more

liberated atmosphere it is to be hoped that more and more responsible and competent translations of Shakespeare's plays will emerge. A beginning in this direction has already been made by the Sahitya Akademi and a prose translation of *Othello* by Ahmad Siddique has been recently published. But it must be emphasized that the full impact of Shakespeare's influence on Indian languages can be felt only through verse translations, however modest the achievement. A prose translation of Shakespeare into Urdu or any other language is bound to have the status of a literary artefact thrice removed from reality.

# INDIA IN SHAKESPEARE

BY C. R. BANERJI

The National Library, Calcutta

SHAKESPEARE was not a traveller. He spent his life at Stratford and in London. There is no evidence to show that he ever left England to visit any foreign country; yet the range of the world to which he refers in his works is amazing. The countries and the people of Europe, Africa, Asia and America are frequently introduced. Of course, Shakespeare views them through the magic casement of imagination. The references to the topics relating to Asia and Africa in particular have not the degree of realism necessary to influence the theme and actions of a play. Yet they were enough to create an indefinable yearning for far-off and little-known lands in the minds of the Elizabethan audience.

Shakespeare's patrons must have appreciated Benedick's readiness for circumnavigating the globe. He asks the Prince of Arragon:

Will your Grace command me any service to the World's end? I will go on to the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia; bring you the length of Preston John's foot; fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard; do you any embassy to the Pigmies rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy.  
(Much Ado, II. i)

Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India soon after the discovery of America, caused a silent revolution in the life of the multitudes of Europe. Love of adventure and greed for gold impelled them to sail for the newly discovered lands. The widening of the world was closely followed by an extension of the intellectual horizon of the people and a pulsation of a new spirit embodied in the works of artists, writers and the leaders of thought.

The interest of the common people, however, was mainly

limited to the accounts of the voyages. They eagerly listened to the tales of the sailors; read the travel accounts with the same avidity as for romantic novels; and this was the principal topic of conversation in the taverns and other meeting places. Robert Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas—two contemporaries of Shakespeare—themselves no travellers—compiled travel accounts from various sources to satisfy the demands of the Elizabethan readers.

This was the demand of the Elizabethan audience as well. No contemporary playwright could afford to ignore the mood of the people. The spirit of the age was introduced in the dramas by referring to the voyages and to the new discoveries. Even the scenes of some of the dramas by Marlowe, Greene, Massinger and Beaumont and Fletcher were laid in Asia and Africa. The events of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* take place in an enchanted desert island which does not belong either to Asia or to Africa. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare takes his audience to an Africa so thoroughly romanized that one can hardly feel the effect of the change of milieu. The scenes of his other plays do not cross the geographical limit of Europe. Yet references to countries and places outside that limit are frequent. No other drama of the period has succeeded in representing the spirit of the age more than *Othello*. Fair Desdemona falls desperately in love with the Moor of Venice after listening to his enchanting stories of adventure and travel. Othello assures the Duke that the narration of the stories of his adventures 'is the witchcraft I have us'd' to win Desdemona.

The sources of information about the places mentioned by Shakespeare were written accounts and verbal narratives of sailors and travellers. Though he deftly refers to some of the characteristics of these places there is no proof regarding his special knowledge about them. Shakespeare did not use any of these places outside Europe as a background of his plays. He was not therefore required to have specialized knowledge necessary for introducing local colour.

The same is equally true of his references to India. [Like his predecessors, Shakespeare used 'India' as a synonym for gold, wealth and sunshine. To him India was more an abstract idea than a country peopled by men and women having distinctive features.]

The earliest reference to India in European drama was made by Aeschylus in his Suppliant Women:

And tales I know, how *Indian* women roam,  
By camels drawn, each in the tented home, ...

Aeschylus referred to some special features of Indian women; the wealth of India was not foremost in his mind.

Even before the discovery of Vasco da Gama and the publication of *The Lusiad*, Chaucer associated gold with India in The Knight's Tale:

The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,  
Of steede bay trapped in steel,  
Covered in clooth of gold, dyapred weel,  
Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.

Other British poets and dramatists also referred to India and her gold, but none had Marlowe's enthusiasm for India and the East. His Faust says:

I'll have them fly to *India* for gold,  
Ransack the ocean for Oriental pearl, ...

Marlowe envisaged the opening of a short route to India through the Suez Canal. Tamburlaine foresees the Suez Canal when he says:

And here, not far from Alexandria,  
Whereas the Terrene and the Red Sea meet,  
Being distant less than full a hundred leagues,  
I meant to cut a channel to them both,  
That men might quickly sail to India.

(2 *Tamburlaine*, V. iii.)

As a dramatist, Shakespeare's indebtedness to Marlowe is considerable. But he does not share Marlowe's enthusiasm for India. Shakespeare mentions India about twenty times in his plays. All these references are more or less passive, merely a restatement of India's gold.

India is mentioned by name in various forms, viz. Ind, Inde, India, Indies (East) and Indian. His references to Asia and the East also largely meant India. The East Indies were practically identified with India. To the Elizabethans, India denoted the whole of South-East Asia and the Indian Archipelago. Shakespeare used 'India' 'elusively for a country fabulously rich'.

The mistaken belief that Columbus had discovered the East Indies led to some confusion regarding the use of 'India' and its variations. Commentators afterwards made the confusion worse. The confusion persisted because both India and America were considered lands of gold and plenty. In 'The Sun Rising', Donne says:

Look, and tomorrow late, tell me  
Whether both the *Indias* of spice and mine  
Be where thou leftest them, or lie here with me.

Shakespeare's earliest reference to India is probably in *King Henry VI* (III. i). King Henry values the feelings of the heart more than the crown on his head, even if that crown be decorated with precious Indian stones:

My crown is in my heart, not on my head,  
Not deck'd with diamonds, and *Indian* stones,  
Nor to be seen.

There are four references to India in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In no other play is India mentioned so many times. India, land of gold and sunshine, has been appropriately introduced at intervals to suit the fairy-world theme of the play.

Oberon, the King of the Fairies, quarrels with his queen Titania about a boy whom he wants for a page. Puck tells us about this quarrel:

For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,  
Because that she as her attendant hath  
A lovely boy, stolen from an *Indian King*;  
She never had so sweet a changeling.

And jealous Oberon would have the child  
Knight of his train, the trace the forest wild. (II. i)

But Titania is not willing to give up the boy whom she dearly loves. Titania is annoyed when she finds Oberon is pursuing her even in a distant wood near Athens to ask for the boy. So she asks,

Why art thou here,  
Come from the farthest steep of India? (II. i)

Oberon says:

Why should Titania cross her Oberon?  
I do but beg a little changeling boy,  
To be my henchman. (II. i)

Titania explains the reason for her love for the boy. The boy's mother was a concubine of an Indian king. The mother, a great friend of Titania, died in child-bed. For love of her friend Titania has stolen the boy to bring him up properly under her care. She describes her friendship with the boy's mother as follows:

His mother was a vot'ress of my order,  
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,  
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side. (II. i)

But this explanation does not satisfy Oberon. In revenge, he uses magic to get the boy from Titania:

I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;  
And then I will her charmed eye release  
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace. (II. ii)

In the Elizabethan age, trade with a rich country like India was profitable. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio makes a reference to his friend Antonio's trade with India:

What, not one hit?  
From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England,  
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India? (III. ii)

But it is an anachronism to refer to Antonio's sea trade with India. According to scholars, the date of the action of the play was before Vasco da Gama's discovery, when traders used overland routes to India.

In explaining to Portia that appearances are deceptive, Bassanio says that Indian women use attractively decorated cloth to cover their dark faces:

Thus ornament is but the guiled shore  
To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf  
Veiling an Indian beauty; (III. ii)

There are a few instances where Shakespeare compares the good qualities of his characters with the wealth of India. In 1 *Henry IV* (III. i), Mortimer says that his father is,

... as bountiful  
As mines of India.

Again, in *Twelfth Night* Sir Toby describes Olivia's gentlewoman Maria as 'metal of India,' or, as good as Indian gold (II. v.) The heroine of *Troilus and Cressida* (I. i) is compared with a precious and beautiful Indian pearl:

Her bed is India; there she lies, a pearl,

Troilus is lost in love for Cressida. Pandarus is anxious to bring Troilus back to himself. To achieve this he is even prepared to go barefoot to India:

Condition, I had gone barefoot to India. (I. ii)

Helena of *All's Well That Ends Well* is deeply in love with Bertram whose high social status is beyond her reach. She mourns that her lot is like the sun-worshippers of India:

... thus, Indian-like,  
Religious in mine error, I adore  
The sun that looks upon his worshipper  
But knows him no more. (I. iii)

Othello regrets before his death that he has killed Desdemona without realizing her virtues. She was like a precious pearl and he, like an ignorant Indian, has thrown her away:

... of one whose hand,  
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,  
 Richer than all his tribe. (V. ii)

'Indian' in the above passage has been interpreted differently by the critics. Coleridge emphatically says that 'Indian' 'means American, a savage in genre.' But he offers no reason for his conviction. 'Base' did not always mean savage in the days of Shakespeare. It was also used to refer to ignorant people. It is more likely that 'Indian' was used to mean an inhabitant of India for the following reasons. Venice had trade relations with India. The inhabitants of India were better known to the people of Venice than Red Indians. As a great traveller, Othello, might have visited India; the possibility of his American visit is remote. In his last speech Othello mentions India, medicinal Arabian trees, Aleppo, turbaned Turk and a Venetian; the association of ideas sounds particularly natural and inevitable because of the geographical contiguity of the items mentioned. It is not probable that the grief-stricken man's thought suddenly roamed for once to far-away America leaving his well-known surroundings and violating the law of association of ideas.

The Duke of Norfolk refers to India's gold in *Henry VIII*. The British people were jealous of France's wealth and prosperity. But after some time Britain 'was made India', i.e. fabulously rich, after the conquest of India. The Duke of Norfolk says prophetically:

To-day the French,  
 All clinquant all in gold, like heathen gods  
 Shone down the English; and to-morrow they  
 Made Britain India: every man that stood  
 Show'd like a mine. (I. i)

'Indians' mentioned in *The Tempest* (II. ii) and in *Henry VIII*

(V. iv) refer to Red Indians who were frequently brought to England in captivity and displayed for money.

'Ind' and 'Indies' often refer to India. The incomparableness of Rosalind in *As You Like It* is emphasized like this:

From the east to western *Ind*,  
No jewel is like Rosalind. (III. ii)

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Falstaff compares Mistress Page and Mistress Ford with the East and West *Indies* respectively for their wealth: '... they shall be my East and West Indies.' (I. iii)

Speaking of Antonio's pecuniary resources Shylock comments in *The Merchant of Venice*: 'Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the *Indies*; ...' Here Indies refers to the East Indies; India was prominent in contemporary international trade.

In *Twelfth Night* Maria describes Malvolio's smile as follows:

He does smile his face into more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the *Indies*. (III. ii)

Opinions differ on the identification of the *Indies*,—whether East or West. According to one commentator the new map drawn by Edward Wright (1600) 'showed the whole of the East Indies, including Japan, which the map of Linschoten did not.' In *Henry VIII* (V. iv), the Porter is annoyed by the noisy crowd into making the following exclamation: 'Is this Moorfields to muster in? or have we some strange Indian with the great tool come to court?'—the strange Indian here could have been one of the many Red Indians who were from time to time brought to England as captives.

The Indies, like India, stand for fabulous wealth. In *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare compares the queen with the riches of the Indies:

Our king has all the *Indies* in his arms,  
And more, and richer, when he strains that lady;  
(IV. i)

The picture of India which emerges from the above references is somewhat vague and uncertain. It is doubtful whether Shakespeare had a clear idea about the geographical outline of India. In *The Comedy of Errors* the corpulent kitchen-maid is described as 'spherical, like a globe; I could find out countries in her.' In different parts of her body Shakespeare can find out Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands and even the newly discovered America. But no part of the globe-like body of the maid reminds Shakespeare of India.

To Shakespeare India was a land of gold. He also knew that Indians engaged themselves in international trade; they were sun-worshippers and the women of India used to wear veils. He had little acquaintance with Indian literature. Otherwise, he would use some of our stories as his plot. The episode of caskets in *The Merchant of Venice* is said to have some resemblance to a Buddhist parable. This parable probably reached Shakespeare through some Latin version.

# VERSIONS OF *KING LEAR*

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## I

OF the four versions of *King Lear* in the neo-classical period, the one by Nahum Tate, first presented in 1685, proved the most popular as well as the most durable. Till 1756, the year in which Garrick produced his version, whenever *King Lear* was produced (and it was produced 372 times between 1701 and 1800)<sup>1</sup>, it was invariably Tate's version which was presented on the stage. Even after 1756, Tate's version continued to be more popular than Garrick's. According to Hogan, between 1751 and 1800, Tate's version was produced 107 times while Garrick's was produced 61 times.<sup>2</sup> Garrick naturally preferred his own version to that of Tate but others continued to patronize Tate. As a matter of fact, Tate's version held the ground right into the nineteenth century. So both for chronological and other reasons, Tate's version ought to be considered first.

Was Nahum Tate fully aware of the significance of his alteration of *King Lear*? The question is both interesting and important. If his own statement of aims in the Epistle Dedicatory to the play is any guide, the answer may be found in the following relevant passage from it:<sup>3</sup>

*'Twas my good Fortune to light on one Expedient to rectifie what was wanting in the Regularity and Probability of the Tale, which was run through the whole, A Love betwixt Edgar and Cordelia, that never chang'd word with each other in the Original. This renders Cordelia's Indifference and her Father's Passion in the first Scene probable. It likewise gives Countenance to Edgar's Disguise, making that a generous Design that was before a poor Shift to save his Life. The Distress of the Story is evidently heightened by it ... This Method necessarily threw me on making the Tale conclude in a Success to the innocent distrest Persons: Otherwise I must have incumbred the Stage with dead*

*Bodies, which Conduct makes many Tragedies conclude with unseasonable Fests. Yet was I Rackt with no small Fears for so bold a Change, till I found it well receiv'd by my Audience; . . .*

Clearly, Tate's decision to give a happy ending to *King Lear* was subsidiary to his main purpose which was to introduce a love affair between Edgar and Cordelia. This concern with love was by no means extraordinary. No playwright could hope to succeed on the Restoration stage without devoting considerable attention to matters of love. Love-interest was often introduced into pre-Restoration plays: Shadwell's version of *Timon of Athens* is one example of this. The reasons for this preoccupation are of no concern here, though part of the explanation might lie in the theatrical exigencies of the period, as has been persuasively argued by a recent scholar.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the explanation of the changes introduced by Tate, this much is almost certain, that in inventing the love relationship of Edgar and Cordelia he was not in any respect departing from the practice of his fellow playwrights. As a matter of fact, this alteration of *King Lear* turned out to be a brilliant anticipation of what the audiences preferred at that time, and even later. Indeed, it was not till 1838 that Macready was able to present the play as Shakespeare had written it, the part of the Fool being still played by an actress instead of by an actor.

What about Tate's attitude to poetic justice which his version of *King Lear* came to exemplify to such a marked degree? If Tate is to be believed, and there is no reason why he should be disbelieved, poetic justice was a secondary consideration with him. The same is true of his alteration of *Coriolanus* which he called *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* (1682). According to Hazleton Spencer, 'Poetic justice [in the above play] is flouted by Tate even more than by Shakespeare.'<sup>5</sup> And he goes on to say, 'Again the love motive is emphasized. Rape is a favourite device with Tate; he uses it in both *Lear* and *The Ingratitude* without the slightest warrant in either source.' Thus, it appears that Tate who was aiming at what, charitably speaking, might be called stage effectiveness, blundered upon poetic justice. However, it was the kind of blunder that was soon hailed as a triumph.

The first man to hail it as a triumph was Charles Gildon. Writing in 1710, he said:<sup>6</sup>

The King and *Cordelia* ought by no means to have dy'd, and therefore Mr *Tate* has very justly alter'd that particular, which must disgust the Reader and Audience to have Vertue and Piety meet so unjust a Reward. So that this Plot, tho' of so celebrated a Play, has none of the Ends of Tragedy moving neither Fear nor Pity. We rejoice at the Death of the Bastard and the two Sisters, as of Monsters in Nature under whom the very Earth must groan. And we see with Horror and Indignation the Death of the King, Cordelia and Kent; tho' of the Three the King only could move pity if that were not lost in the Indignation and Horror the Death of the other two produces, for he is a truly Tragic Character not supremely Virtuous nor Scandalously vicious; he is made up of Choler, and Obstinacy, Frailties pardonable enough in an Old Man, and yet what drew on him all the Misfortunes of his Life.

Gildon's remarks set the tone of what most people were to say on this subject in the course of the century. Almost simultaneously, however, came Addison's protest against *King Lear* having been robbed of 'half its Beauty'<sup>7</sup> in Tate's version. But this was a minority point of view at that time: the majority shared Gildon's way of thinking. For instance, Lewis Theobald<sup>8</sup> was prepared to excuse Shakespeare's 'Ignorance of Mechanical Rules' but not 'the Catastrophe' of *King Lear*. No wonder that he commended Tate's alteration most emphatically. Indeed so did Thomas Cooke<sup>9</sup> who said that he had read many a sermon but did not remember even one that 'contains so fine a Lesson of Morality as this Play'. And he continued:

Here is Loyalty to a Prince, Duty to a Parent, Perseverence in a chaste Love, and almost every exalted Virtue of the Soul, recommended in the loveliest Colours; and the opposite Vices are placed in the strongest Light in which Horror and Detestation can place them... The Poet shews in this Tragedy that the Vengeance of Heaven

co-operates, as indeed it always does, with the natural Course of Things; and when Virtue meets her due Reward, we may say, with *Cordelia*, *there are Gods, and Virtue is their Care*; for the all-wise Disposer of all Things has from the Beginning annexed Rewards to Virtue, and Punishment to Vice; and in these we find Nature as consistent with herself, as when we behold the Trees producing their proper Fruit. What more profitable Lesson can the People be taught than this?

Cooke's certitude of faith in the 'all-wise Disposer of all Things' is astoundingly naïve, even for his own day. In a sense, it is also pathetic. At the same time, it must be recognized that this is precisely the attitude which finds the concept of poetic justice irresistibly attractive. If life promised justice to all those who deserved it, poetic justice would, obviously, be superfluous. It is largely because in actual life there is no sure correspondence between what we deserve and what we get that a need is felt to establish such a correspondence. But to elevate this need into a belief, or into a critical precept, is to affirm that life must be portrayed not as it is, but as it should be.

