

RENAISSANCE, MANNERISTIC, AND BAROQUE
STYLE IN SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

by

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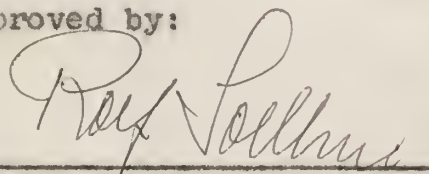
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RENAISSANCE, MANNERISTIC, AND BAROQUE
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The historian cannot help dividing his material into "periods," nicely defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "distinguishable portions of history." To be distinguishable, each of these portions has to have a certain unity; and if the historian wishes to verify this unity instead of merely presupposing it, he must needs try to discover intrinsic analogies between such overtly disparate phenomena as the arts, literature, philosophy, social and political currents, religious movements... (Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism).¹

We no longer agree about what the period we call the "renaissance" really was--or what centuries it embraced. How does one deduce unifying principles from a mass of art including the fragile and orderly surface virtuosity of a Spenser and a Botticelli, the introverted and tortured eccentricities of a Donne and an El Greco, and the extroverted and robust spectacles of a Milton and a Rubens? Jacob Burckhardt, in his Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch (1860), treated this problem, interpreting the renaissance as an upsurge of individualism in history. But surely this does little more than comment on the profusion of styles. To do Burckhardt justice, it must be allowed that his treatment included only Italy, and that it ended with the sixteenth century. Even within the three centuries treated by Burckhardt, however, later studies have attempted to group individual artists by discovering the "intrinsic analogies" Mr. Panofsky mentions. In 1888 Heinrich Wölfflin published the first edition of his Renaissance und Barock, and in 1915 he added to it his Principles of Art History,

which proved to be even more influential. In these volumes he suggested that this amorphous "period" enclosed at least two distinguishable "modes of representation," modes he labeled "renaissance" and "baroque." It is still impossible to study properly the art products of these periods without reference to his valuable descriptions of each style.

The critical interest generated by these studies gradually came to recognize that in the transition from "renaissance" to "baroque" there were enough techniques used for common and isolatable purposes to warrant the recognition of still a third "mode of representation." It was unluckily christened "mannerism," a term not uncommon to continental critics and one which had accumulated so many unfortunate connotations (even denotations) that often writers, in attempts to rid their vocabularies of the term, have failed to do justice to its referent. The strength of such antipathy is evident when in 1957 Walter Friedlander, while translating two of his earlier essays into English, chose the negative term "anticlassical" as the less pejorative term to embrace the essence of the new movement.² However, both "gothic" and "baroque" were also once pejorative terms; the process of amelioration may in time allow "mannerism" some measure of respectability.

In spite of the trouble over terminology, the categories themselves are becoming more and more refined as instruments of art and literary criticism. If they can be refined sufficiently, it seems likely that some valuable insights may result from the

invoking of categories from art history as new vantage points from which to view literature. In any case, the terms "renaissance" and "baroque" can never again be employed absurdly as Procrustean beds to encompass the several different orders of style used during the period from the opening of the fourteenth to the closing of the seventeenth century.

When trying to establish definitions, one is obliged to be precise about the use of all terms. Wylie Sypher, in a landmark study published in 1955, Four Stages of Renaissance Style, probed for a workable definition of "style." He noted that an artist in any medium

does not present us with objects themselves or experience itself, but instead with a representation or portrayal of objects and experience; that is, the object or experience appears in art only after it has been reduced or emancipated from actuality. The instrument of reduction or emancipation is the artist's style, the schema, composition, or "form" in which he makes his statement, the structure or organization he imposes upon the object or experience to which he refers. Art filters life. Between us and actuality the artist or writer places a special style or technique-of-representation. Surely this is what critics imply when they say that art subdues the world to a style.³

Style should not be thought of so much as a way of seeing the world as a set of techniques for representing one's subject as one would have it seen, a mode of representation. Each art form has its own techniques to exploit its special medium. Yet, criticisms of the various art forms often use interchangeable terminology for these techniques. For example, we speak of the artist "gaining distance" (or not doing so) from his audience in literature as well as painting and architecture. We speak of

rhythm in poetry and prose as well as in music, architecture, painting, and sculpture. And so we can continue with tempo, accent, repetition, etc., in formal arrangement. If "parallel" is too presumptuous a term to use when discussing any of these similarities, perhaps, as Sypher has suggested, "analogy" is not.