This is how we would argue today. But Cooke's contemporaries argued otherwise. Indeed they concurred with him so wholeheartedly in this matter that sometimes they did not even stop to consider whether it was necessary to distinguish between Shakespeare's play and Tate's alteration of it. In 1734, Jacob Tonson, the well-known publisher, criticized R. Walker, another publisher, because the latter 'thro' Ignorance of what plays are Shakespeare's'<sup>10</sup> had brought out Tate's version without realizing his mistake. Tonson's motive for this criticism was evidently commercial rivalry, but the light that it throws on the popularity of Tate's alteration is revealing.

It would be pointless, and possibly misleading, to find fault with one publisher when almost everyone in that period preferred Tate's version to the original play. Even those who set out to expound comparatively new principles for alteration of Shakespeare ended up by complimenting Tate who, for instance, was thought to have introduced a love-affair between Edgar and Cordelia 'without wronging Shakespeare'.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, while concluding his summary of Tate's version of *King Lear*, the anonymous author of the *Dramatic Historiographer* (1735) observed that though he would not pretend to determine how far the 'Catastrophe (of the play) is consonant to Truth', he had no doubt that it was 'certainly agreeable to that Poetical Justice, which in representations of this Kind ought always to be strictly observed'<sup>12</sup> In view of the foregoing, it would not be wrong to say that till about the middle of the century, not a single voice had been raised against Tate's alteration except for that of Addison, and Addison's protest had failed to find an echo.

## II

However, this situation did not remain static for long. With the emergence of Garrick in effective control of Drury Lane was inaugurated what is usually known as 'the Age of Garrick'. No one before Garrick had possessed either the talent or the prestige to influence and, if he wanted, to manipulate the taste of the theatre-going public. Allowing for his limitations, it is perhaps best to grant that Garrick was a genuine admirer of Shakespeare. At any rate, it was assumed by a number of his contemporaries that, if sufficiently pressed, he might be willing to present Shakespeare without alteration. A proposal to this effect was put forth fairly vigorously by the anonymous author of *An Examen of the New Comedy Call'd The Suspicious Husband, &c.*, in 1747. He said:<sup>13</sup>

...why will you do so great an Injury to *Shakespear*, as to perform *Tate's* execrable Alteration of him? Read and consider the two Plays seriously, and then make the Publick and the Memory of the Author some Amends, by giving us *Lear* in the *Original*, *Fool* and all; (*Macklin* or *Chapman* will play it well;) and as some small Recompence for your Conversion to the Ways of Truth, I will convince you of some Errors you are guilty of in that capital Character.

After this, the author proceeded to point out some of Garrick's faults in his representation of *Lear* and added:<sup>14</sup>

You will say the alter'd Play has mark'd it so; to which I answer, that it can be no Mitigation of your Fault, to plead that Mr. *Nahum Tate* has seduc'd you; tho' you are not the Principal, you are accessory to the Murder, and will be brought in Guilty—How can you keep your Countenance when you come to the *Spheres stopping their Course, the Sun making halt, and the Winds bearing on their rosy Wings, that Cordelia is a Queen!* Surely you are not acquainted with your own Powers (for let the Censor say what he will) the last scene of *Shakespeare's Lear* must shew you to advantage; and I hope it is rather your Idleness, than Judgement, that makes you persist in the other...

Considering the date of these remarks, one cannot help being struck by the boldness and, what is more important, the acumen of this critic of Garrick. Furthermore, he does not appear to be one of the people otherwise hostile to Garrick. The occasion for his remarks was provided by Samuel Foote's discussion of the theatrical merit of Garrick in his *Treatise of the Passions* (1747). Foote had not only commended '*Tate's Alteration of Shakespeare*',<sup>15</sup> he had also quoted from Tate's version in support of his argument. While pointing out this mistake of Foote's, the author of *An Examen of...the Suspicious Husband* had said:<sup>16</sup>

Is it not surprizing that this great Critick and Man of Taste, should propose Lines for your Consideration, which are in the vile Alterations by *Tate*?

Indeed it would not be too much to say that throughout his pamphlet this writer reveals an uncommonly perceptive mind.

Within a year of this strong appeal to Garrick to throw his weight in favour of the original *King Lear* came another, and this was from someone who also enjoyed public prestige and favour. In the Postscript to *Clarissa*, while quoting Addison's attack on poetic justice, Richardson said in a footnote:<sup>17</sup>

Yet so different seems to be the Modern Taste from that of the Antients, that the altered *King Lear* of Mr. Tate

is constantly acted on the English Stage, in preference to the Original, tho' written by Shakespeare himself!—Whether this *strange* preference be owing to the false Delicacy or affected Tenderness of the Players, or to that of the Audience, has not for many years been tried. And yet, if it were *ever* to be tried, *Now* seems to be the Time, when an *Actor* and a *Manager*, in the *same person*, is in being, who deservedly engages the public favour in all he undertakes, and who owes so much, and is gratefully sensible that he does, to that great Master of the human Passions.

Garrick, who could afford to ignore the author of *An Examen of...The Suspicious Husband* could hardly afford to ignore Richardson. So he wrote to Richardson, and in the course of his reply said:<sup>18</sup>

The honour you have done me (& I do most sincerely think it a great one) in y<sup>r</sup>. last Volume, has flatter'd me extreamly; and had not a Visit from Me immedeately [on] the Receipt of your present, appear'd m[ore] the Effect of your favours, than my Friendship I had seen you last Week; but as I ha[ve] now kept from you a decent time, I will wait upon you soon to thank you i[n] Person for your last good Offices to Me.

It appears from the tone of Garrick's letter that though Richardson's proposal was made in public, Garrick preferred to deal with it in private. In any event, we are in no position to know what transpired at their meeting—or meetings, as the case might have been. Judged by the result, nothing particularly startling came out of these appeals to Garrick. The first occasion on which Garrick turned his attention to *King Lear* was in 1756, and that was to effect a compromise between Shakespeare and Tate rather than to reject Tate. But more of that later.

Meanwhile, the circle close to Richardson took up the attack on Tate. In the *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749)—usually attributed to Sarah Fielding—is an interesting reference to *King Lear*. Miss Gibson who appears to speak for the author

puts forward the proposition that, in her opinion 'those whose Eyes melt not at scenes of well-wrought Distress, cannot properly be said to laugh, from a liberal and chearful Spirit, at the true Scenes of comic Humour.'<sup>19</sup> This proposition she illustrates as follows:<sup>20</sup>

The beginning of this Season I went with a Lady, whose Acquaintance I accidentally fell into, to *Drury-Lane* Play-house, where Mr. *Garrick* performed the Part of *King Lear*. I should have thought (tho' altered and defaced as it is by Mr. *Tate*) that even Butchers must have wept; but to my great Astonishment, my Companion sat unmoved: Silent indeed she was, only now and then said, *she did not love Tragedy*; that, for her part, *she had rather laugh than cry*, and liked a Comedy best. I had a Curiosity to see in what manner comic Scenes would affect her; and therefore proposed going to *Covent-Garden* play-house the next Night, when Mr. *Quin* was to play the part of *Sir John Falstaff*, in *Harry the Fourth*. Accordingly we went. The Lady did, indeed, now and then catch the Laugh of those around her, enough to move about her Features a little; but upon the whole was pretty near as unmov'd as she had been the Night before and at last she confessed, that the Humours of *Sir John Falstaff* was not the Sort of Comedy that pleased her Fancy, but that the merry Dialogues between *Tom* and *Phillis* in the *Conscious Lovers*, and the comical Humours of *Ben* and *Miss Prue* in *Love for Love*, were more suited to her Taste. I was not much surprised, because I before suspected, that whoever could sit the Play of *King Lear* without weeping, would see *Sir John Falstaff* without laughing.

Sarah Fielding's approach is unusual as well as challenging. At the same time, it throws new light on the self-conscious attitude of Richardson, and others of his way of thinking, to the problem of pity as a tragic emotion.

An important representative of Richardson's way of thinking in that period was Frances Brooke. Before her marriage, she edited an interesting weekly called *The Old Maid*. It ran for

only eighteen months. Modelled on the *Spectator*, it carried essays on manners and morals. In the issue dated March 13, 1756, the author wrote:

It has always been a matter of great astonishment to me, that both the houses have given *Tate's* wretched alteration of *King Lear*, the preference to *Shakespeare's* excellent original; which *Mr. Addison*, the most candid, as well as judicious of critics, thinks so infinitely preferable, as to bear no degree of comparison; and one cannot help remarking particularly, and with some surprize, that *Mr. Garrick*, who professes himself so warm an idolator of this inimitable poet, and who is determined, if I may use his own words, in the prologue to *The Winter's Tale*,

To lose no drop of this immortal man.

Should yet prefer the vile adulterated cup of *Tate*, to the pure genuine draught, offered him by the master he avow's to serve with such fervency of devotion.

This was written only a few months before Garrick presented his alteration of *King Lear* which, to be precise, was staged on 28 October, 1756. The repeated appeals to Garrick to discontinue the staging of Tate's version eventually led to Garrick undertaking to prepare his own version of *King Lear*. To what extent this was a step in the right direction, we shall see presently. Meanwhile it is important to give details of the pressure from the other side too, that is from those who distinctly favoured Tate's version of the play. Indeed, that alone can present a balanced picture of the pressures and counter-pressures on Garrick which decided him to come out with his own compromise version.

In *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing* (1750), Shakespeare (and not Tate) was commended for having 'thrown into the mouth of this lady [Cordelia] expressions, as full of love for *Edgar*, as those he has given to *Juliet* for *Romeo*.'<sup>21</sup> In the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1752) a correspondent, writing under the name of 'A.B.', echoed Lewis Theobald's view that there was at least 'one absurdity indeed which he [Shakespeare] might have corrected, without the knowledge

of mechanical rules, and that is, in the *catastrophe* of this piece, *Cordelia* and *Lear* should have survived, as Mr. *Tate* has made them in his alteration of this play'.<sup>22</sup> Charlotte Lennox, one of the first critics to study Shakespeare's sources, wrote in 1754, 'Had *Shakespear* followed the Historian, he would not have violated the Rules of poetical Justice; he represents Vice punished, and Virtue rewarded; in the Play one Fate overwhelms alike the Innocent and the Guilty, and the Facts in the History are wholly changed to produce Events, neither probable, necessary, nor just.'<sup>23</sup> To swell this chorus of enthusiastic approval of *Tate*, Arthur Murphy also joined in, though, to be sure, his was a better-argued approach than that of the others. While concluding his reply to *Joseph Warton*, *Murphy*<sup>24</sup> observed:

The close of this Tragedy is full of Terror and Commiseration, and our great Poet has here given us a Death, which is not often found in the Playhouse Bill of Mortality, *viz.* the Death of *Lear* without the Dagger, or the Bowl. But, perhaps, after all the Heart-piercing Sensations, which we have before endured through the whole Piece, it would be too much to see this actually performed on the Stage; from the Actor whom I have already named [*Garrick*], I am sure it would; though, I should be glad to see the Experiment made, convinced at the same Time that the Play, as it is altered, will always be most agreeable to an Audience, as the Circumstances of *Lear's* Restoration, and the virtuous *Edgar's* Alliance with the amiable *Cordelia*, must always call forth those gushing Tears, which are swelled and ennobled by a virtuous Joy...

Thus, subject as *Garrick* was to pressure from both sides, he thought it expedient, it appears, to steer a middle path between the two opposing points of view. In his version which was published for the first time in 1773, the 'happy' ending as well as the love affair between *Edgar* and *Cordelia* are retained. The Fool is still omitted. The chief improvement that *Garrick* effected was to restore a great deal of Shakespeare's poetry. Indeed he advertised his version as one 'With Restorations from Shakespeare',<sup>25</sup> which is significant in so far

as he based himself upon the original text and not upon Tate's devitalized version. In order to underline this point, George Winchester Stone, Jr., who, in a series of articles, has defended Garrick against his nineteenth-century detractors, affirms that, as compared to the 1773 edition, the 1786 edition carries the process of restoration from Shakespeare still further.<sup>26</sup>

It might be asked, however, what is the critical significance of Garrick's version? George Odell's<sup>27</sup> answer is that Garrick's version was 'as good as a false start allowed it to be'. This is fair; equally fair is his further comment, 'The result is precisely as if one looked again through recently polished windows, after for a long time having viewed the scene through very dirty glass.' The only qualification one might offer to the above statement is that, when faced with the same problem as Garrick, George Colman the Elder—only thirteen years later—acquitted himself much better. As a matter of fact, Colman came very close to exorcising the ghost of Tate altogether.

### III

And yet, it must be admitted that Garrick's understanding of what the audiences wanted was decidedly surer than that of Colman. Of hostile reactions to Garrick's alteration, there were almost none. Either commentators were indifferent to Shakespeare or they were satisfied with the alterations made to suit the contemporary mood. For instance, one Joseph Pittard, while discussing Garrick's histrionic talent, made a passing reference to *King Lear*, without in any way taking sides on the question of the alterations of Shakespeare. He said:<sup>28</sup>

This Play terminates happily, as it is acted different from the Manner in which *Shakespear* wrote it: *Cordelia* is made Queen, and *Lear* retires, to pass away his Life in Quietness and Devotion. Many of the Passages are transposed from the Order they stand in the Original; for that Reason I have sent you the Alteration, that you may see it as it is played. The words which express the

*Versions of King Lear*

Joy, at the Thoughts of *Cordelia's* being a Queen, are spoke with an Emphasis and Energy, which is peculiar to Mr. *Garrick's* only: And though the Poet is no longer visible in this Place, the Player sustains his Character in this also.

Since Pittard was writing in praise of Garrick it would be safe to infer that he must have seen Garrick playing in his own version of *King Lear*. To that extent, he may also be said to have approved of it.

Thomas Wilke, however, took care to be more specific in his reference to both the versions of *King Lear*. Writing in 1759, he said:<sup>29</sup>

✓ In some things it were injustice not to own that Tate has changed Shakespeare's plot for the better: in Shakespeare we see the king bringing in the body of his Cordelia, whom he supposes to have hanged herself: the picture here, with all its concomitants, raises disgust, and rather excites horror than creates pleasure. But Tate, to make amends for his judicious emendations, lest too much merit should accrue to him from them, has left out some of the finest speeches in the character of Lear, which Mr. Garrick has properly restored; and they are, I believe, retained by other performers.

This was emphatic support of Garrick's policy of retaining the structural outline of Tate's version, but substituting for it as much of Shakespeare's language as was possible. In a sense, therefore, Garrick's approach had been vindicated.

It is curious, however, that though otherwise so close to each other, Dr. Johnson did not make any reference to Garrick's version in the course of his remarks on *King Lear*. Indeed he pointedly mentioned Tate but not Garrick. His remarks on *King Lear*, too well-known to be reproduced here, refer to Tate's version and not to that of Garrick. Is one to conclude from this that Garrick's version had not made as deep an impression on the public as we are disposed to believe? A correspondent writing under the name of 'Theatricus' in the same year which saw the publication of Dr. Johnson's

edition seems to imply as much. Commenting on some newspaper criticism of the performance of *King Lear* at the two rival theatres, he concluded, 'Upon the whole I think candid judgement will allow the play to be well performed at both houses; and Tate's *Lear* (as at Covent Garden) the best and most agreeable alteration.'<sup>30</sup> The whole question (which of the two versions was better) was, however, soon complicated by the appearance of Colman's version in 1768.

The reasons which prompted Colman to prepare yet another version of *King Lear* are described by him as follows:<sup>31</sup>

Now this very expedient of *a love* betwixt Edgar and Cordelia, on which Tate felicitates himself, seemed to be one of the capital objections to his alteration: for even supposing that it rendered Cordelia's indifference to her father more probable (an indifference which Shakespeare has no where implied), it assigns a very poor motive for it; so that what Edgar gains on the side of romantick generosity, Cordelia loses on that of real virtue. The distress of the story is so far from being heightened by it, that it has diffused a languor and insipidity over all the scenes of the play from which *Lear* is absent; . . . and had the scenes been affectingly written, they would at least have divided our feelings, which Shakespeare has attached almost entirely to *Lear* and Cordelia, in their parental and filial capacities; thereby producing passages infinitely more tragick than the embraces of Cordelia and the ragged Edgar, which would have appeared too ridiculous for representation, had they not been mixed and incorporated with some of the finest scenes of Shakespeare.

This reveals, as Odell<sup>32</sup> said, 'a new conscience in matters Shakesperian'. But, perhaps for that very reason, Colman failed to carry the bulk of the theatre-going public with him. It is not that public support was lacking altogether: only, what little there was did not add up to much. *The Monthly Review*, for instance, said:<sup>33</sup>

The admirers of Shakespeare are obliged to Mr. Colman

for having refined the excellent tragedy of King Lear 'from the alloy of Tate, which has so long been suffered to debase it'. There are, in our opinion, several very judicious alterations made, in this revisal of one of our most capital dramas; though in some respects, perhaps, the critics may dissent from the judgment of this ingenious Editor; and it is also equally probable that no two of them will agree in their decisions.

Another brief but more appreciative comment came from Benjamin Victor<sup>34</sup> who said:

The Intent of this Alteration was, to clear this celebrated Tragedy from the Love Scenes of *Edgar* and *Cordelia*, which were introduced into this Play by the Poet Laureat Mr. Tate.—This Love Business has been ever ridiculed by the Connoisseurs and Admirers of *Shakespeare*; and yet when the above Alteration was performed, the Play-going People, in general, seemed to lament the loss of those Lovers in the Representation.

As a matter of fact, Colman's exclusion of the Edgar-Cordelia affair provoked considerable criticism. Of those who objected to it, Francis Gentleman<sup>35</sup> is both vigorous and representative. He asserted that the

incident of Edgar's saving Cordelia from the Bastard's ruffians, is not only as we think, defensible, but worthy of praise as a happy thought, and well calculated for action; as is the princess's cordial and becoming deportment to her exiled deliverer when he makes himself known. This scene ever has, and ever will have, except upon unfeeling stoical criticism a very engaging effect; it enriches and recommends both the characters so much, that we must pronounce Mr. Colman's objection to it, as the whimsical offspring of judgment too squeamishly chaste; especially where, in his preface, he sneers at Cordelia's embracing the ragged Edgar. . . . The matter appears to us in so fair a point of view, that we are bold to say, if SHAKESPEARE, that competent and liberal judge of human

nature, was alive, he would consider this as an ornament also.

It is not difficult to see where Gentleman's sympathies lie. Nor is it difficult to see why Colman did not achieve the degree of success that he deserved. According to C. B. Hogan,<sup>36</sup> Colman's version was acted 15 times between 1768 and 1800, whereas Garrick's version (done twelve years before Colman's) was acted 61 times. One obvious explanation for the comparative lack of popularity of Colman's version is the fact that Colman was not as popular as Garrick. But surely no less important is the fact that Colman's version was much closer to Shakespeare and, hence, not very acceptable to contemporary audiences.