All of these techniques add up to "form," which Sypher has defined as "the way in which the artist organizes his material or statement."⁴ "Style" and "form" are elastic; they always allow the artist to say what he chooses to say. As they are used to represent subjects seen or experienced, however, they necessarily involve the whole cultural and social world of the artist.⁵

Therefore, it can be said that art techniques have social contexts. This is why we can speak of "period" styles. Sypher has described style as a "symptom" of the contemporary consciousness, as well as its most sensitive "vocabulary" and "syntax."⁶ Wölfflin has said that styles "crystallize the world in certain forms."⁷

Each artist must arrive at his own style by accepting and rejecting, adapting and improving techniques which others have used to give form to experience. But the limitations imposed by environment seem to demand, or at least to encourage, cycles of style. The wealth of periodical literature on the subject of this terminology is witness to the variance of opinion about whether these cycles of style are recurrent phases or datable periods, whether they apply to social classes, races, nations, or

movements which bind some combination of these, such as the Counter-Reformation or the Counter-Renaissance. We must take care not to replace the old Procrustean bed with a new model.

Human nature is fascinating in its unpredictability, and artists are, in the final analysis, human. Some allowance must be made for the development of an artist, for his adopting of new goals or more perfectly achieving old ones, and this kind of development is seldom a steady forward movement. This brings us to the matter of error itself, as an art product is not always a totally successful fulfillment of its creator's intention. When are distortion, ambiguity, and accommodation merely failures of craft? Unless such departures from order are deliberate and serve an artistic end, it would be foolhardy to treat them as indicative of an artist's style.

Because of the nature of an investigation such as this, there is much that we are not and will never be able to say with certainty. There will always be exceptions. But if these categories can never be more than rough-hewn, they are novel hypotheses, a luxury even science grants itself.

The study of comparative art thrives on works by different artists treating the same subject or on retreatments of a subject by the same artist. For this study, retreatments of a subject in different styles would, of course, be ideal; however, as Shakespeare's plays do not permit it, a necessary modification must be tolerated. This study will attempt to show a kind of development in Shakespeare's mode of representing tragic

situations. It will become evident, if the study is successful, that these modes are related to the artist's changing view of his social context.

Shakespeare's development seems to proceed from a provisional formulation of rules to which he strictly adheres (renaissance), through a disintegration of such an orderly and confident art and world which is reflected in his artistic imitation of disorder and doubt (mannerism), to a final reintegration of optimism and confidence in sensual rather than rigid intellectual and logical terms (baroque). Again, it must be made clear that these three stages of development do not proceed neatly from one to another, even though the three plays discussed stylistically in this study suggest a chronological development, from Romeo and Juliet (1594/1595), through Hamlet (1600/1601), to Othello (1604). Some other tragedies may include elements of two styles, and Shakespeare may use elements of an earlier style in a later play. Nevertheless the order in which these styles are described is that which Shakespeare seems to have followed in his most successful tragedies.

If it seems strange that continental paintings should be used to point up analogies with English drama, it must be remembered that during most of the renaissance England had a preeminence in literature equivalent to continental preeminence in painting, sculpture, and architecture. Geographical distances seem not to have altered the similarity of larger elements of world view and the resulting correspondences of style.

I. RENAISSANCE STYLE

Although opinions vary about the nature of the period called the "renaissance," there seems to be general agreement that there was an acceleration of interest in the literature and moral philosophy of Greek and Roman antiquity, and that there was an unprecedented surge of translations and commentaries during the fourteenth and fifteenth century in Europe and during the sixteenth century in England. And, although it can be shown that medieval man did occasionally translate from classical literature and philosophy, it is also clear that his goal was to assimilate the conclusions and philosophical positions into the system of Christian truth. The Scholastics were optimistic in their belief that human reason had been created to know truth, and they left unquestioned the assumption that it should be used in the service of dogma. Reason bowed to divine mystery, and even to some forms of sensible reality, but still it was considered the noblest faculty of man, the faculty which distinguished him from the beasts. Therefore, Dante is convinced that

the proper function of the human race, taken in the aggregate, is to actualize continually the entire capacity possible to the intellect, primarily in speculation, then through its extension and for its sake, secondarily in action.⁸

The act of knowing is given greater nobility than the act of willing. The meaning of life in this world was indissolubly linked with the hope for eventual return to God. Gothic man saw his life as a process which could lead him toward a "fixed and permanent supra-terrestrial state in eternity."⁹ It was this

goal that gave special meaning and purpose to life on earth. Living this life with one's sights always fastened on another world created a "double vision of reality."¹⁰ Therefore, like life, gothic art had two poles; on the one hand was the ideal order of the universe expressing the unchanging will of God, but on the other was the changing existence of each human being who felt desire and pain. Man always stood at the center of gothic art, but he was viewed from the perspective of eternity; allegory was the ideal literary device for such a world view.

There operated in the gothic world--in its allegories, in the bewildering ribs and bays and arcades of its architecture, in the delicate and incessant ramifications of its scholastic syllogisms, even in Dante's terza rima--a principle of "progressive divisibility."¹¹ These elements, of necessity, proceed in linear succession, like the pageant wagons of the medieval mystery plays, because what gothic art does not employ is a single focus. Gothic figures are often more intensely realized as human beings than their renaissance counterparts, but their world is deprived of architectural substance. The space they occupy is not proportional. It ranges in a linear way from the top to the bottom of the painting, but it is not developed in depth. Therefore we cannot see all of the elements of the painting simultaneously, in their relationship to each other and the boundaries of the space they occupy. This style served well the purpose of the gothic artist. His focus was never single; it was both worldly and otherworldly, and he was

emphatic about preserving the distinction.

However, it is clear in retrospect that the emphasis began to shift; the unfolding was gradual, not sudden. The world we now label "renaissance" was still considered an orderly, law-governed microcosm of another more permanent "world," but it began to possess dignity and true significance in itself and to center more and more upon distinctively human interests and ideals. In contrast, orthodox medieval thought had done its best to make Jean de Meung and Geoffrey Chaucer disreputable for their preoccupation with individual human lives in and for themselves.

Although many renaissance thinkers (especially the Christian humanists) still insisted, as did the Scholastics, that they sought to reconcile the findings of other systems of thought with the truths of Christianity, it is difficult not to notice that religion was more and more closely identified with philosophical truth. Special attention was paid to the classical systems of ethics, especially those of Cicero and Seneca, from whose works humanists absorbed much of their Platonism and Stoicism. Their ideal life of virtue, lived according to the Stoic law of nature and right reason, modelled after the Platonic cardinal virtues, and often invoking the Aristotelian ethic of the golden mean between excess and defect, witnesses to the surge of eclecticism. The harshness of the demand to "exterminate the passions in the interests of reason" gave way for the humanists to the "ideal of their control and guidance by reason."¹²

If, nominally, reason was still the handmaiden of religion, in the practice of even the Christian humanists it was directed more and more toward the pursuit of moral virtue, and proportionately less attention was directed toward the contemplation of truth, at least in the speculative sense which the Scholastics would have understood. Consequently, the limitations of reason which activated grace and faith were underplayed in the optimism of setting up rational plans for the creation or continuation of harmony in the governing of public and private life. Thus, the renaissance focus upon aspects of man's life here upon earth reduced the strain of the gothic double poles. Reason could show the way to a very comfortable existence in time and space, and thus the renaissance stage was set for a more secular drama. Man could, by proper control of his faculties, create order; his world could be unified, coherent, and harmonious. He became exhilarated by his own powers.

The renaissance artist was so enamored of these harmonious effects of order and intelligibility that he willingly submitted his art to theories of "correct proportions," algebraic and geometric equations and Platonic notions of harmony. When these theories were honored in practice, the resulting art products can be academic, bloodless, and much less human than late gothic art. The nineteenth century so overstated the importance of renaissance sensuousness that the severity of the actual theories and art products is often initially shocking to us.

Following these mathematical ratios, the renaissance artist

was able to create the technical illusion of natural space, unknown in gothic art. It is important to realize, however, that the renaissance artist mastered the third dimension because his world picture encouraged new art styles. His world, his state, and his life became works of art, microcosms of the universe; renaissance man was confident that submission to rigid rules was a small price to pay for his new surge of self-confidence.

Following Vitruvius's measurements of the human body, Leonardo noted that

if you open your legs so much as to decrease your height by $1/14$ and spread and raise your arms so that your middle fingers are on a level with the top of your head, you must know that the navel will be the center of a circle of which the outspread limbs touch the circumference; and the space between the legs will form an equilateral triangle.¹³

Likewise, renaissance architects designed a centralized church arranged in simple ratios. Man was not invited to move, as he was by gothic architects, but rather to stand at the proper focal point, at which he supplied the perspective needed to allow all the symmetries to fall into place.

Certainly this seems "artificial," but renaissance artists were consciously imitative; to them, the word meant "skillfully achieved." What Castlevetro and Minturno were to poetry, people like Alberti were to painting. As he explained it,

Painting is nothing other than a cross section of a visual pyramid upon a certain surface, artificially represented with lines and colors at a given distance, with a central point of view established and lights arranged....The painter's task consists in defining and recording by line and color each body presenting itself on any surface, at a specific distance and situated by means of a central axis, with the effect that all will be represented as a relief imitating closely the object seen.¹⁴

Many of the peculiarly renaissance characteristics of painting and literature derive from this unusual synthesis of seeming naturalism with a highly theoretical closed system. Wolfflin has described renaissance art as "linear," a style emphasizing clarity of contour, sharp edges and boundaries, and each separate detail in an "isolating" way. Although the art works are self-contained, the "absolute clarity" of each detail is so stunning in its surface virtuosity that individual aspects of the whole sometimes maintain their identity and independence, as well as function in the total design. This seems to be the inevitable effect of a posed, studied composition. Thus Wölfflin has noted a kind of "multiplicity" in renaissance composition.