Gentleman underlined this point by showing how the Edgar-Cordelia affair and the 'happy' ending were, in a way, interdependent upon each other. In his own words:<sup>37</sup>

Cordelia's piety merits the highest reward of temporal happiness, which TATE has given here, by a connection with the man of her heart; the becoming a queen, through France's generous behaviour, as we do not hear of any previous attachment in his favour, cannot be deemed so delicate or adequate a compensation for her virtues, as bestowing her on Edgar, who is thereby also recompensed in a peculiar manner for both the love and loyalty he has manifested; the old king's consent, with Gloster's and Kent's hearty blessing, shed a brilliance on TATE's last scene, highly pleasing to every good and tender mind; it adds great force to the old king's restoration, and furnishes, to our apprehension, as satisfactory and compleat a catastrophe as any in the whole scope of dramatic composition.

It appears that Colman, too, was aware of the connection between the love-interest of Tate's version and its 'happy' ending. What is more, apart from successfully excluding the Edgar-Cordelia affair from his version, he probably also tried to restore the tragic ending of *King Lear*. There is no definite evidence for such a statement. His published version ends

happily, not unhappily. However, there is one piece of evidence which strongly suggests the possibility of his having tried to restore the original ending. In the *Theatrical Review*, usually attributed to John Potter, is to be found the following comment on Colman's version in the issue dated 23 November, 1771:

At *Covent Garden Theatre*, Mr. Colman has introduced another alteration of this Play, in which he had availed himself of some of *Tate's* errors, or rather over-sights, omitting the episode of the loves of *Edgar* and *Cordelia*, and considerably heightened the distress of the catastrophe; but we doubt, very much, whether humanity will give him her voice in preference to *Tate*.

This is not specific enough to warrant any definite inference; but what the same reviewer wrote on 30 December, 1771, leaves little room for doubt:

Mr. Colman has made several very judicious alterations, at the same time, that we think his having restored the original distressed Catastrophe, is a circumstance not greatly in favour of humanity or delicacy of feeling, since it is now, rather too shocking to be borne; and the rejecting the Episode of the loves of *Edgar* and *Cordelia*, so happily conceived by *Tate*, has, beyond all doubt, greatly weakened the Piece, both in the perusal and representation: However, with respect to this particular, we only speak from our own feelings, being aware, that though we dissent from the judgement of Mr. Colman, it is equally probable, that others may subscribe to it.

If Colman really tried to restore the tragic ending of *King Lear* but felt obliged to abandon the attempt, it must be said to his credit that, at least in this respect, he was much ahead of his times. Indeed, this was even more courageous than his rejection of the love-interest so profusely introduced by *Tate*. That he probably did try to restore the tragic ending is supported by another piece of evidence too. Thomas Davies,<sup>38</sup> who preferred Garrick's version to that of Colman (mainly because the former did not cause him distress), said about the latter,

'Even Mr. Colman was, after mature deliberation, obliged to make Lear end happily'. Does 'mature deliberation' refer to deliberation in the study or to an experiment—or experiments—on the stage? If Davies means the former, how did he hear about Colman's deliberations?

#### IV

The situation after Colman's failure to win public favour for his version was accurately described by Elizabeth Griffith<sup>39</sup> in the following words:

The Critics are divided in their opinions between the original and the altered copy [Tate's version]. Some prefer the first, as a more general representation of human life, where fraud too often succeeds and innocence suffers: others prefer the latter, as a more moral description of what life should be.

But argument in this, as in many other cases, had better be left quite out of the question; for our feelings are often a surer guide than our reason; and by this criterion I may venture to pronounce, that the reader or spectator will always be better pleased with the happy, than the unfortunate, catastrophe of innocence and virtue.

Besides, if Dramatic exhibitions are designed, as they certainly should be, to recommend virtue and discourage vice, there cannot remain the least manner of dispute in our minds whether Shakespeare or Tate have fulfilled Horace's precept of *utile dulce* the best. However, if *pity* and *terror*, as the Critics say, are the principal objects of Tragedy, surely no Play that ever was written can possibly answer both these ends better than this performance, as it stands in the present text.

Mrs. Griffith who was writing in 1775 has, in her own way, drawn attention to a dilemma that faced critics in the second half of the eighteenth century. As is evident from her manner of putting the issue, she sees an antithesis between *utile dulce* and *pity* and *terror*. In point of fact it would not be wrong to take this antithesis as an oblique reference to the cleavage of opinion

in this period between the defenders of poetic justice and its detractors. While discussing *King Lear* in the context of this argument about poetic justice, a critic, writing in 1774, made the following observations:<sup>40</sup>

The morals of Shakespeare's play are in general extremely natural and just; yet why must innocence unnecessarily suffer? Why must the hoary, the venerable Lear be brought with sorrow to the grave? Why must Cordelia perish by an untimely fate? the amiable, the dutiful, the innocent Cordelia! . . . that such a melancholy catastrophe was by no means necessary, is sufficiently evinced by the manner in which the same play is now performed. Ingratitude now meets with its proper punishment, and the audience now retire, exulting in the mutual happiness of paternal affection, and filial piety. Such, if practicable, should be the winding up of all dramatic representations, that mankind may have the persuasive allurements to all good actions: for although virtue depressed may be amiable, virtue triumphant must be irresistible.

But it may perhaps be objected by some, that the death of the wicked cannot occasion pity; and if innocence and virtue are not to fall beneath the stroke of oppression and injustice, where is the pathos, where is the tender sympathy? To this it may be answered, in the unmerited misfortunes, in the agonizing distress of the innocent; in seeing the virtuous involuntarily led to the perpetration of some horrid crime, or in the dread apprehension of having already committed it, or tottering on the very brink of perdition. . . . It is not my design to condemn those tragedies, in which innocence falls a victim to treachery or violence; we see but too many instances of it in real life; consequently it cannot be improper for the stage, which ought to represent living manners. I would be understood therefore not to reject other tragedies, but to give the preference to those, in which death, punishment, or remorse, await the guilty only. And as at all dramatic representations I am to see but an imitation of nature, let the delusion be on the side of virtue, that I may still

flatter myself with the pleasing belief, that to be good is to be happy.

It is not the conclusion of this argument which is so important as the manner in which that conclusion is arrived at. Indeed the conclusion is still roughly the same, as, say, that of Gildon, but the argument gives due weight to the contrary point of view. Going further, it might be said that it is true not only of this critic but also of several others. For instance, the *Monthly Review* (June 1784), while reviewing the *Dramatic Miscellanies* of Thomas Davies, expressed astonishment at his approval of 'the ridiculous loves between Edgar and Cordelia.'<sup>41</sup> However, when it came to a discussion of the tragic ending of *Lear*, the *Review* did not express itself in such forthright terms, but said, 'In the catastrophe, Tate has some merit: though we wonder that Garrick, who hazarded an alteration of Hamlet, never attempted a restoration of the conclusion of Lear, a scene which he, of all men, was most equal to exhibit; a scene which contains touches equal to any from the hand of Shakespeare.' To give a balanced picture, however, it must be added that the other important journal of the day, the *Critical Review* (July 1784), while reviewing the same book, confessed its dilemma in the manner typical of the period. It said:<sup>42</sup>

Lear has derived little advantage from the efforts of those who endeavoured to remove its imperfections; but we still prefer the happy conclusion: reason opposes it, while the tortured feelings at once decide the contest.

In place of the earlier unanimity of approach, these opinions represent a much greater diversity of emphasis. That this was linked up with the general weakening of the neoclassical dogma in this period will be readily admitted. But it needs to be added that the fight for the restoration of Shakespeare's text—and the fight centred, in a sense, around the text of *King Lear*—was not won without a great deal of further effort. However, the effort was made mainly by people not connected with the stage. Such people could afford to express opinions which the theatrical managers, always a cautious and timid lot, did not dare to put into practice. Colman's failure had been, to some

extent, a warning. At the same time, it was such opinions which in the long run led to that revolution in taste which, amongst other things, helped to restore Shakespeare's original text. The following opinion, probably by John Litchfield,<sup>43</sup> provides a fair indication of the new temper of thinking:

Tragedy, by the blended affections of *Terror* and *Compassion*, humanizes with Pity, and regulates with Apprehension. *To weaken* either, is to subtract from the vital principles of its being.

There may be, nevertheless, certain innovating coxcombs, proud enough, and presumptuous enough, to new-model a WONDER of GENIUS, and rashly wrest from the Poet the appropriation of his own conceptions. One of these blockheads was TATE.

KING LEAR, without doubt, the noblest Tragedy existing, has been thus disgraced by puny addition, and the whole *moral* force of the poem totally conjured away. Instead of the fine catastrophe of the original Play, where monstrous irascibility and impetuous pride sink sacrificed upon the *Altar of Justice*, here *Restoration* comes, with *healing wings*, as if our hearts were too tender for misery—capable indeed of a sigh, but too imbecile for *true* tragic passion.

The present age rejects, from *one Play* of this immortal Bard, the touches of GARRICK; the inference any one may deduce.—We claim, from Taste and Judgement, a revival of the Piece as *originally written*.

It would be misleading to say that after 1789, there were no opinions in favour of Tate's or Garrick's version. Henry James Pye, the author of *A Commentary Illustrating the Poetics of Aristotle* (1792),<sup>44</sup> is only one of the numerous people who still clung to the conception of tragedy which invariably demanded the observance of poetic justice. Pye repeated these views even in his *Comments on the Commentators on Shakespear* (1807).<sup>45</sup> More serious than all these opinions, however, was John Kemble's new version of *King Lear* in 1809. Instead of moving towards Shakespeare's text, he borrowed lavishly from Tate. In this respect, his version was distinctly inferior to that of Garrick. In fact, what

he did may be seen from Genest's<sup>46</sup> comment in 1832, 'Kemble, not content with injuring Shakespeare by revising *King Lear*, here thinks proper to insult him, by advertising his own alteration of Tate's Lear, as Shakespeare's play—there are no less than five characters in the bill which were not in *King Lear* as written by Shakespeare.'

Despite this, in keeping with developments in other fields of literary activity, the tide was turning increasingly in favour of a return to Shakespeare's text. Writing in 1808, Leigh Hunt asserted that 'Shakespeare made his play end unhappily, because he knew that real nature required such a catastrophe'.<sup>47</sup> From this, it was only a short step to Lamb's well-known statement:<sup>48</sup>

A happy ending!—as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through,—the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation,—why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station,—as if at his years, and with his experience, any thing was left but to die.

Who shall say that in his fidelity to Shakespeare, Lamb was not displaying a close fidelity to Shakespeare's text? Kent's speech when Edgar draws his attention to Lear's death makes the same point:

Vex not his ghost: O! Let him pass; he hates him  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer. (V. iii. 313-15)

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# SHAKESPEARE AND THE NEOCLASSICAL THEORY OF DRAMA

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THE controversy about Shakespeare's reputation in the 18th century ended long ago and the late Professor Nichol Smith's view that 'at no time in this century was he not popular'<sup>1</sup> has now come to be wholly accepted. What still remains controversial, however, is the extent to which his impact was felt on the neoclassical theory of drama. The popular view still is that Shakespeare as an 'unaccountable accident'<sup>2</sup> and that the general thesis of the age 'that good poetry could be produced only by those who knew and obeyed the rules, and only in ages of good sense and good taste'<sup>3</sup> remained totally unaffected by Shakespeare. The holders of this view do, of course, concede that Shakespeare was too great a master of dramatic poesy to be altogether ignored and he had, therefore, to be 'accommodated'<sup>4</sup> in this general thesis. This 'accommodation' could conveniently be achieved by claiming that Shakespeare was great in spite of everything—'in spite of his age, in spite of his audience, in spite of his language,'<sup>5</sup> and, of course, in spite of his ignorance of the rules.

However plausible this theory may sound, it fails satisfactorily to answer the question whether Shakespeare could in fact be thus 'accommodated', and, further, whether this 'accommodation' of Shakespeare in the general neoclassical thesis left that thesis intact. The purpose of the present paper is to show, first, that in the earlier stages, the neoclassical critics did not make much attempt to 'accommodate' Shakespeare in the contemporary theory of drama and, in fact, tended to reject him altogether; and, secondly, that with the rise in Shakespeare's reputation the age became doubtful about the adequacy of the neoclassical thesis itself. In this second phase, the neoclassical thesis failed to remain intact and indeed came largely to be repudiated. It is not after all strange. The English mind cannot wholly accept a theory of drama which leaves out

Shakespeare. Such a theory of drama may come from the ancients or moderns of any nation but to be acceptable in England it has got to come to terms with Shakespeare.

[In a radio talk printed in the *Listener*, 25th November, 1936, T. S. Eliot warned the writers of poetic drama in England 'to get away from Shakespeare'.] Almost an identical warning (though for different reasons) was given by Dryden to his contemporaries in the beginning of the Restoration period. Dryden's contention was that Shakespeare and his contemporaries had exhausted the possibilities of one type of drama and that the choice before his age was 'either not to write at all, or to attempt some other way'<sup>6</sup> This 'other way', Dryden could not have failed to realize, had to be radically different from the Shakespearean way.

The heroic play which the Restoration age evolved may profitably be considered as a reaction against Shakespearean tragedy. It came into existence in response to the needs of an aristocracy which had largely been uprooted and which could not be wholly rehabilitated in spite of the restoration of monarchy. In its behaviour and attitudes it exhibited an understandable sense of moral and political insecurity. It had been reduced to the necessity of seeking sustenance in things and ideas which had vanished because of historical forces outside its control. Their need was not for a drama which should interpret contemporary reality for them as Shakespearean drama had done for his age, but for a drama which should give them the illusion of those nobler values of life (like Love and Honour) which their society had either lost or was in the process of losing. Their craving for romance and heroism is to be related to this ever-growing emptiness in their lives. The new drama which the age evolved for their satisfaction had necessarily to remove itself from real life and its problems. It had indeed to become essentially artificial. It is in this context that the Restoration heroic play has to be understood and judged. Instead of dismissing this play as fantastic and exotic, we should always bear in mind that it performed an important psychological function for a class of people in this period.

To achieve this function, the heroic play had to reject precisely those features of Shakespearean tragedy which

were essential to it. [The most vital of these features (and the most baffling for the neoclassical period) was its tragic view of the universe. Shakespearean tragedy is cruel and painful and it offers no comfort to the individual—the ‘unaccommodated man’, the ‘poor, bare, forked animal’.<sup>7</sup> Whatever comfort is ultimately offered comes from within, from the inner strength of man, from his ‘readiness’ and ‘ripeness’ in the face of circumstance. For the Restoration age this was too strenuous a view of the universe to adopt and it preferred to think that the universe was divinely planned and controlled. In serious drama, at any rate, it almost deliberately shrank away from the painful truth about life which Shakespeare had embodied in his tragedies.] Consequently, it chose for its plays ‘heroic’ themes and characters instead of ‘tragic’ ones and explained human destiny in terms of virtues and vices. At its crudest level such an attitude got rigidly embodied in what came to be described as poetic justice. Poetic justice left no room for the operation of those inscrutable and inexorable forces which are always at work in a tragic universe. It offered a view of life which was at once simple, comforting and rational. Shakespearean tragedy could give no comfort to minds fed on such a naïve faith.) One of their major complaints against Shakespeare is his persistent and wholesale rejection of their simplified world-picture. Rymer’s real attack against *Othello* is largely this. He is not able to understand a play which should present tortured innocence as its theme in a noble character like Desdemona. He vehemently complains that instead of ‘moving pity, or any passion Tragical and reasonable’, *Othello* ‘can produce nothing but horror and aversion’.<sup>8</sup> Such a ‘Catastrophe’ can only ‘envenome and sour our spirits’ and make us ‘grumble at Providence; and the government of the world’.<sup>9</sup> He asks in despair, ‘If this be our end, what boots it to be Vertuous?’<sup>9</sup> Such a question can perhaps be asked more appropriately about *King Lear* where, in the words of Kent, all is ‘cheerless, dark and deadly’.<sup>10</sup> It is no surprise that Nahum Tate gave it a happy ending in his own version of the play and proved that ‘there are Gods, and Virtue is their Care’. (V, iii). In a sense the eternal theme of the heroic play is to justify the ways of God to man. In almost every play ‘the Hand of Providence appears’<sup>11</sup> on the side of virtue and it is monotonous-

ly claimed that 'the Gods guard those virtues they inspire.'<sup>12</sup> Another feature of the Shakespearean tragedy which the neoclassical age found unacceptable was its 'frightening inclusiveness'<sup>13</sup>—its capacity to mix all kinds of elements—pain, joy, ugliness, heroism, buffoonery. Mixing of the comic and the tragic was especially reprehensible in the eyes of the age. But it is this mixture which gives Shakespearean tragedy a sense of reality which no other tragedy has possessed in this measure. It is often not recognized that an age which does not have this capacity of bringing the comic and the tragic together fails to produce great tragedy. Professor Clifford Leech has rightly remarked: 'If the tragedy and comedy of an age remain akin, tragedy will maintain contact with the earth and give us real men and women instead of Almanzor and Almihide, will make us look at the human situation without editing; comedy will not show a blindness to the stresses of actuality, will aim at a statement concerning human life and not merely at an evening's libertinage, will have the capacity to produce a *Troilus*, a *Tartuffe*, a *Cherry Orchard*.'<sup>14</sup> The Restoration age, however, wanted its tragedy to be heroic and its comedy to be an evening's libertinage. It, therefore, denounced Shakespeare's mixing of the comic and the tragic. Dryden censured Shakespeare for indiscriminately combining, both in subject-matter and style, the majestic and the mean. 'Never did any author', Dryden bewailed, 'precipitate himself from such height of thought to so low expressions, as he often does.'<sup>15</sup> (Thomas Rymer) found Shakespeare's habit of mixing 'so much farce' with 'Apocryphal Matter in his Tragedies'<sup>16</sup> outrageous. This 'Bedlam Buffoonery'<sup>17</sup> gave such a rude shock to the fashionable men and women of the Restoration period that as a compensation Dryden and his contemporaries offered them the heroic play which, in Dryden's words, was a 'serious' play 'unmixed with mirth.'<sup>18</sup> It was indeed very much more—'an imitation, in little, of an heroic poem.'<sup>19</sup> Its theme was Love and Honour and it consciously avoided, in the interest of its heroic tone, all comic and familiar elements.

[The introduction of poetic justice and the removal of comic elements more or less served the same purpose. One expelled from serious drama whatever was painful or disturbing, the other whatever was vulgar and smelt too strongly of life in

the raw. Falstaff's mock-defence of him to the Prince, who is playing the rôle of the King—'banish Peto, banish Bardolph, ... banish not him (Falstaff) thy Harry's company: banish plump Jack, and banish all the world'<sup>20</sup>—has an unsuspected critical relevance for students of dramatic theory. The moment you banish comic elements from drama, you 'banish all the world'.

Another contemporary demand which also achieved a similar purpose was insistence on the observance of the unities of time and place. The demand may have been prompted by laudable artistic motives but often its effect was to reduce characters and action to a neat mechanical pattern. In its attempts to achieve a perfect 'contrivance of the plot',<sup>21</sup> contemporary serious drama lost that imaginative hold on life without which it could offer neither 'the variety and greatness of characters'<sup>22</sup> nor 'the imitation of humour and passions.'<sup>23</sup> It did indeed cease to be 'animated with the soul of Poesy.'<sup>24</sup>

These changes in the spirit and structure of tragedy necessitated a change in tragic style. A 'heroic' play dealing with 'heroic' characters and passions and arousing admiration for 'heroic' virtue had necessarily to use 'heroic' language. The age evolved an exalted style which rejected low and familiar words.<sup>25</sup> Rhyme, or the 'heroic measure', naturally followed as the easiest means of achieving this heightening of language. Such a heightening is natural enough in a heroic poem but in tragedy it is fatal. Rhyme—and all that it implied—had the effect of destroying that unique and unsurpassable style for poetic drama which Shakespeare had bequeathed. There may have been excellent historical reasons for adopting rhyme in place of blank verse but in actual effect it largely contributed to the death of tragedy in England. Rhyme did, perhaps, succeed in making poetic style clear, precise and definite, as its advocates claimed, but it took away all flexibility and naturalness from it and indeed destroyed those very qualities which made it *dramatic*—'its subtlety, its indirection, its hidden layers of reference; its consciousness of the other world ... its sensibility, the amazing range of its feelings and moods, from the heavy and gross to the almost imperceptibly light and transient.'<sup>26</sup> Style in poetic drama can now argue, declaim, describe and decorate, but it has lost its old capacity

of creating characters and adequately depicting moments of spiritual crisis.

With the introduction of poetic justice, the unities and rhyme and the rejection of comic elements, the disintegration of the Shakespearean synthesis was complete. Here indeed was the 'surrender' of the English stage to those 'French notions of dramatic decorum and construction' to which Professor Peter Alexander recently made a painful reference.<sup>27</sup> Through this 'surrender' alone, it was felt, could a new poetic drama emerge. But was this 'surrender' complete and could it last?

The age faced a real dilemma. Shakespeare obeyed no rules and in their eyes had committed various crimes against good sense and yet 'many times' he had 'written better than any poet in any language'.<sup>28</sup> Dryden and his contemporaries had made bold departures in drama but they had failed altogether to achieve greatness. What had gone wrong with them? Dryden's confession in his Prologue to *Aureng-Zebe* (1676) is at once both revealing and pathetic:

Not that it's worse than what before he writ,  
 But he has now another taste of wit;  
 And, to confess a truth, though out of time,  
 Grows weary of his long-lov'd Mistris, Rhyme.  
 Passion's too fierce to be in fetters bound,  
 And nature flies him like enchanted ground:  
 What verse can do, he has performed in this,  
 Which he presumes the most correct of his.  
 But spite of all his pride, a secret shame  
 Invades his breast at *Shakespear's* sacred name:  
 Awed when he hears his god-like Romans rage,  
 He, in a just despair, would quit the stage;  
 And to an age less polished, more unskilled,  
 Does, with disdain, the foremost honours yield.

Dryden here admits that in spite of being 'less polished' and 'more unskilled' Shakespeare's age had achieved greatness which was utterly beyond him and his contemporaries. He correctly traces the reason for this greatness in their capacity to depict 'passion' and paint 'nature'. He regrets that 'nature flies him like enchanted ground'. But that is precisely what he

and his fellow-playwrights had studiously tried to achieve. They had deliberately chosen to paint only that 'best nature, ... which is wrought up to a nobler pitch'<sup>29</sup> and only such 'passion' as can be exalted beyond normal humanity. They had done the same thing in the case of language since 'sublime subjects ought to be adorned with the sublimest, and (consequently often) with the most figurative expressions'.<sup>30</sup> Rhyme was only an external symbol of the artificiality that they had chosen as their cherished goal and one of its important functions had been to 'bound and circumscribe the fancy'<sup>31</sup> and to put 'fierce' passions under 'fetters'. But this had been a disastrous mistake. Tragedy and artificiality cannot go together: tragedy must choose human passions and human suffering rather than heroic love and valour as its natural themes. It should indeed be in the Shakespearean tradition. It is not a mere coincidence that the attack against the heroic play started with the demand that serious drama should return to the old natural style. Shakespeare's example indeed became a rallying point for almost all forces fighting against the heroic play:—

...Shakespear, long since in's Grave  
 In Choicest Libraries a place will have,  
 ✓ When not a modern Play will scape the fire.<sup>32</sup>

✓ [ Luckily the prophecy contained in these lines has not come true and we have zealously preserved almost all plays of the period but the fact remains that soon enough the age came to realize that to produce genuine tragedy they needed 'the Nature, Wit and Vigour of foremost Shakespear.'<sup>33</sup> ]

✓ But the kind of Tragedy that Shakespeare wrote was beyond revival. It had died what in historical terms may be described as a natural death and later generations could do nothing about it. It was the product of a view of life which squarely faced the human predicament without being paralysed by it. ✓ This view of life had been almost wholly lost to the Restoration age and if the contemporary serious drama remains on the surface and is not able to say much that is of essential relevance to the human situation, the blame largely has to go to an age 'more gallant than the last.'<sup>34</sup> ✓ Dryden claimed that in his *All for Love* he was imitating 'the divine Shakespeare'<sup>35</sup> ✓

and there are echoes of Shakespeare in the plays of quite a few contemporary playwrights. But no contemporary playwright, Dryden, Otway or any one else, could really catch the spirit of Shakespeare or revive the vitality of 'the Shakespearean idiom'.<sup>36</sup> What Dryden said in the Prologue to his own version of *The Tempest* carries a much larger meaning than he really intended:

But Shakespear's Magick could not copy'd be;  
Within that circle none durst walk but he.

The real impact of Shakespeare, then, has to be sought on the age's critical thinking rather than on its actual achievement in the field of drama. Dryden's contemporaries might not have been as troubled by a sense of shame at Shakespeare's sacred name as he himself had been, but there is no doubt at all that the rejection of the heroic play did mean rethinking on the part of contemporary critics and playwrights on such important critical questions as the dramatic unities, tragic-comedy, poetic justice, the proper language for tragedy etc. To treat this re-examination of critical doctrines in isolation and to fail to relate it to the rising reputation of Shakespeare is to miss an exciting fact of literary history.

Such a re-examination was not too painful in the case of Dryden. In his first major critical work, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), he had already claimed to vindicate the honour 'of our English writers from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them'—and more especially the honour of Shakespeare 'who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul.'<sup>37</sup> (It is interesting to record, in passing, as a reflection on the English attitude to foreign domination in critical matters, that Dryden's chief opponent in the controversy, Robert Howard, also offered 'justification of our Nation's plays' and tried to prove why 'English Plays justly challenge the Preeminence'<sup>38</sup> over French, Spanish and Italian Plays.) Dryden's chief lapse in relation to Shakespeare occurred in 1672 when in his epilogue to *The Conquest of Granada* and the essay in defence of the epilogue he censured Shakespeare and his contemporaries for their 'low language, ridiculous plots,

violation of décorum.<sup>39</sup> Dryden soon recovered from this lapse and in his Heads of an Answer to Rymer (1678-1679?) adopted an extremely radical position towards the whole question of the rules when he declared that even Aristotle's critical ideas were valid only so long as they were considered in the context of Greek tragedy and that if Aristotle had seen English tragedy of the last age he 'might have changed his mind'. There is also the curious fact (noted by Zimansky)<sup>40</sup> that The Defence of the Epilogue which had appeared in 1672, last appeared in the 1678 edition and was omitted by Dryden from the 1687 and subsequent editions.

Addison's attitude to rules is equally hostile. He derives comfort from the fact that 'the inimitable Shakespeare is a stumbling-block to the whole tribe of these rigid critics.'<sup>41</sup> It is, however, in Johnson that the problem is squarely faced. If Shakespearean practice as a playwright is valid and the rules are of a secondary importance, then, argues Johnson, it is only fair to recall 'the principles of the drama to a new examination.'<sup>42</sup> This 'new examination' on any considerable scale never took place even at Johnson's hands but such an unambiguous attitude on the part of the most important man of letters in the period destroyed altogether the chances of rules dominating English criticism.

We must not, however, make too exaggerated a claim for Shakespeare's rôle in the process without noticing the awkward complexity of the situation. We should not forget, as the late Professor Nichol Smith reminded us, that in his Irene Johnson himself 'bowed to the rules' and that a man like Lewis Theobald, 'whom some would consider Shakespeare's greatest friend' in the 18th century, 'believed in the rules.'<sup>43</sup> On the question of Shakespeare as a defence for careless writing there is the contemptuous note of Pope on James Ralph in The Dunciad: 'Being advised to read the rules of dramatic poetry, he smiled and reply'd, Shakespeare writ without rules.'<sup>44</sup> In his prologue to The Distrest Mother (1712), Steele rebuked playwrights who shelter behind the view that 'Shakespeare's self transgressed':

And shall each Elf,  
Each Pigmy Genius, quote Great Shakespear's self!

Steele's real argument in his Prologue, however, seems to be that minor writers must make 'propriety' their 'Care' and, if possible, combine 'French correctness with *British Fire*'. But this combination is not possible, as Cibber reminded his contemporaries in his Prologue to *Zara* (1736):

'Tis strange, that Nature never should inspire  
A *Racine's* Judgment, with a *Shakespeare's* fire.

What shall be their attitude, then? Should they accept French rules of drama and produce plays 'Correctly flat, and most profoundly dull' (to quote Boden's Prologue to *The Modish Couple* (1732)) or follow Shakespeare, with all their handicaps, as Rowe claimed to do in his Prologue to *Jane Shore* (1714)?

With rough majestic force he (Shakespeare) moved the  
heart,  
And strength and nature made amends for Art.  
Our humble author does his steps pursue,  
He owns he had the mighty Bard in view.

One thing, however, is fairly clear. When rules come to be regarded as necessary only for 'duller men'<sup>45</sup> or when only such men find it easy to support them, the battle for rules in the minds of thinking men is in any case lost. If rules, 'like crutches, never became of any use but to the lame',<sup>46</sup> then surely they have no right to exist. And it was Shakespeare, more than any one else, who had shown their utter futility.

It is, however, the question of (tragi-comedy) which seems to clinch the issue. The age is almost unanimous in its condemnation of the mixing of the comic and the tragic. The practice is condemned as 'wholly Gothic' and 'barbarous'<sup>47</sup> and a play following it is contemptuously described as 'a monster with two heads'.<sup>48</sup> But the really interesting feature of this condemnation is that it applies largely to the Restoration tragi-comedy. It is not that Shakespeare is forgiven for following the practice but both Dryden and Johnson make an illuminating exception in his case. Historically Dryden's case is particularly important. In *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* it is Lesideius who launches the attack: 'There is no theatre in the world has anything so

absurd as the English tragi-comedy; 'tis a drama of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so; here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, a third of honour, and fourth a duel: thus, in two hours and a half we run through all the fits of Bedlam.'<sup>49</sup> The mere mention of 'honour' and 'duel' betrays Lesideius's target: it is the contemporary tragi-comedy rather than 'the English tragi-comedy' as such that he is attacking and his attack is absolutely unanswerable.<sup>50</sup> The heroic play and the comedy of manners cannot be mixed together: they are not only 'incompatible' ('are not mirth and compassion things incompatible'? Lesideius had asked) but mutually destructive. It is difficult to imagine Almanzor and Sir Fopling as companions in the same play for they represent not the tragic and the comic but the heroic and the foppish which in any case are an 'unnatural mingle.'<sup>51</sup> It is not this kind of a tragi-comedy which Neander defends but the Shakespearean kind when he contends that 'compassion and mirth in the same subject' do not 'destroy each other'.<sup>52</sup> It is this old kind of tragi-comedy which for Neander is 'a more pleasant way of writing for the stage, than was ever known to the ancients or moderns of any nation.'<sup>53</sup> Nothing demonstrates more powerfully Shakespeare's impact on contemporary thinking than this sharp distinction that Dryden makes between the Restoration tragi-comedy and the Shakespearean tragi-comedy. It also points to the unbridgeable gulf that exists in the period between theory and practice.

In Dr. Johnson's comments on Shakespeare's mixing of the comic and the tragic Dryden's argument is silently extended. It is 'a more pleasant way of writing... than was ever known to... any nation', Dr. Johnson seems to say, because it is not really a mixture of the comic and the tragic but composition of 'a distinct kind'.<sup>54</sup> (One is reminded of the late Professor Ellis-Fermor's description of the Fletcherian tragi-comedy as a new 'emotional type'.)<sup>55</sup> This 'kind' expresses 'the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner, burying his friend.'<sup>56</sup> 'This surely aims at the heart of the problem', Mary Lascelles comments on this passage, 'for it compels us to ask: what have the mourner and the reveller to say to one another when they meet?'.<sup>57</sup> She profoundly

adds: 'Have the mourner and the reveller anything of moment to say when they encounter? Not unless each, looking in the other's face, should recognise the lineaments of his own.'<sup>58</sup> This is the crux of the problem: Shakespeare's comedy and tragedy are fundamentally akin and in them mirth and compassion sustain each other. That is precisely, however, what does not happen in the neoclassical tragi-comedy. It is not an accident that this tragi-comedy soon disintegrates into drama of sentiment on the one hand and farce on the other.

The question of language is much more complicated and deserves a more comprehensive treatment than we are able to give here. In 1933 Prof. L. C. Knights' expressed the still widely held view that in the Augustan age 'the Shakespearean idiom' was 'out of the reach of criticism.'<sup>59</sup> The age, he argued with illustrations from Rymer, Dryden, Johnson and others, 'was incapable of fully understanding Shakespeare's use of words.'<sup>60</sup> This criticism, however, is prompted by Knights's basic thesis that 'the only profitable approach to Shakespeare is a consideration of his plays as dramatic poems, of his use of language to obtain a total complex emotional response.'<sup>61</sup> The neoclassical period would have found Knights's thesis unintelligible and in total conflict with the critical doctrines which they had inherited from the ancients. It is not that they regarded language as unimportant but that in their scale of values it came much after the other elements of drama. We have always to keep this in mind to do justice to their criticism of Shakespeare's language.

Rymer, of course, is a hopeless case and even about Johnson Knights's view that his 'great virtues as a critic did not include an understanding of Shakespeare's idiom'<sup>62</sup> may be partially correct. But Dryden's is not a simple case at all. He did, of course, find Shakespeare's style 'so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure'<sup>63</sup> and felt exasperated at Shakespeare's habit of saying 'nothing without a metaphor, a simile, an image, or description.'<sup>64</sup> But he did not deny 'so great a poet' the capacity to distinguish 'the blown puffy style from true sublimity.'<sup>65</sup> The distinction made by F. R. Leavis between Shakespeare's 'Poetry' in *Antony and Cleopatra* and Dryden's 'eloquence' in *All for Love*<sup>66</sup> was first made by Dryden himself in a famous passage in his

Preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679). After quoting a 'passionate description' from *Richard II*, Dryden offered the following perceptive comment on the whole question: 'To speak justly of this whole matter: 'tis neither height of thought that is discommended, nor pathetic vehemence, nor any nobleness of expression in its proper place; but 'tis a false measure of all these, something which is like 'em, and is not them; 'tis the Bristolstone, which appears like a diamond; 'tis an extravagant thought, instead of a sublime one: 'tis roaring madness, instead of vehemence; and a sound of words, instead of sense.'

If Shakespeare were stripped of all the bombast in his passions, and dressed in the most vulgar words, we should find the beauties of his thoughts remaining; if his embroideries were burnt down, there would still be silver at the bottom of the melting-pot: but I fear (at least let me fear it for myself) that we who ape his sounding words have nothing of his thought, but are all outside; there is not so much as a dwarf within our giant's clothes.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, let not Shakespeare suffer for our sakes; 'tis our fault, who succeed him in an age which is more refined, if we imitate him so ill that we copy his failings only, and make a virtue of that in our writings which in his was an imperfection.<sup>68</sup>

Dryden's admiration for Shakespeare in this passage is not complete for a modern reader as he still regards what L. C. Knights calls 'the metaphorical life'<sup>69</sup> of Shakespeare's language as an 'imperfection'. But perhaps it is in this passage that the impact of Shakespeare on contemporary thinking on language is seen at its best. In the beginning of his Preface to *Troilus and Cressida* Dryden had arrogantly claimed that in his own version of the play he was undertaking 'to remove that heap of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried' and had confidently added: 'I need not say that I have refined his language, which before was obsolete.'<sup>70</sup> But by the time he ended the Preface he had come to realize that in spite of all their claims, he and his contemporaries were merely 'dwarfs' compared to Shakespeare who belonged to a 'giant-race'.<sup>71</sup> In this passage the comparison is between the two styles—the Shakespearean figurative style (an 'imperfection') and the Restoration 'heroic' style ('all outside') and it is no mere coincidence that 1679, the year of this Preface, marks the

definite decline of the heroic play. Here indeed is visible the impact of an older writer on contemporary drama in a most decisive way. One may, of course, still ask, as has been done by an American critic, why English tragedy in the late seventeenth century did not turn to Shakespeare and 'merely substituted a fruitful mistake for a sterile one, sentimentalism for heroics'.<sup>72</sup> But, like everything else, Shakespeare's style could not be revived and we should feel content that at any rate theoretically the chief playwright of the period recognised its distinct superiority.