These individual details or objects, in Wolfflin's terminology, are arranged according to the "horizontal perspective," the line leading to the vanishing point, upon the surfaces of well-defined planes, which are in turn, and in proportion, related to each other. Although there is the illusion of "depth seeing," careful analysis can easily isolate the end of one plane and the beginning of the next.

Finally, Wölfflin has observed that renaissance art works,

like the renaissance world, are "closed," bounded by apparent, well-defined limits. Within the work, because the figures are so neatly ordered, there is an obvious balancing of vertical and horizontal.

This obvious posing and balancing of figures is very evident in the "Madonna and Child with Saints and Angels," of Piero della Francesca (1416?-1492). The human figures occupy the lower half of the painting; an arch occupies the upper half. Horizontally, the figures are divided at the exact focal center by the Madonna and Child. On either side of them, there are five figures, two women and three men. The intensity of colors, the arching of arms, and the pointing of fingers lead the observer to note the obvious antitheses.

Each of the characters is clearly defined; the edges of each figure are carefully separated, even when they overlap. The arch overhead is likewise absolutely clear. Each brick is delineated with such fussy precision that the observer tends to see multiple bricks rather than a background arch. Actually, the viewer tends not to subordinate the time he spends seeing the top half to the time spent on the bottom, although the latter is unquestionably the more important.

"The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian" by Antonio Pollajuolo (1429?-1498) is another perfect example of renaissance technique. There is obvious balance and antithesis of the archers and mounted soldiers on each of at least five detectable planes. Saint Sebastian, who is looking highly detached, considering his

situation, is located on the central axis, the line of the vanishing point. He occupies the top half of the painting. On each plane the figures are in proportion to each other, but if we recede critically into the background it is obvious that either the horses are too small or the archers are too large. Yet there is the illusion of natural depth.

The tone of the renaissance paintings matches the pastels of the palette. Saint Sebastian is wholly composed, neither in pain nor ecstasy. He simply looks resigned. Likewise, Piero della Francesca's saints and angels are in the presence of the Madonna and the Christ Child, yet they appear only moderately interested. Agony and ecstasy are not orderly emotions.

The same ideal of the orderly state is evident in the "two hours' traffic" of Romeo and Juliet. The feud which has disrupted the harmony of Verona is the concern of its good Prince Escalus. But the overthrow of reason by the willful passions demands its toll, and thus we see the tragedy of the two young lovers.

The only two critical treatments of this play in the terms we have proposed differ about its classification. Arnold Hauser, in The Social History of Art, classifies it, with every other Shakespearean play, as manneristic.¹⁵ Wylie Sypher mentions it in passing as an example of renaissance style; his conclusion is based upon the "clear equilibriums" and the symmetry achieved by the use of foils.¹⁶ However, he spends little time explaining why the use of foils in this play is different from that in later

plays which he classifies as manneristic and baroque. It seems more profitable to analyze the artistic effects which result from the use of a technique, as it can be shown that Shakespeare modifies and expands his use of a set of techniques rather than adds new ones.

Such an analysis suggests that Sypher's classification is valid. The play has apparent structural limits. In Wölfflin's terminology, it is "closed"; that is, it does not seem to merge with the space around it to any significant degree. The Prologue announces the problem of the play in a perfectly balanced formal sonnet, serving as one half of a frame. The final speech of Prince Escalus provides the epilogue, the other half of such a frame.

The Prologue announces an ancient, somewhat apologetic feud between two households, the Capulets and the Montagues. As the Prologue promises, it breaks out into "new mutiny." The wise and kind old Friar Laurence seems honestly to believe that a marriage of the only two living offspring of the houses will turn their "households' rancour to pure love" (II, i, 92).¹⁷ However, the Prologue has said this is not to be; the love is "death-mark'd." Their parents' rage does continue; nothing can remove it "but their children's end."

It seems also that the lovers are "star-cross'd," according to the Prologue. It does indeed seem to be hostility of Fate when the Friar's letter is detained and when Juliet awakens only moments too late. Yet, however fateful or accidental these

events may seem to the lovers, they are merely the implementations which work out the demands of the Prologue; they are the "misadventur'd piteous overthrows."