We need not be put off by the fact that in the passage quoted above, Dryden's emphasis is on the 'excellent' thoughts rather than on the language itself. It is enough praise that Dryden regards Shakespeare's language as adequate for these 'excellent' thoughts. His basic demand from all language is the same: its accommodation to the subject. Where this accommodation is lacking, language has failed in its essential function as a vehicle. It is this view of style which makes Dryden's famous statement in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* a high tribute to Shakespeare: 'But he is always great when some great occasion is presented to him; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of Poets.'<sup>73</sup>

This accommodation of style to subject is present in all contemporary criticism. One of Shakespeare's earliest admirers, Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle, takes such an accommodation for granted in her comment: 'Shakespeare had a Clear Judgement, a Quick Wit, a Spreading Fancy, a Subtil Observation, a Deep Apprehension, a most Eloquent Elocution.'<sup>74</sup> 'Nothing can be greater', we are told by Felton, 'and more lively than his Thoughts; nothing nobler, and more forcible than his Expression.'<sup>75</sup> Rowe echoed the sentiment, though with some reservations on the adequacy of language: 'His (Shakespeare's) Sentiments and Images of things are Great and Natural; and his Expression (tho' perhaps in some Instances a little Irregular) just and rais'd in Proportion to his subject and Occasion'.<sup>76</sup> Rowe also testified to 'the particular Pleasure' that the Duke of Somerset had taken in 'that beautiful Expression which is everywhere to be met with in Shakespeare.'<sup>77</sup>

Dryden had mentioned in his Preface to *All for Love* (1678): 'words and phrases must of necessity receive a change in

succeeding ages. But 'tis almost a miracle that much of his (Shakespeare's) language remains so pure.<sup>78</sup> Dennis agreed with Dryden about the purity of Shakespeare's language but his further comment on Shakespeare's style shows a remarkable critical insight: 'His Expression is in many places good and purer after a Hundred years; simple tho' elevated, graceful tho' bold, and easie tho' strong.'<sup>79</sup> Such descriptions are a commonplace of contemporary criticism but when applied to Shakespeare they come to acquire a deep meaning. The real merit of Shakespeare's style indeed is that it is a compound of many simples, that it includes everything, that it has a vitality which belongs not so much to language as to life itself. In a sense Shakespeare has no style: his characters speak their own virile and various tongues and all that Shakespeare does is to record what they speak. The time has not yet, of course, come when a major literary figure like (Thomas Gray) should declare, 'In truth, Shakespear's language is one of his principal beauties; and he has no less advantage over your Addisons and Rowes in this, than in... other great excellencies',<sup>80</sup> but there are people in the age who regard it as the most perfect dramatic instrument. This realization could not, however, help in the revival of the older style but it did expose the fatal deficiencies of the 'heroic' style which, in its attempts to raise language 'above the common dialect', had impoverished it greatly. Shakespeare's example was often cited against such elevation and appeals were made to the audience not to count as 'Low' 'What's natural'.<sup>81</sup> 'Rant', 'Rapture' and 'high flight'<sup>82</sup> came to be discredited and playwrights came to plead for the right to make their 'persons speak like men and women, and in such words as the real persons represented might be supposed to discourse in the same circumstances'.<sup>83</sup> Some playwrights also raised the basic problem of 'cloathing (the) Fiction with words that may keep up the dignity of Verse, while the tale requires all the Freedom and natural Turn of Prose'.<sup>84</sup> This is the real problem of style in poetic drama and Shakespeare alone of all English playwrights has satisfactorily solved it. In him alone, in T. S. Eliot's words, that 'perfection of verse drama' has been achieved which combines human action and human speech in such a way 'as to represent at once two aspects of dramatic and musical order'.<sup>85</sup> Dryden and his

contemporaries failed to achieve this 'perfection' altogether but it is some comfort to learn that when confronted with this problem they also ran 'to renew their acquaintance with Shakespeare' 'for no author ever writ with that Felicity.'<sup>86</sup>

The impact of Shakespeare on the age's thinking on poetic justice is very hard to assess. Addison was the first critic in England who described poetic justice as 'a ridiculous doctrine in modern criticism'<sup>87</sup> and who declared that in Nahum Tate's version *King Lear* had 'lost half its beauty.'<sup>88</sup> It is doubtful, however, whether Addison's views were influenced by Shakespeare to any appreciable extent. His reasons for opposing poetic justice are just (as moral) in their own way as those of the advocates of poetic justice. He is opposed to 'virtue' and 'innocence' being made 'happy and successful'<sup>89</sup> because that destroys pity which for him is a moralizing force. 'The instruction and moral are much finer', he tells us, 'where a man who is virtuous in the main of his character falls into distress, and sinks under the blows of fortune at the end of a tragedy, than when he is represented as happy and triumphant.'<sup>90</sup> 'Such an example', he adds, 'corrects the insolence of human nature, softens the mind of the beholder with sentiments of pity and compassion, comforts him under his own private affliction, and teaches him not to judge of men's virtues by their successes.' All this may explain contemporary sentimental tragedy but it is almost wholly inapplicable to Shakespeare. His plea that insistence on poetic justice 'would very much cramp the English tragedy, and perhaps give a wrong bent to the genius of our writers'<sup>91</sup> raises some hope in our minds that perhaps Addison is saying something fundamental here but it is shattered when we find him praising indiscriminately and almost in the same breath Shakespeare's *Othello*, South-erne's *Oroonoko*, Rowe's *Tamerlane* and Edmund Smith's *Phoedra and Hippolitus*.<sup>92</sup>

Johnson's case is equally disappointing for our purposes. Even though in his *Life of Addison* he concedes that 'the poet is certainly at liberty' to flout poetic justice, his basic stand seems to favour the doctrine. His comment on *King Lear* makes it obvious that he is totally incapable of appreciating the grim 'Justice' of Shakespearean tragedy: 'A play in which the wicked prosper and the virtuous miscarry may doubtless be good,

because it is a just representation of the common events of human life; but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded that the observation of justice makes a play worse, or that, if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue.<sup>93</sup> The question may legitimately be asked whether 'the other excellencies' in a play observing poetic justice would compare favourably in *quality* with those in a play like *King Lear*. Johnson's further comment that in the case of *King Lear*, 'the public has decided'<sup>94</sup> by preferring Tale's version to Shakespeare's does not do much credit to him. However important the reactions of a 'common reader' may be in certain matters, on the question of poetic justice they have always been muddled. It is a pity that in spite of 'his strongly religious sense of mystery in the universe, of the inscrutable', he failed to go deeper into 'the terrestrial distribution of good and evil, rewards and punishments'.<sup>95</sup>

Dryden is the only critic in the period who came to recognize, however haltingly, that the traditional doctrine of poetic justice was at bottom a threat to Shakespearean tragedy. Dryden may not have fully understood the spirit of this tragedy but the stand that he finally takes on poetic justice redeems all his deficiencies. He, of course, began as a traditionalist and in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, poetic justice indeed is the only question on which there is general agreement between all the participants in the discussion. But twice Dryden felt compelled to re-examine the question and on both occasions he took a firm stand. When Shadwell<sup>96</sup> attacked him and other writers of the comedy of manners for violating poetic justice and for rewarding vice, Dryden made the famous claim that comedy need not observe poetic justice at all, its primary aim being the providing of 'delight and divertisement'<sup>97</sup> to the audience. Tragedy, he conceded at this stage, had, of course, to observe poetic justice 'to deter mankind from the pursuit of vice'.<sup>98</sup> In 1678-9(?), however, when Rymer attacked the English tragedy of the last age for violating poetic justice, Dryden demanded whether it was absolutely essential for a tragic poet to 'reward virtue and punish vice'. It is remarkable that Dryden's views on poetic justice in his *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* (1678-9?) have not received sufficient attention. The

fault may be that of Dryden himself. He expresses his views with such caution and even diffidence that one tends to regard them as too tentative to be of any real importance. One reason for this lack of firmness on his part may be that *The Heads of An Answer to Rymer* are only rough notes which were meant to serve as hints towards a full and cogent answer to Rymer which was never written. The nature of these notes explains why at places Dryden tends to give the impression that he is really not against poetic justice at all. He, however, builds his argument slowly and almost imperceptibly which finally challenges the doctrine altogether. First, he respectfully suggests that the English tragedy of the last age need not really be condemned for failing to reward virtue and punish vice as it does in fact show some awareness of moral justice in the universe in its attempt to render 'virtue always amiable, though it be shown unfortunate; and vice detestable, tho' it be shown triumphant.'<sup>99</sup> [Dryden is not being very original here as he seems to have borrowed the idea almost wholly from Corneille who, in his first *Discourse*, had suggested that one way of presenting 'vices and virtues' was to make the good character 'always to be loved, though unfortunate' and the evil 'always hated, though triumphant'. But Dryden's real contribution to the debate does not lie in this tame deviation from Rymer but in his total though polite rejection of the latter's basic thesis. He takes his stand on Aristotle and declares: 'After all, we need not yield that the English way is less conducing to move pity and terror, because they often shew virtue oppressed and vice punished.'<sup>100</sup> His further comment on this 'English way' makes his position still clearer: 'the suffering of innocence and punishment of the offender is of the nature of English tragedy.'<sup>101</sup> It is painful to record that later critics have attached hardly any importance to these brief statements. It needs to be emphasized that the 'English tragedy' that Dryden is defending here is really the Shakespearean tragedy—a fact of supreme importance in the history of Shakespearean criticism. He is rejecting the traditional notion of poetic justice and taking his stand on what Shakespeare does in his tragedies where virtue is oppressed and vice punished. Dryden does not, of course, probe further into the tragic universe of Shakespeare. But it does great

credit to him as a critic that he should find Shakespeare's view of life in his tragedies acceptable to him in preference to the moral view propounded by Rymer and others. It shows not only that he transcends the limitations of his age but also that contact with a great writer like Shakespeare can quicken and transform one's sensibility.

Dryden could not have altogether ignored the views that he expressed on poetic justice in his *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* in his practice as a playwright. At least *Cleomenes* (1690) seems to have imbibed some of the Shakespearean spirit. In this play Dryden seems to have totally rejected the 'heroic' assumptions about life in favour of the truly 'tragic' ones. He ends this play on a note of tragic mystery: 'The rest is all unfathomable depth' (V, ii). It is revealing that his contemporaries condemned *Cleomenes* in the sharpest possible terms. 'In this play', we are told by James Drake in his *Ancient and Modern Stages Survey'd* (1699), 'Poetic Justice is altogether neglected, Virtue is everywhere depressed, and calamitous, and falls at last unavenged.' It is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that Dryden's real imitation of 'the divine Shakespeare' is to be sought in *Cleomenes* and not in *All for Love*.

In view of the excessive length of the essay, it is impossible to trace Shakespeare's influence on the contemporary theory of comedy. We may briefly mention the broad changes in outlook that took place in the case of Dryden. In his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), Dryden rejected Shakespeare altogether as a model for contemporary comic writers as he 'did not perfectly observe the laws of Comedy'. Fletcher was also found deficient as he too 'through carelessness made many faults'. Dryden found perfection only in Ben Jonson's comedies and praised him for being 'a careful and learned observer of the dramatic laws'.<sup>102</sup> Some years later, however, Dryden started wavering in his loyalty to Ben Jonson and, as has been recently pointed out,<sup>103</sup> by about 1685 the influence of Shakespeare was discernible not only in his critical thinking but also in his comic plays. In a famous statement in 1693 (in his Dedication to *Examem Poeticum*), it is true, he equated Shakespeare with Ben Jonson: 'Peace be to the venerable shades of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson: none of the living will presume to have any competition with them: as they were our predecessors, so they

were our masters.'<sup>104</sup> But this is a general statement showing his indebtedness to his Elizabethan predecessors and it is only fair that in such circumstances both Shakespeare and Ben Jonson should be honourably mentioned together. It is in 1694, in his Prologue to Congreve's *Double-Dealer*, that he announces the complete supremacy of Shakespeare over all comic writers. After claiming that Congreve was superior both to Jonson and Fletcher, he declared:

In him all beauties of this age we see;  
 Etherege his courtship, Southerne's purity;  
 The satire, wit, and strength of manly Wycherley.

.....  
 .....

Heav'n, that but once was prodigal before,  
 To Shakespeare gave as much: she could not give him  
 more.<sup>105</sup>

We may feel that the last statement here is unfair to Shakespeare but is it not logical to conclude that there is no getting away from Shakespeare? He is the yard-stick for all literary greatness: he is the eternal 'touch-stone'. He may be described as an 'unaccountable accident' only in the sense in which all great literature is an unaccountable accident. But every age takes this supreme 'accident' into account and even while it is busy reinterpreting him, it discovers its own identity in the realm of ideas. It should hardly need saying that he has to be reckoned with not only in the history of poetry and drama but also in the history of criticism.

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51. Watson, II, p. 202 ✓
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56. Wimsatt, op. cit. p. 29. Wimsatt calls it 'one of the few most pregnant passages of dramatic criticism written in England during the eighteenth century'. (p. xxiv.)
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60. Ibid. p. 10
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63. Watson, I, p. 239.
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66. Cf. 'Antony and Cleopatra' and 'All for Love': A Critical Exercise, *Scrutiny*, Vol. V, pp. 158-69. ✓
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now does he feel his title  
Hang loose about him, like a Giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.

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# THE ISOLATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC HEROES<sup>1</sup>

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THE hero in Shakespeare's major tragedies suffers isolation; he finds himself out of tune with the world that surrounds him and, more poignantly, in opposition to those with whom he had shared love and trust. This seems to me a significant aspect of the tragic situation as presented by Shakespeare, and I propose to analyse how such a conflict originates and what light it throws on the character of the tragic hero, both as it develops in the play and as it was in the past, in so far as the latter can be inferred from the play itself.

Obviously, all the tragedies written by Shakespeare do not lend themselves to analysis and discussion from this point of view. *Titus Andronicus*, immature and formless in so many ways, presents no coherent picture of the place of Titus in the Rome for which he has the honour to nominate the Emperor. The social environment is hardly actualized and, in personal relationships, only his misery at Lavinia's rape and disfigurement is emphasized. Even in this there is no dramatic or psychological consistency. Titus suffers a great deal but it is all in a phantasmagoric world of intrigue, which culminates in the gruesome banquet given by him, at which he is killed. Human relationships are not what we remember from this play.

The same can be said about *Timon of Athens*. It is a play that, on technical grounds, is difficult to accept as wholly written by Shakespeare, after the great tragedies that precede it in the generally accepted chronological order. Its emotional nihilism is equally difficult to reconcile with the almost mystical veneration of human ties in the tragedies beginning with *Hamlet*, and continuing up to *Coriolanus*. Timon is isolated, but his isolation is meaningless. From his curse,

Burn house! Sink Athens! henceforth hated be  
Of Timon man and all humanity! (III. vi. 104-5)

there is no spiritual development to his self-composed epitaph:

Here lie I, Timon, who all living men did hate.  
Pass by, and curse thy fill; but pass, and stay  
not here thy gait.'

(V. iv. 72-73)

His generosity is not related to his love for any of his friends; it is no more than a gratification of his self-esteem.

The similarity to Lear's moments of misanthropy on the heath is purely verbal. Timon's bitterness lacks an 'objective correlative' and therefore fails to win our sympathy, whereas when Lear invokes the curse of the heavens on ungrateful humanity we are moved, knowing how deeply cherished was his longing for love from his daughters, which he believes is completely denied to him. Though Timon is not 'determined to be a villain', he lives in as much of an emotional vacuum as Richard III does, and a more just epitaph for him would be:

There is no creature loves me;  
And if I die no soul will pity me:  
And wherefore should they, since that I myself  
Find in myself no pity to myself?

(Richard III, v. iii. 201-4)

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the earliest of Shakespeare's tragedies based on the theme of forbidden love, the isolation of Romeo as a lover is no more than a convention of the romantic tradition, especially in the beginning of the play when

he, his own affections' counsellor,  
Is to himself. . .

. . .so secret and so close, (I. i. 152-54)

In the independence of his attitude to the feud between the Montagues and Capulets, however, Shakespeare attempts to give him something of the individuality of the later tragic heroes. Romeo is the only character in the play who admits his indifference to the feud in public, and to a member of the other family, when he refuses to be provoked by the calculated

insults of Tybalt in Act III, sc. i. The tragedy inheres in the sacrifice of Romeo and Juliet to the enmity of their families, which they disregarded in their first avowal of love, with his:

Is she a Capulet?  
O dear account! my life is my foe's debt

and her:

My only love sprung from my only hate.

These young lovers do not ask the fundamental questions of a Lear or a Hamlet, but their love makes them rise above the conventions of the Verona in which they live, to wonder 'What's in a name?' However, their characterization is not mature enough to carry such exploration far; the Prologue, with its emphasis on their being 'star-cross'd lovers', makes them 'patients' rather than 'agents'.<sup>2</sup> Their death heals a social breach, but we do not feel that their personalities have made a powerful impact on their social milieu. Their love, like Juliet's beauty, is 'too rich for use, for earth too dear!'; it is expressed in exquisite poetry which creates a world of its own and has no point of contact with the idiom of Verona. The social and the personal emotions touch tangentially, and are not inextricably twined as they are in a later love tragedy, *Antony and Cleopatra*, which poses the same question, 'What's in a name?' in a much more complex way, the names in this case being Rome and Egypt.

I do not consider the isolation of Othello tragic in the same sense as that of heroes like Antony and Coriolanus. The tragic situation, of course, is not his isolation from Venetian society but his loss of faith in Desdemona. But his awareness of being an alien in Venice—the sub-title of the play, we remember, is *The Moor of Venice*—and his sense of inferiority as the black husband of a Venetian woman are related in his mind. Iago succeeds in making him doubt the loyalty of his wife because he attacks the most vulnerable aspect of his character: his sense of being a man ignorant of the ways of the civilization to which she belongs.

Othello is different from the other tragic heroes in that his position in Venice is based on nothing more than a contractual arrangement. He speaks of it thus when he bids the Duke send for Desdemona to confirm the honourable manner of his wooing:

If you do find me foul in her report,  
The trust, the office, I do hold of you,  
Not only take away, but let your sentence  
Even fall upon my life. (I. iii. 117-20)

Coriolanus also commands respect from the citizens of Rome purely in his capacity as an indispensable leader in war, but at the same time he has traditional privileges as a Roman aristocrat which are not dependent on the award of a political office. Othello holds his place in Venice at the pleasure of the state, and in fact his command is 'taken off' peremptorily in the last scene.

Othello has no other ties except those he forms in Venice. Shakespeare gives him no relationships with his native world. He fetches his 'life and being/From men of royal siege' but his ancestry is never personalized. Even in the speech in which he describes the magical qualities of the crucial handkerchief, our attention is not focussed on his bond with the parents who had first preserved it as a token of love. He is a rootless man who, before coming to Venice, had lived in an 'unhoused free condition'. He has no identity outside Venice, and within it he has a strictly limited one. His death involves no national destinies; he is a foreigner who is discarded by Venice without any social upheaval, and the *status quo* is maintained with the appointments of Cassio and Gratiano.

Isolation as an aspect of the tragic situation is clearly emphasized in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. The hero in each of these tragedies is not only 'one who is highly renowned and prosperous', a person of 'high degree', but also one who is aware of, and deeply involved in, social and personal relationships. Naturally, all the heroes do not share an identical mode of awareness, nor is the intensity or breadth of their relationships similar. Hamlet, as the most introspective, is fully aware of the great importance of loyalty

in human relationships, but he is not satisfied until he has revealed to the society of Denmark that it is the violation of this loyalty which is at the root of its corruption. To Hamlet, 'my revenge' means something more than the murder of one villain in Denmark. That is why his way of stating his mission is significantly different from that of the Ghost.

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right!

(I. v. 188-89)

In interpreting his responsibility in this way, he is not escaping from the particular duty enjoined on him by the Ghost; on the contrary, his moral grasp enables him to relate the personal to the social problem. And this is what isolates him, his 'superior power of insight into, and reflection upon, his situation, and his capacity to suffer the moral anguish which moral responsibility brings.'<sup>3</sup> Even Horatio fails to understand him. Hamlet accepts any challenge to his courage, moral or physical, and courts danger; Horatio is the friend who counsels prudence. That is why he is the confidant of Hamlet but not his partner; he stands at one remove from experience, one fit to 'tell' the 'story' but not to live it.

Macbeth's relationship to society is, on the surface, the opposite of Hamlet's. By committing the murder of Duncan, he becomes guilty of the violation of the most sacred relationships. But what makes him a tragic hero rather than a villain is his conscience which vividly anticipates the horror of the sacrilege before it is committed, and which makes him realize the futility of the course he has adopted.

I have liv'd long enough. My way of life

Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;

And that which should accompany old age,

As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,

I must not look to have;

(V. iii. 22-26)

We, the readers or spectators, know the anguish the awareness of his isolation brings Macbeth, for we can listen to his soliloquies. He, more than any other hero, expresses his true nature in soliloquy; that is why he has a degree of sympathy

*The Isolation of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes*

from the reader or spectator that he never has from other characters in the play.

Lear, the only hero who is a reigning monarch, is a man of multiple relationships, but he acquires awareness of their significance only after deep suffering. He is different from Hamlet and Macbeth, and like Antony and Coriolanus, in that the step which ultimately leads to his isolation is decided upon not in a soliloquy, but in the presence of others. This means that the other characters in the play are from the start aware of the situation of the King and efforts are made to make him recognize the anomalous position he has created for himself after his conditional abdication. Gradually, as the brittle edifice of deceptive appearances topples down, Lear has to start building his world of values from scratch. He is not set apart from the other characters by the nature of his metaphysical speculations, as Hamlet is. It is only when he is isolated from all that he had depended on that he is driven to ask 'the questions of a Prometheus'.<sup>4</sup> His question to Goneril, 'Are you our daughter?', is not prompted by petty sarcasm, but is rather the starting point of his quest into the validity of human relationships, and his position among them. What elevates him to his Titan-like heroic stature is his fearless defiance of the world of Regan and Goneril, his courage in embarking upon his metaphysical quest, in order to teach himself to distinguish between appearance and reality.

The isolation of the two Roman heroes, Antony and Coriolanus, is of a somewhat different kind. The historical context precludes any dramatic use of the concept of the divine right of kings, with its corollary of multiple loyalties, which Shakespeare could use in a completely contemporary manner in *Macbeth*, and in (a modified way) in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Antony is 'the triple pillar of the world', but this position is dependent on his political alliance with Octavius. We are never allowed to forget that Antony's position in Rome is deeply meaningful to him, and he takes great pride in recalling the almost legendary associations of his family with Roman history. This makes the sacrifice of his family as a Roman soldier to his love for Cleopatra tragic; the most dramatic expression of his isolation from Rome is in the short scene in which strange music is heard, which is interpreted

by the soldiers to mean that the patron god of the Antonii, Hercules, has left him. It would be a mistake to think of Antony as a romantic lover, who spontaneously and unquestioningly rejects all else for his love. His isolation from his social and political milieu is gradual; it is only at the battle of Actium, as late as Act III, sc. xii, that he accepts that his sword must obey his affection 'on all cause'. This final surrender to his love for Cleopatra, and the renunciation of all other ambitions is expressed in his request to Caesar to be allowed to live as 'a private man in Athens'. However, Antony's isolation is not absolute, as Coriolanus's is. He endures isolation from some ties, but only for one that gives full scope to his natural love of pleasure, feasting and splendour. Had Cleopatra betrayed him at the end, his isolation would have been 'tragic' in the limited sense. But she is ultimately faithful to him; out of his isolation is born a greater bond than either of them has known before.

Unlike Antony, Coriolanus does not inspire the loyalty of his soldiers, nor does his reputation as a soldier derive from his being the descendant of famous Romans. In the beginning of the play, Shakespeare shows his pride to be dehumanized, expressed in harshly metallic imagery and not in the limpid hyperbole that characterizes Antony at his first appearance. The imaginative sweep of his world is limited, both in the range of his relationships and in his self-knowledge. In *Coriolanus*, as in *King Lear*, we see human relationships evolving from an embryonic stage. Lear in the opening scene is ignorant both of the true responsibilities of kingship and of the nature of Cordelia's love; he mistakes her sincerity for pride. Volumnia is equally naïve; he also accuses her son of pride when he refuses to be false to his nature for the sake of the consulship. In both plays, separation between parent and child leads to the growth of a deeper understanding, though in one case the emphasis is on the father, and in the other on the son.

Of all these heroes it may be said with confidence that in what they do and believe there is represented a deep involvement in human relationships, though in varying degrees. They seek their identity in the human world, which is the world of all of us. What isolates them is their assertion of personal integrity beyond the socially approved and recognized



The fact that the hero is isolated should not mislead us into thinking that he errs and society is right.

It is this fundamental misconception which, I think, vitiates John Holloway's tentative suggestion that Shakespearean tragedy and the idea of human sacrifice are related. I agree with his premise that the protagonist in the tragedies pursues a rôle 'which takes him from being the cynosure of his society to being estranged from it', but his conclusion from this, that 'what happens to him suggests the expulsion of a scapegoat, or the sacrifice of a victim, or something of both'<sup>8</sup> seems to me completely unacceptable except where Macbeth is concerned. An important distinction has been ignored; no attempt has been made to distinguish the isolation of the hero from the isolation of villains like Claudius and Edmund, who recognize no sanctity in human relationships and who know no loyalty except to their self-interest. There is a group of characters who are characterized by their emotional rootlessness. Claudius and Edmund are the more spectacular examples; there are also their hirelings like Osric and Oswald. The tragedy is that

Such smiling rogues as these,  
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords a-twain  
Which are too intrinse t'unloose

(*King Lear*, II. ii. 78-80)

The group is not limited to men; there are also women like Goneril and Regan. Lady Macbeth starts by thinking that she can negate her feminine nature, but she ceases to be like Goneril and Regan once she withdraws from the world of action and lives in her lonely world of nightmare, haunted by the shedding of an old man's blood, whereas Lear's elder daughters never learn to think of old age with any compassion. It is such characters who undermine the social fabric; it is their 'vile offences' which demand their destruction, otherwise

Humanity must perforce prey on itself,  
Like monsters of the deep. (*King Lear*, IV. ii. 49-50)

In the Roman tragedies, not only is the characterization

v.9 of the heroes different, but there is also a difference in the nature of the men who act as foils to the heroes. Antony and Coriolanus are certainly not types of human perfection; even so, we realize their moral superiority to men like Octavius and Aufidius. Antony by the end of the play gives up kingdoms as clay compared to the nobleness of his love for Cleopatra, whereas Octavius has no hesitation in making his sister, whom he sincerely believes he loves, a pawn in the political game, and marrying her to a man about whose character he has few illusions. Again and again there is the contrast between the Joye-like warmth and generosity of Antony and the cold calculation of Octavius. The perfect comment is Cleopatra's: ' 'Tis paltry to be Caesar'.

v.9 In spite of Coriolanus's superficial self-sufficiency, he sacrifices his life in an attempt to acknowledge the claims of his love for his mother, and at the same time be true to his soldier's pledge to the Volsces. Ultimately his pride 'melts', just as earlier his arrogance as the victor in battle had been subordinated to his acknowledgement of gratitude to his poor host in Corioli (I. ix. 82 ff.). He becomes 'a kind of nothing' temporarily, whereas his rival Aufidius is that in his essential nature. There is no humanity in him either as a man or as a soldier; that is why he is capable of the ultimate treachery to Coriolanus.

In the context of the isolation of the hero, the use of the actor image in these tragedies is extremely significant. The unscrupulous characters, beginning with Claudius, are extremely good actors; the hero knows not 'seems'. The hero is isolated because he cannot pretend to be other than he is. This gives an advantage to the successful hypocrites; Goneril and Regan share the kingdom while Cordelia is banished.<sup>9</sup> The inability to play a part successfully is what elevates Macbeth and Coriolanus to the level of tragic heroes; Antony rises to this stature when he gives up the politic diplomacy that he practises in the first part of the play.

The actor image is used, not only in a general way, but is particularly connected with (the use of costume) by a stage player. It is here that the use of clothing imagery becomes deeply symbolic. Hamlet's 'inky cloak' is, of course, in defiance of the festive mood of Claudius' court but he wants to make

it clear that he is not using costume as an actor uses it.

I have that within which passeth show;  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

(I. ii. 85-86)

Macbeth, on the other hand, casts himself for a rôle which is unsuited to him and which he is unable to sustain. His ill-fitting garments become symbolic of an elemental perversion; nothing is but what is not. Coriolanus, the proud patrician, is bullied by his mother into attempting to disguise his true nature beneath the 'gown of humility'; he fails to enact the part. The conclusion is a metaphysical one:

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;  
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all.

(*King Lear*, IV. vi. 169-70)

Shakespeare the actor created this transcendent image from his everyday experience, when he saw players

such as in disguised attire and hair present themselves on a stage, and there oft represent those whom God knows, they are from, but yet outwardly take upon them their persons as if they were.<sup>10</sup>

Through such imagery Shakespeare brings within the scope of these tragedies the question of appearance and reality. It is significant that he starts his exploration of this theme in *Hamlet*, in which the purpose of the art of acting is discussed in great detail. Hamlet's definition, 'the purpose of playing... is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature' applies to his putting on of 'an antic disposition' and his staging of *The Murder of Gonzago*, but it does not apply to the various scenes stage managed by Polonius and Claudius, the purpose of which is not to reveal the truth but to find out how to hide it. The heroes who come after Hamlet share his contempt for the kind of acting that disguises the true nature of human beings. They are isolated because they will not accept the dichotomy between appearance and reality which charac-

terizes their social environment. Macbeth is different in that he thinks he can divorce the appearance from the reality, by using a 'false face' to hide a 'false heart' but he is typical of the tragic hero in that he is a bad actor. The fact of his isolation is the same as that of Richard III; what distinguishes them is the reaction to the hypocritical course adopted.

In the light of this, it is clear that the frequent use of soliloquy by the tragic hero is no clumsy stage device. He is engaged in a search for identity which is essentially personal.

In this he differs from the major characters in the comedies and histories, who are not shown to us in their solitude.

The hero's declaration 'I am myself alone' is not a distasteful combination, as T. S. Eliot has called it, of 'the Senecan attitude of Pride, the Montaigne attitude of Scepticism, and the Machiavelli attitude of Cynicism'.<sup>11</sup> Rather, it is the attempt

of the hero, who has drawn his breath in pain in this harsh world, to tell his story, to establish his identity. The tragic situation in each case is different, the nature of the hero is different and, as Douglas Bush says, if there is any formula which covers the kind of isolation in which Shakespeare's tragic heroes find themselves it is that, in diverse ways and degrees, if only in a momentary flash, they all attain a truer knowledge of themselves and others.<sup>12</sup> In this lies the final value of tragic experience.

Search for identity

#### REFERENCES

1. Quotations from Shakespeare in this article are based upon the edition of Professor Peter Alexander (1951).
2. I have borrowed this distinction from J. Lawlor, *The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare*, (1960). See esp. the chapter on *Hamlet*, 'Agent or Patient'?
3. H. Gardner, *The Business of Criticism* (Oxford, 1959), p. 50.
4. W. M. T. Nowottny, 'Lear's Questions', *Shakespeare Survey*, 10, p. 91.
5. 'The Jacobean Shakespeare: Some observations on the construction of the Tragedies', in *Jacobean Theatre (Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 1, 1960)*, p. 20, author's italics.
6. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (2nd edition, 1905), pp. 19-20.
7. *Hamlet, Father and Son* (Oxford, 1955), p. 77.
8. *The Story of the Night* (1961), p. 135.
9. I agree with the view of R. B. Heilman, *This Great Stage* (Baton Rouge,

1948), p. 36, that by her conduct in the first scene Cordelia becomes 'a tragic actor...one whose decision involves her in the tragic consequences, and not merely a pathetic victim.'

10. Lancelot Andrewes, quoted by B. Joseph, *The Tragic Actor* (1969), p. 5.
11. 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', Shakespeare Association Lecture (1927), reprinted in *Shakespeare Criticism* (1919-35), ed. A. Bradby (Oxford 1945), p. 215.
12. 'The Isolation of the Renaissance Hero', in *Reason and the Imagination: Studies in the History of Ideas, 1600-1800*, ed. J. A. Mazzeo (1962), p. 67.

# THE STAGE IMAGE IN SHAKESPEARE

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## I

ANYONE who has constantly to do with the business of the stage must some time or other pause and reflect on the 'phantom' life that the stage presents and its relation to life in earnest. It would indeed be a miracle if Shakespeare whose mind was so deeply engaged in the creation of dramatic illusion did not so pause and ponder. The life of the stage certainly meant more to him than merely 'the public means that public manners breeds', an ill-fortune one of the sonnets laments. It is clear from his numerous references to it that he had a lively interest in all that pertains to the practice of the player's art as well as a more contemplative interest in the meaning and importance of the 'shadow world' of the stage.

My concern is not so much with Shakespeare's references to the various skills of the actor or the scene-shifter and how these may be ill-employed or well in the creation of an illusion of life upon the stage, as is the case in *Hamlet*, for instance, when Hamlet recognizes the importance of the player's art, hails the actors as 'the abstract and the brief chronicles of the time', gives them sound advice not to overdo it but 'to preserve the modesty of Nature' and also, finally, uses play-acting for his own grim purposes, namely, to 'catch the conscience of the King'. Nor do I mean Shakespeare's reflections on the importance of mimicking as a human activity. It is true that in the earlier plays, notably in the Introduction of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, references to the stage carry an implication of the worthiness of the mimic art: whereas, later references are derogatory in tone, generally belittling the stage and stressing its falseness and deviation from life in earnest. What caused this shift is an interesting conjecture in itself. Was it the fear that his nature might be subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand? What

personal vicissitude caused this loss of faith? Such matters as these or questions concerning Shakespeare's interest in purely technical aspects of the art are only peripheral, for my purpose, to his central preoccupation with the principal image. I mean the illusion of life as a self-contained entity that the stage creates and sustains. That is the most striking feature of the activity of the stage, one that always has a profound impact on our consciousness as beings absorbed in our little performances on that other stage we call life. To regard the stage as a shadow world is an oft-repeated platitude; it is also one of the archetypal images in literature.

The idea itself is very ancient. In the West, Pythagoras and Plato have employed it, and it is deeply interwoven with Eastern thought and expression as in India. There is a special reason why the idea should have made a fresh impact on the Elizabethan dramatist. The ritual theatre of the Middle Ages had not sharply marked off the events of the stage from the 'real' world of the audience. It is only with the rise of the Elizabethan theatre that the illusion created by the stage became, as it were, an autonomous world, thus giving point and poignancy to those correspondences which it has with the world in earnest. The 'mirror held up to Nature' would, of course, reflect the reality represented by the audience. But that simple relation was complicated by the perception that life itself contained stage elements—dramatizations and 'play-acting' which we associate with the natures and doings of all deceivers and dissimulators. The two senses of the term 'Hypocrites,' actor on the stage and dissimulator in life were ever very close. And Shakespeare uses terms like *Act, scene, perform, play a part* with a subtle double meaning which must not have been lost on Elizabethan audiences: 'In sermons and song-books, chronicles and popular pamphlets, Elizabethans were constantly being reminded of the fact that life tends to imitate the theatre. Comparisons between the world and the stage were so common as to become, in many instances, almost automatic, an unconscious trick of speech.'<sup>1</sup>

Though a theatrical commonplace, the idea built itself in Shakespeare's imagination and became variously expressive of his profound insights. There is a certain appropriateness in the fact that the Latin motto 'Totus mundus agit histrionem'

associated with the Globe Playhouse should have been used by Jaques to play the rôle of the 'melancholy' philosopher. It is, therefore, natural to ask: 'How did Shakespeare use the image of the stage? What peculiar reflection did it provoke? How did it enter into his intimate experience of dramatic creation?'

To begin, we should expect a more or less casual use of it merely as a common element of the web of language. As an activity constantly present to the attention, staging and acting would naturally occur in the plays as the stuff of figurative expression. When the image of the stage occurs in this way, it may not be particularly evocative of philosophic reflection nor possess any peculiar dramatic force by reason of its special connection with character or theme. It may occur simply (as rhetorical padding.) Or, on the other hand, it may perform the more complex function of making the dramatic texture coherent and intricate. It might also, perhaps, illuminate the central meaning of a play by being its dominant image in the way the image of the hidden ulcer infecting the whole body may be said to express the central meaning of *Hamlet*.

A close look at the text will reveal that Shakespeare uses the image with all this stylistic diversity for purposes great and small. What is more to my purpose here is to ask whether, as we examine his use of this image at different stages of his development as dramatic artist, we sense a subtle alteration in his attitude to it—something in the manner of its artistic use which would imply a deeper alteration in the mind and outlook of the poet. The stage-life analogy as it is generally employed stresses the obvious opposition between the shallowness and transitoriness of the stage life on the one hand and the serene depth and magnitude of Nature on the other. That is also the general tenor of the references to the image in Shakespeare. As a rule, they bring out the specific aspect of the stage as a shadowing forth of the real world and its consequent external limitation and inferiority to life as shadow is inferior to substance. But as we advance from the earlier plays to the later we are conscious of a modulation in the use of the image. The implied comparison of (the real world) with the stage gains in weight and seriousness till the world in earnest is itself looked upon, more or less, as a kind of stage illusion shadowing

forth a reality beyond our ken. [What was considered the substance before, the solid ground of our existence, begins to be something like the shadow world till, in the final stages of the transformation, as in *The Tempest*, it is, in sooth, the insubstantial pageant or mere dream or intimation of something which the rational consciousness cannot reach.]

The earlier occurrences of the stage-life analogy are, in the main, a form of playful collocation in which the distinction between the two things is never allowed to get blurred. The world might seem a stage momentarily in a fit of fancy or of melancholy. Presently, the thought becomes more confirmed, more meaningful, grows in the grain, as it were. [What was formerly said in jest or in the cynical bravado of a Jaques is uttered with a far different effect in the agonized accents of a Macbeth or a Lear. Gradually, as it may seem, the attitude appropriate to the witnessing of a play upon the stage becomes the attitude appropriate to the apprehending of life.]

In a sense, this is nothing more than the normal improvement of the perspective one expects in the artist's maturer vision. And it is most certainly not the result of his acceptance of a new dogma or philosophic concept. [The idea of the world as a stage does not occur in Shakespeare as the common staple of Platonic or Neo-Platonic thinking. It is never quite the dancing shadows of Plato's cave or the mystical vision of the Neo-Platonists expressed in some such way as this:]

'Murders, death in all its guises, all must be to us just such a spectacle as the changing scenes of a play; all is but the varied incident of a plot, costume on and off, acted grief and lament. It is not the soul within but the shadow outside of the authentic man that grieves and complains and acts out the plot on this world stage which men have dotted with stages of their own constructing.'

[Nothing could be more alien to the spirit of Shakespearean drama than this. Shakespeare's is never this sudden leap into the seductive depths of the mystic experience. His is rather the attitude of one who can feel everything from within and from without both at the same time. The seeing of men's doings as a drama played upon the stage does not alienate him from his sympathies nor give him a loftier stance. We are with him throughout in the company of ordinary flesh and blood.] The

wisdom of the detachment is very much the wisdom of striving, suffering, aspiring. But there is the gentle suggestion, all the same, that to see ourselves as actors in a show might be the beginning of sanity.

## II

The Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* refers to the staging of the story of (the star-crossed lovers) simply as 'the two hours' traffic of our stage' for that is what it is. However grim and serious the action, it is but a mimicking. A play is just 'two boards and a passion,' and the passion is simulated. The simulation should reflect, it is true, something of life's earnestness in a recognizable form. Otherwise, it would be what that other story of star-crossed lovers became in the hands of Bottom and his fellow actors—the most lamentable comedy and the most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe. Nor need we despise the delicious absurdity of Bottom's efforts at creating stage illusion. Theseus would assure us that, after all, 'the best in this kind are but shadows and the worst no worse if imagination amend them.' To which Hippolyta would retort: 'It should be your imagination then, not theirs.' Whether it is the actor's or the spectator's, the moral of it is the same. The illusion of the stage has only a brief tenure and lasts just so long as imagination sustains it. Its existence depends on the odd chance of our being able to sustain it.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is true, the opposition is not the simple confronting of stage illusion with reality. The image occurs in a diffused way. Our sense of realism is sharply set off against all kinds of mental creations; the diverse progeny of the imagination, dreaming or waking, is contrasted with it. If all through this mingling of dream, lovers' phantasy, folk-lore and myth, stage illusion as well as the sober sense of the earth we tread, we retain our balance, it is largely because of the presence of the two principal purveyors of realism in the play—the imperious, patronizing man of action, the aristocratic Theseus and the equally vital Bottom at the other end of the scale. The vitality of Bottom is of the essential kind. It is the sort of self-assertion that one imagines is bound up with our ability to exist—the underlying urge to live by continually.

triumphing over circumstance.] His involvement in dream or the make-believe of the two hours' traffic of the stage will never make him confuse illusion with reality. His feeling for Earth, for 'oats and hay' never deserts him. There is never any dimming of his radiant resourcefulness, all bent, for the moment, in the task of producing the mock business of 'the young Pyramus and his love Thisbe: very tragical mirth', according to his lights. He presses everything into use—is indeed the soul of improvization—and leaves nothing to chance: two great qualities of the theatre producer.

For the realist Theseus, a play is but 'an abridgement for an evening.' In an off-hand manner he demands, 'Is there no play to ease the anguish of a torturing hour?' Theseus could have been, one imagines, co-author of the wise Baconian precept, 'It is not good to remain too long in the theatre.' He strides into the Fifth Act royally and proceeds to unravel the tangled skein of fact and fancy very much in the manner of his successor, the legendary Alexander, who reportedly resolved the Gordian knot with one blow of his sword: ]

I never may believe

These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.

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...

.....  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

It is all said in the grand manner of Feudal Hall oratory by a man of heroic deeds who has also in him, perhaps, something of the latter-day empire-builder. He is, at the same time, the kindly patron and has the characteristic humanity of the born aristocrat:

For never anything can be amiss,  
When simpleness and duty tender it.

His verdict is unmistakable; it is firmly against all form of midsummer madness. And he is addressing himself, it would

seem, particularly to those who allow themselves to be swayed overmuch by these creations of the imagination. So the poet is left somewhat uneasy, yoked, as he is, with lunatics and lovers. Nevertheless, in Theseus's comments we have some of the aptest words ever used to describe the poetic activity. They do appear much like a paeaning of the power of the imagination and of the poet's pen. There is little doubt, however, that the poet's power is mentioned only to emphasize the steep contrast with the thinness of substance, 'the airy nothing' which the poet's words enshrine. It is as if to say, 'After all, to what little purpose are the great talents of the poets employed!'

In this connection one must notice the obvious parallel between this earlier *Dream* and the later dream represented by *The Tempest*. The venue of each is an enchanted spot—Athenian wood or tempest-tossed island—with it a fairy music and its own population of elves and sprites. Both have to do with the dream-like world born of young love, magic or art; and they relate that world with life in earnest which has its demands of moral obligation, though, of course, in the *Dream* moral obligation is only nominally present. Both have a formal stage-presentation along with the viewers' comments on the theatrical illusion so created. There is in both a central figure who makes the final pronouncements and defines for us the concluding mood and sentiment on which the whole vision is to close. And these final words are radically different, are, indeed, opposed in their import and in the reflection they provoke. While the pontifical Theseus firmly testifies against fairy toys and antique fables as well as against the phantoms that career upon the stage, the no less pontifical Prospero goes on to assert that this solid-seeming reality is itself of the stuff of dream and illusion. So that by implication the products of the imagination gain in seriousness and reality which was so brusquely and confidently denied to them by Theseus. It looks as if the Theseuses of the world are not going to have the last word on a matter to which their masculine minds are apt to be a little opaque. And the vastly different ways in which these two visions leave their impress upon us would indicate the distance Shakespeare's mind and art have travelled in the interim.

In the *Dream* the idea of the stage occurs as one of the ingredients of a broader pattern which sets off all kinds of illusion from reality. There is no direct use of the image of the stage as a shadow world or of the world itself as a stage. The image occurs with a pronounced effect, however, in at least two of the Romantic Comedies. And when it does, we notice that it is slanted in a way expressive of the spirit of the early Comedies. In that young and unclouded world any painful rumination on life's hollowness or insubstantiality must perforce be something of a pose. It is not the painfully achieved truth but rather a clever man's affected melancholy or else the result of some whim, some kink of character, some secret sense of guilt not engendered by anything that happens in the play but simply brought by a character *ab initio* and fully articulated. There is a family likeness between Jaques's 'All the world's a stage.' and Antonio's, 'I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano, a stage where everyone must play his part and mine a sad one.' Jaques's is, of course, the painless form of poetizing which so admirably suits the mood of Monsieur Melancholy. In Antonio's words there is a touch of excessive abandonment to grief. His gloom seems to be real though largely unaccounted for within the ambit of the play's action.

When we meet him first he is already tainted by his world-weariness which remains a constant feature of his character throughout. So that it has been a problem for the dramatist to polish him off at the end of the play where he has to be left like a poor scarecrow outside the magic circle of married bliss. As Auden puts it: 'If Antonio is not to fade away into nonentity, then the married couples must enter the lighted house and leave Antonio standing alone on the darkened stage, outside the Eden from which, not by the choice of others but by his own nature he is excluded.' His exclusive affection for Bassanio calls attention to itself and it is difficult to avoid the suggestion that his sadness springs from that source. He is portrayed as a melancholic who is incapable of loving a woman, 'as a man whose emotional life is concentrated on a member of his own sex.' We note that he is already apprised of Bassanio's intention to go on a courting expedition to his well-endowed and newly-discovered lady, when he opens the play with 'I know not why I am so sad...' And the first

thing he asks of Bassanio when he can get a private word of him is:

Well, tell me now, what lady is the same  
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage  
That you to-day promised to tell me of?

So when Salanio says of Antonio's feelings for Bassanio, 'I think he only loves the world for him' we believe it. And when we hear Antonio declare:

I am a tainted wether of the flock  
Meetest for death; the weakest kind of fruit  
Drops earliest to the ground and so let me.

we not only believe him but even glimpse a shadow of guilt that seems to have long clouded his mind. When, therefore, such an Antonio says, 'I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano; a stage where everyone must play his part, and mine a sad one', Gratiano must take him to be putting on an act and playfully proceed to say, if everyone must indeed play a rôle he would opt for that of the Fool!

If Antonio sees the world as a stage because of his 'tainted' mind, Jaques sees it in that light merely as a pleasant poetical exercise which feeds his own self-esteem. His is a leisurely point by point elaboration, all a little too neat and cut out. There is a touch of flamboyance in Jaques's cynicism which must express itself in over-working the image:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His Acts being seven ages...

This and the seven 'tableaux' with which Jaques elaborates the analogy, read like an independent poem, the product of a mind that only sports an affected melancholy, not genuinely soured by life's experience. Jaques is clearly indulging himself, hugging his most humorous sadness. Each of the seven pictures

must be touched with cynicism and present an ungenial side of the original. So that, the little play, whose sole dramatic persona is *Humanum Genus* is presented in growth and decline, is not exactly a Tragedy. For a Tragedy would imply some sort of 'empathy' on the author's part, whereas Jaques stands aloof. In effect, 'What a ludicrous show', says Jaques; and he, the showman, thank God, is untouched by it! The image of the world as a stage is, therefore, held at an arm's remove, as it were; Jaques plays with it. We know on very good authority, that of the Duke Senior, that Jaques is no sucking innocent and that he has had a 'past'. We can hardly regard his display of wit as a gallant's innocent diversion; it is certainly more mendacious than that. And yet his use of the stage image has certainly something of the gallant's amateurish poetizing about it.

That Jaques's perception of the world as a stage has little to do with genuine feeling is well brought out by the context. His provocation for the image came from the Duke Senior's:

Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy:  
This wide and universal theatre  
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene  
Wherein we play in.

—where the image is used to emphasize the need for spontaneous sympathy. It is an invitation to see the whole pageant, of which our little concerns and sufferings are an insignificant part. Jaques's answer to the call for sympathy is a mocking 'Yes, indeed, the world is a stage, and Lord, how ludicrous the spectacle!' But his cynicism can do no damage, for Orlando arrives just then, and the words of the Duke Senior, 'Welcome. set down your venerable burden, and let him eat' restores us to Nature. Thus Jaques's speech is flanked on either side with an insistence on the healthier response which serves as a corrective.

In both these cases—those of Antonio and Jaques—the image has a certain relation to character, it is true, but does not indicate an attitude that grows out of experience in the course of the play's action. It comes into the play, more or less adventitiously as an apt analogy that serves to express a

whim or an ailment of a character. Whether it is Theseus's grave attitude of 'No nonsense', or Antonio's tainted sadness, or Jaques's flourishes of gloom, stage illusion as an analogy to our earnest world can pull but little weight in the sunny atmosphere of the early Comedies. It does not induce serious reflection. Little is yet revealed of the growing hold the image seems to have on Shakespeare's mind.

### III

In the Histories, we should expect, this image would acquire a force and a special bias, perhaps, because of the obvious thought that history is an action played upon the stage of this world. Time has already set a distance between what happens as an immediate experience of living persons and the beholders who now watch the show. We now see it as an extended vision. A historical play must needs be the seeing of some kind of a pattern in the flux of events. Such a pattern must emerge from our probing of causes and of the motives of men who figure in history. Even the most elementary philosophy of history would imply the linking of cause with effect, the distant with the immediate, the scarcely guessed at germ, the unmanifest, with its full manifestation. Things that were obscure to the actors on the stage of life should be clear to us, the beholders. All this would re-inforce an idea of history as a kind of 'playing' upon the stage.

In Shakespeare's history plays, the image occurs sometimes incidentally as when in *King John*, Philip the Bastard angrily refers to the scroyles, the mangy fellows, at the siege of Angiers:

By heaven, these scroyles of Angiers flout you, kings,  
And stand securely on their battlements  
As in a theatre, whence they gape and point  
At your industrious scenes and acts of death.

Or when in *Henry VI*, Pt. 3, Warwick vows to revenge the death of his brother:

Why stand we like soft-hearted women here,  
Wailing our losses, while the foe doth rage;

And look upon, as if the tragedy  
Were played in jest by counterfeiting actors?

Though here the comparison between drama and life is a matter of common dramatic vocabulary it has a special reference to the situation and state of mind of the speaker. Warwick, the king-maker, has been momentarily isolated from battle: now the news of the killing of his brother suddenly makes him see that his inactivity was unnatural, that it was as if he had become a passive spectator at a play instead of being an actor on the stage of history. The history plays are full of such instances where the image is casually employed to intensify the dramatic effect.

There is, too, a deeper and more intimate connection between the stage-life analogy and the career of princes envisioned in the history plays. Everything naturally centres round the figure and function of kingship. Not only is the Prince an actor upon the stage of history, but it is important that he should be conscious of this rôle of his and perform it with some finesse. He should realize that he stands upon the stage in the sight of all the world subject to their applause or censure as Queen Elizabeth I, herself an adept at such necessary play-acting, is reported to have maintained. This sense of the theatre in kingship is greatly strengthened by the symbolic power of all the pomp and ceremony that surrounds it. The ritual of coronation is like the assumption of a dramatic rôle which is larger and more momentous than the individual life of the person who bears it. The person has thenceforth to put aside his private existence and endeavour to fill the rôle watched by a myriad eyes. The consequences of performing it ill or well are indeed a matter of concern, being counted in terms of the joys and tears of the many who must answer for the deeds of the king. Should the performer and the performance prove spurious the king is seen to be a fustian king; his power is all a mockery, and his crown, the paper crown of the player king.

There is this pervasive sense of the theatre behind the world of political activity. And because it is specifically the public life of men that is mirrored in it, the juxtaposition of private life with public is always of cardinal importance for

the Histories. Often, an inner hollowness mocks the regal exterior. And it is not only the historical personages who present such pictures of futility but tragic characters who are clothed with the power and trappings of royalty. Claudius is thus seen to be but a king of shreds and patches; Macbeth is like a man wearing stolen garments too large for his size; Lear, too, is seen diminished to a shadow of himself.

*Henry V* which presents Shakespeare's ideal king forcefully elaborates the stage image in order to set forth the earthly glory of kingship. The Chorus becomes the master of ceremonies and invites us to sit and see 'Minding true things by what their mockeries be'. His ostensible purpose is to bewail the inadequacies of the wooden O and the stage presentation, calling upon the audience to eke them out with their imaginations:

O! for a Muse of fire, that would ascend  
The brightest heaven of invention;  
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act  
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.

The more important consideration is that this invocation to the Muse is also the epic poet's formal prayer. The epic treatment of the subject informs the whole action of the play often at the cost of the drama, and, in effect, heightens the impression of the stage by setting the action on a loftier plane than that of common life. Similarly, the opposition between the private and public life of the king seems to acquire a peculiar poignancy in the play. On the night before Agincourt, Henry should painfully brood on ceremony, place, degree and form which create awe and fear in other men thus separating the king from the common man and the king's gilded, burdensome life from what private men can enjoy. It is the proud dream 'that plays with a king's repose' and must needs demand a sort of betrayal of the personal life. That is, perhaps, why Henry's courtship of Katherine has to be so crude and no less graceless than his rejection of Falstaff—'I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers'. On the night before Agincourt Henry remembers the price his father paid for the crown, unmindful of the price he himself has paid for the earthly glory of kingship.

The image of the world as a stage dominates *Richard III* and *Richard II* alike but in somewhat different ways. A brilliant histrionic talent is at the basis of the character and career of *Richard III*. Only, he plays with the lives of real people instead of with the simulated humans of the stage—the wooing of Anne being, perhaps, his greatest triumph in this kind. He is of the great company of villains who are dissimulators, Claudius, Iago, Macbeth, Edmund. But, in a sense, he is the more complete actor-villain than any of these; his is purely the triumph of the actor's ability to play many rôles. He is throughout conscious of, and indeed luxuriates in his command of theatre. It is as if the harm he causes is merely incidental and of subsidiary interest to him, being only the occasion for a taste of his own delicious mastery. He himself announces his many rôles early when he appears in *Henry VI*, Pt. 3 and then proceeds to make good his every word:

Why, I can smile and murder whiles I smile,  
 And cry 'content!' to that which grieves my heart,  
 And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,  
 And frame my face to all occasions.  
 I'll down more sailors than the mermaid shall . . .

.....  
 I can add colours to the chameleon,  
 Change shapes with Protheus for advantages,  
 And set the murderous Machiavel to school.

In his theatrical schemes he employs the assistance of similarly gifted characters to support his main rôle. Buckingham, for instance, can rival him in that talent:

Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian;  
 Speak and look back, and pry on every side,  
 Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,  
 Intending deep suspicion.

*Richard III* thus demonstrates the power of diabolical acting by filling the stage of history with bloody deeds. And the incantatory catalogue of the sorrowing queens bemoans the deep ruin caused to the private life. Nature, at last, rights

itself with a mighty convulsive effort on Bosworth Field very much in the manner it does at Dunsinane.

Richard II, on the other hand, is in the position of one who is greatly taken up with the form and circumstances of Royalty without the power to substantiate his rôle in deeds. The stage image has a peculiar connection with Richard's character. He, too, is an actor and rather a bad one. His weakness as king is related to his penchant for acting as is obvious from his later posturings of self-pity. When he sees himself being unthroned, he must ask for a looking-glass as if to make sure that he does justice to the pity of the spectacle. In the prison he must stage a fiction with thoughts for a set of dramatis personae and end up with:

Thus play I in one person many people,  
And none contented.

It is significant that, while Richard thus whimsically plays with figments, to the humble gardener is given the truer vision of the State as a garden that needs the pruning hand of the alert monarch. With what manifold appropriateness does this image come to us, therefore, when York describes the triumphal procession of the proud, unscrupulous, and practical Bolingbroke in which Richard is seen to dwindle to a complete nonentity!:

As in (a theatre,) the eyes of men,  
After a well-grac'd actor leaves the stage,  
Are idly bent on him that enters next,  
Thinking his prattle to be tedious;  
Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes  
Did scowl on Richard.

(In the Roman plays) there is an emphasis on the actor's business as a mimicking that requires a purposefulness and a formal perfection of its own. Brutus, after the conspiracy has been set afoot, exhorts his fellow conspirators:

Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily;  
Let not our looks put on our purposes,

But bear it as our Roman actors do,  
With untir'd spirits and formal constancy:

And after the assassination, Cassius and Brutus make an extremely self-conscious use of the image to describe their rôles as makers of history and its guardians:

*Cassius*: How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er,  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

*Brutus*: How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,  
That now on Pompey's basis lies along  
No worthier than the dust!

[This was, of course, during that phase of Shakespeare's develop-  
v. 2. ment when his faith in the worth and significance of the actor's profession was still bright and joyous and unclouded. Later references in the Roman plays show the actor in a meaner light though his technical skill seems to be highly regarded and even feared. Coriolanus, in that great scene of his meeting with Volumnia, for instance, simply says, 'Like a dull actor now I have forgot my part.' Or, in Troilus and Cressida, Ulysses describes the way Achilles sits in his tent listening to Patroclus's mimicking of Agamemnon and the rest: how Patroclus 'pageants' them with scurrilous jests like a 'strutting player whose conceit lies in his hamstring'. And Cleopatra has visions of how she will be treated in Rome:

The quick comedians  
Extemporally will stage us, and present  
Our Alexandrian revels. Antony  
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see  
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness  
I' the posture of a whore.

[Between these references to the image and those in the tragedies and romances there seems to be a considerable gulf.  
History may resemble a staged play and the actors on that stage may themselves be aware of their theatrical rôles. But there is no suggestion that participation in history is any the

less urgent or important for that reason or, else, that an attitude of withdrawn contemplation is wisdom. In the Histories, the perception of the world as a stage has no particular influence on character in the sense of inducing a mood of detachment. The Histories are a profound assertion to the contrary. There is always the obligation to act and to act with full involvement in the moment. Any proneness to the theatrical attitude—or even (an excessive attachment to the aesthetic—is weakening as *Richard II* would seem to indicate. In the tragedies and the romances, on the other hand, the perception of the world as a stage may be linked with change and growth in character and make some vital contribution to the progress of the action.

## IV

(The dark Comedies) present a sort of a transitional phase in this respect. In *Measure for Measure*, for instance, the somewhat incredible Duke Vincentio assumes, like an earthlier and less maturer Prospero, the position of actor-director and organizes an action for quite elevated purposes. He is conscious that 'kingship' involves a man in some amount of dramatization and is a little restive in that rôle:

I love the people  
But do not like to stage me to their eyes.

He knows, besides, that such acting cannot lightly be dismissed as unwholesome because it is so necessary. He, in fact, practises the player's art and rehearses his rôle—'how to bear myself formally like a true Friar'—in order to prepare for his self-imposed task as stage-manager and obscure wire-puller. As the lewd Lucio characterizes it, not entirely unjustly, 'It was a mad fantastical trick to steal from the state and usurp the beggary he was never born to'. For a while the Duke's theatrical venture appears to be vindicated. In the great dialogue which seems to put the puritanical mind itself on trial, Isabella conjures up the image of the world as a stage, as seen from an extra-human standpoint:

But man, proud man,  
 Drest in a little brief authority,  
 Most ignorant of what he is most assur'd?  
 His glassy essence, like an angry ape,  
 Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
 As make the angels weep.

The Duke's (white-magic encounters) 'day-light' difficulties. Everything does not go according to plan; the something incalculable in human nature makes men do the unexpected. Angelo's treachery in ordering Claudio's execution despite Isabella's supposed fulfilment of her part of the contract springs a surprise. 'Saint' Barnardine absolutely refuses to oblige by dying at the right moment for the convenience of the hidden contriver. And the unsilenceable Lucio haunts the muffled Duke and pursues him relentlessly like his scourge, meting out proper punishment for presuming to stage-manage a reality far too vital and subtle to be subjected to a formula. 'Lucio is like an unruly extempore actor crept without permission into the Duke's tidy morality drama.'<sup>3</sup> We hear the laughter of the gods at man's attempts to emulate them. And one cannot be too sure that Isabella's description of the ape-like antics of self-assured man, dressed in a little brief authority, may not extend to the Duke himself. His initial impulse to imitate the theatre is in itself suspect. There was in it some sort of a harmful confusion between real life and our vision of it as a stage. It was like under-rating the depth and intimacy of life, or putting the abstract above the concrete, simplifying living experience to fit it into a systematic formulation. The Duke is highly regarded as one who, above all, sought to know himself. His attempt to treat life as a theatre must add to his understanding because of what he succeeded in doing and what he failed to do. But that is no direct part of the play's intention.

In the tragedies, (the image) tends to have a modifying effect on character. And at least in one of them it seems to be so centrally placed as to influence the entire meaning and purport of the play. The image of the stage in a curious way defines Macbeth and his career of crime. When Macbeth, at the end of that career mutters to himself:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow  
 .....  
 Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

All the images that occur in the passage can be shown to spring from a great deal that happens in the play; but, perhaps, the special significance of Macbeth's seeing himself as 'the poor player strutting and fretting his hour upon the stage' is not always realized. We are aware that Macbeth reaches here the culmination of a process of inner change that had been set in motion by the impulse of the first crime. As Santayana said, we seem to miss whatever meaning Shakespeare had in mind if we fail to see that Macbeth is impressive here. This is his final moment of radiant self-knowledge, and then he ends up as one of those stage tyrants that Bottom would have loved to play, 'a part to tear a cat in, to make all split'—not, though, before he has achieved, in this soliloquy, an accurate definition of the state he has arrived at.

(Macbeth) had wished to do the deed as if it were an action upon the stage. Before the forces released by that deed have spent themselves quite, he finds himself reduced to 'the poor player' he wished himself to be while the act was a-doing. From the first sprouting of the evil thought the theatrical suggestion had firm grip on his mind:

Two truths are told,  
 As happy prologues to the swelling act  
 Of the imperial theme.)

His words echo the 'prologue-like' Chorus of *Henry V*:

A kingdom for a stage, princes to act  
 And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.

Lady Macbeth's apostrophe:

Come, thick night,  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
 To cry, 'Hold, hold'.

as well as her adjuration to her husband to look like the flower but be the serpent under it, are all cast in theatrical terms. Macbeth's pretended grief: 'The lees of life is drawn, and the mere lees is left this vault to brag of' as well as his real grief: 'I have almost forgot the taste of fears. The time has been...' announce that his inner progress is that of one who has cut his moorings in Nature and is propelled into the hollow life of the stage puppet. There is an increasing disconnection from life and Nature till Macbeth realizes that he can only end up as a blustering tyrant of melodrama. He had invoked the aid of the spirit of theatre to commit his initial crime, because his own soul had risen against it. His wish is ironically fulfilled; he has, indeed, become an actor in a more complete sense than he had imagined.

(The image of the stage) has taken on a meaning and a force which brings it closer to the final perception of life as a stage. For Macbeth, though evil, has the greatness of Milton's Satan, and what is more, the saving grace of a poetic vision which enables him to see himself as he is. His words have an overtone which asserts itself in other and holier circumstances where, too, life does assume the appearance of a stage. In *The Winter's Tale*, for instance, while there is talk of a second marriage to secure an issue for the throne, Leontes protests:

No more such wives; therefore, no wife: one worse,  
 And better us'd, would make her sainted spirit  
 Again possess her corpse and on this stage,—  
 Where we're offenders now,—appear soul-vex'd,  
 And begin, 'Why to me?'

So also has King Lear learnt his lesson thoroughly only when he has come to that state of mind which enables him to look upon the world and himself in it as a drama, one in which he has but a spectator's interest. There may or may not always

be meaning in Lear's words of madness but these are too full of sanity to be accidental:

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:  
Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air  
We wail and cry. I will preach to thee: mark...  
When we are born, we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools.

L. C. Knights says, 'There is no immediate way of deciding how we should take these words... The question is whether what we have here is a weary subsidence into the only wisdom that is ultimately possible or whether, although representing an extreme point of weariness and denial, it masks the possibility of some genuine resilience of the spirit.'<sup>4</sup> When examined in the light of all that happens in the play this is clearly seen to be just such a summarizing comment as is Macbeth's, with this difference that Macbeth's is the recognition of a totally negative prospect while this implies a renewal hidden in denial. Lear's story is the story of Lear's rebirth. And the reborn Lear has a strangely detached spirit gained by a quiet, joyful recognition of the world as a stage:

So we'll live,  
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
At gilded butterflies and hear poor rogues  
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,  
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;  
And take upon's the mystery of things,  
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,  
In a wall'd prison, packs and sets of great ones  
That ebb and flow by the moon.

This is (the still point) expressive of the highest condition of sanity Lear achieves and is possible for man. It is also the positive affirmation the play makes despite all the odds against such an affirmation—in a world where 'All's cheerless, dark and deadly.'

From here it is only a step to Prospero's:

We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. ✓

What we regarded as the unquestioned solidity of our lives is now seen to be identical with—not merely comparable to—the extreme insubstantiality of stage illusion. We have come full circle. Our lives themselves are the dream from which, being awakened, we should desire no longer to remain deluded. But the dream itself is a kind of metaphor speaking to us in a poetical mode, conveying intimations of a reality beyond the grasp of our waking consciousness. Here, again, there is a negative: ✓

...the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. ✓

but one that hides a sense of fulfilment. [The image of the world seen as a stage is thus linked with Shakespeare's moral perception. It is a splendid embodiment of what may be called his 'open' or naturalistic ethic which requires no philosophic or religious buttressing and yet implies an intense concern with values realized in a resolute facing of life. This is partly, at least, the basis of his universal appeal. The truth is, his art is so congruous with Nature that any theoretical imposition only results in our misreading him. And the image of the stage becomes, in his hands, a progressive vehicle of meaning. What was simply a common element of Shakespeare's dramatic vocabulary becomes a powerful expression of his final comment.] ✓

#### REFERENCES

1. Anne Richter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, p. 83. I am greatly indebted to this excellent study. My effort, however, is to see in what manner the stage image seems to be related to development of character and situation. ✓
2. W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*. ✓
3. Anne Richter, op. cit. p. 179. ✓
4. L. C. Knights, *King Lear in Shakespeare Criticism 1935-60*, ed. Anne Ridler. p. 277. ✓

## EDITORIAL

THIS Number of the *I.J.E.S.* has been wholly devoted to a single theme: Shakespeare. The emphasis of the Number has been mainly on an account, though brief and rapid, of Shakespeare's impact on the various languages and literatures of India. An attempt has been made in these essays to consider translations, adaptations, stage performances (in the original or in Indian language versions) of Shakespeare, critical and biographical works and, furthermore, original creative writings, dramatic and otherwise, patently inspired by Shakespeare. Lack of space has prevented us from presenting a bibliography of Indian language translations and adaptations; for some languages, there are useful hand-lists; for an all-India picture, the bibliography published by the National Library of Calcutta, much superior to a similarly planned bibliography prepared by the Sahitya Akademi, is reasonably full and can provide a dependable working basis for research and serious study.

It will be seen that a few Indian languages are not represented here. Kashmiri, about the position of which I made a reference to Professor Jia Lal Kaul, offers rather meagre materials that are relevant. The scholars who were requested to write on Sindhi and Panjabi failed at the eleventh hour owing to unforeseeable personal difficulties. Nevertheless, from the accounts of the other languages, a total picture of Shakespeare's impact on Indian literatures emerges, a picture that perhaps not incorrectly represents the position in those languages too. For sheer reasons of historical accident, the English language came to certain areas of India earlier than in other areas; for the same reasons, these areas took to a study of English literature—and thus of Shakespeare—earlier than the other areas. And once schoolboys and college undergraduates were stimulated to an appreciation of Shakespeare by such fine teachers as Henry Vivian DeRozio and David Lester Richardson, and once the Indians had received the exhilarating experience of seeing the Shakespeare play performed (by companies which had, not unoften, Indian actors co-operating with them even as they had co-operated with that amazing Russian adventurer, Herasim Lebedeff who

lived in Calcutta in the last decades of the eighteenth century and staged plays in both English and Bengali), once young Indians realised that here was a drama in many significant ways different from their own traditional drama, it did not take them long to translate Shakespeare in their own languages and, more often, to adapt Shakespeare to suit Indian conditions and tastes. I believe three names stand out in an account of the Shakespeare-impact in India; Girish Ghosh, the great actor-manager-playwright of Calcutta; Ganpatrao Joshi, the Marathi actor, perhaps the greatest Shakespeare-actor of India in whose praise I find the Calcutta newspapers of the day eloquent; and Agha Haidar Kashmiri whose translations of Shakespeare in Hindustani became popular all over India and even beyond India (for example, in Singapore and Malaya) wherever Indians lived. Even I have recollections of seeing as a small boy a lusciously melodramatic version in Hindustani of *Hamlet* in a Hindustani theatre in Dacca.]

The time has come carefully to study and evaluate the nature of Shakespeare's impact. I cannot exactly anticipate the full scope of such a study but in at least three respects the study should be valuable.

(1) An examination of the adaptations will bring out a number of variations between Indian and English taste. Has the Indian admired everything that is Shakespeare's? To offer only one instance: I find one Purnachandra Basu writing in the last century a strident condemnation of Shakespeare on the ground that the English playwright deals with murder and bloodshed which are inadmissible in the pacific tradition of Sanskrit drama. Such a point of view as Basu's—and this is by no means a solitary point of view of this kind—raises the question: how does the intelligent Indian reader fit in Shakespearean drama with the traditional Indian ideals of literature in general and drama in particular? Again, in the Indian versions, names of the *dramatis personae* are as a rule Indianised, for understandable reasons, but when the course of dramatic action and situation too is changed, one has to probe into and explain the nature of such changes and omissions. Perhaps, too, it would be interesting to compare these Indian adaptations with such neoclassic adaptations as Nahum Tate's and puritanic omissions as Thomas Bowdler's.

(2) A study of the translations *qua* translations should indicate how far the divergences between the original and the translated version arise from (a) the translator's failure to understand Shakespeare, either because of inadequate knowledge of the English idiom, and especially the idiom of Elizabethan English or on account of any obscurity, at least from his own point of view, in the original text; (b) the translator's incompetent control over his own language; (c) the utter untranslatability of certain portions of Shakespeare, untranslatability in any language; (d) a basic incompatibility between English and the Indian language concerned that prevents even the perfectly qualified translator from rendering Shakespeare into his own language. This last item should be linguistically an important investigation and if the investigator can make a comparative analysis of variant translations in some other languages, Indian and European, the results may be altogether startling. To give one instance: in Bengali, *Macbeth* has been translated by some very competent poets including Tagore; the sonnets by the ablest poets of our generation. Nonetheless, there are startling differences of idiom, rhythm and meaning among the versions. How responsible is the translator's particular interpretation of Shakespeare or his individual passion for a class of idiom for these variations? This study, I think, should also contribute substantially to a general theory of translation.

(3) Furthermore, a close study of translations, adaptations and original works inspired by the reading of Shakespeare, should bring into a clear relief the nature of Shakespeare's 'universality'. 'Not of an age, but for all time', said Ben Jonson, and during the quatercentenary year, the saying has been quoted again and again, and we in India, celebrating the Shakespeare year, have claimed him not only for all time but for all lands too. But in his essay on 'The Age of Elizabeth', written for the two tercentenary volumes published by the Clarendon Press in 1916, *Shakespeare's England*, Sir Walter Raleigh said: 'Shakespeare's admirers abroad do credit to him and to themselves, but they cannot teach the love of him to his friends at home. Their public homage is an empty thing to those who celebrate him more intimately, who love him best not for his power but for his humanity.' How empty has been the

public homage paid in India, and, I have no doubt, paid in the other countries of the world too in 1964? And if the homage has been empty, how tenable is the claim for universality?

Perhaps we would do well not to be peeved by Sir Walter's chauvinism, his attempt to limit the illimitable. We would rather remember the lines of Tagore on Shakespeare (published in *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* in 1916 on the occasion of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death): 'When by the far-away sea your fiery disk appeared from behind the unseen, O poet, O Sun, England's horizon felt you near her breast and took you to be her own. . . . Then at the silent beckoning of the Eternal you rose higher and higher till you reached the mid-sky, making all quarters of heaven your own. . . . Therefore, at this moment, after the end of centuries, the palm groves by the Indian Sea raise their tremulous branches to the sky murmuring your praise.' Tagore was right, Ben Jonson was right, humbler folk like ourselves are right, in claiming universality for Shakespeare. There is no emptiness, notwithstanding Sir Walter Raleigh, in our homage. Shakespeare today is an authentic part of the Indian literary consciousness.

The occasion of the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth has been widely celebrated in India. Schools, colleges, university departments, public libraries, cultural societies, the Sahitya Akademi, have organized Shakespeare days or Shakespeare weeks during which speeches have been made, portions of Shakespeare have been recited, play-reading sessions have been held, plays have been staged (in English as well as in Indian language versions), poems and essays have been composed, special issues of journals and magazines have been brought out, seminars have been conducted, learned volumes to which several scholars and critics have contributed have been published. It is desirable that a record of these various activities, state-wise or language-wise, should be collected, preferably, by the Indian Association for English Studies. The special Shakespeare Numbers of Journals and volume of critical essays that have been received at the editorial office will be reviewed in our next number.

A. BOSE

## NOTE

*The Indian Journal of English Studies* is, for the present, being issued once a year but the Indian Association for English Studies of which this journal is the official organ, hopes, in course of time, to increase the frequency of its publication.

The Editorial Committee welcomes articles on all areas and branches of English Studies. The articles should be of a high standard of scholarship and critical power, embodying results of original investigation and independent and fresh thinking. Intending contributors are requested to note that in addition to a few full-length articles, this Journal also admits a number of brief 'Notes and Comments'. References, based on standard editions of texts, must be placed at the end of the article and must be prepared in conformity with the method followed in the *MLA Style Sheet*; the references should be integrated into the text as far as possible. Contributions, two copies of which are to be sent, must be neatly typewritten in double space on one side of the paper only. The Editorial Committee's decision on the acceptance or rejection or modification of articles shall be final. Rejected articles will not be returned. No payment is made for articles but contributors will receive ten complimentary offprints. All articles and all publications intended for review in the journal are to be sent to:

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