The Prologue sets up rigid rules of action and the play obeys them. The "accidents," therefore, should be no surprise to us. We have been prepared for them, and thus they are lent credence and do not seem to be either capricious plot manipulations or inscrutable interventions of an unknown power. We know that the Friar's plan will miscarry, that the lovers must die.

Yet the lovers do not pit themselves against Fate, nor really do they consider it their enemy, except in figures of speech. The feud is Fate for them, and when their deaths are lamented it is the feud, not Fate, which is blamed. The Prince says,

...Capulet! Montague!

See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.
And I for winking at your discords too
Have lost a brace of kinsmen. All are punished.
(V, iii, 291-295)

Shakespeare, via the Prince, paints a moral object lesson. The Capulets and Montagues learn that lesson, and the Prince dismisses the audience with the admonition to "think on these things." The frame is closed. It seems only academic to use Wölfflin's term "absolute clarity."

Within this closed, perfectly coherent form, there is indeed the equilibrium and symmetry suggested by Wylie Sypher. Whenever possible, two characters or two groups of characters balance each other: the feuders and the non-feuders, the Capulets and the

Montagues, the only daughter and the only son, the bawdy Nurse and the proper Lady Capulet, the firebrand Tybalt and the peacemaker Benvolio, youth against age, etc.

The import of this use of foils is evident, however, only when it is seen in conjunction with another of Wölfflin's categories, "linear-painterly." "Linear" structure, to recall for a moment, emphasizes the clarity of contours and boundaries and of individual details within the proper scale, in contrast to "painterly," a more rapidly moving blurring of contours and details. What could be more linear than the first scene of Romeo and Juliet? The scene opens with Sampson and Gregory, two Capulet servants, one a good bit more successful than the other as a wit. We add two Montague servants. Then we supply Benvolio, the nephew of Montague, and balance him with the arrival six lines later of Tybalt, nephew of Capulet. The next addition is Capulet and his lady, and quite expectedly, four lines later, Montague and his. Finally, to break up the strife, comes Prince Escalus. This piling up of characters, on one plane at a time in the order of their rank, and the balancing of one against the other, is typically renaissance, and it recalls the similar progression of the painting "The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian" by Pollajuolo.

Lady Capulet and Lady Montague express disgust at the feuding, as does the Prince. The household heads are ashamed. The feud is ripe for settlement; the servants fight only out of tradition and the "fiery Tybalts" fight about anything. The

theme of order is proclaimed by the Prince. He labels the "rebellious subjects" in the way any advocate of the Great Chain of Being would be obliged to; they are "beasts," for they are not guided by reason.

Juxtaposed to all this external tumult, we are introduced to Romeo, upset over Rosaline. Benvolio, who introduces him with some of the most beautiful poetry of the play, comments that his mood echoes Romeo's, and although this provides renaissance symmetry to their brooding, it never comes to anything and must be regarded as a detail which maintains its own interest but does not advance the play. This is only one of the instances which recall Wölfflin's discussion of renaissance "multiplicity."

The planar development of the action continues when the men's talk of Capulet and Paris is balanced against the female chatter of the nurse and Lady Capulet. Shortly thereafter, the bawdy humor of Mercutio and the rage of Tybalt provide antithesis to the juxtaposed sweet innocence of the new lovers. The plans for Romeo's marriage vividly contrast with plans for the duel that will precipitate the tragedy. Immediately afterward, we see the accomplishment of first the marriage and then that inevitable duel. At this moment we have arrived at the dramatic center of the play, the central focus toward which we have been proceeding.

Antithetical then are Juliet waiting and Romeo fleeing. While Paris is planning his marriage to Juliet, she and Romeo are consummating theirs. Again the scene is shifted, this time to the plotting of Friar Laurence and Juliet against the second

marriage. Another neat yet vivid contrast is provided by Shakespeare's focusing in the next scene on the preparation for the marriage, only to interrupt them with others for a funeral. At this dramatic moment, we begin another ascending catalogue similar to that in I, 1. Beginning with the calm Friar, we add the weeping parents, the nurse ridiculous in her exaggerated grief, and then proceed to the more touching grief of Paris, the prospective groom, and finally center on the heartbroken husband. This last scene brings back all the characters for a final summary.

This is not medieval episodic progression; it has a focus, as announced in the Prologue. However, we proceed to it by planes, detailed sections advancing from the Capulet side to the Montague side and back again, from a plan to a counterplan. At the risk of sounding repetitious, it may again be noted that this progression is reminiscent of that in "The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian," in which we proceed by planes on each of which people are engaged in the same activity but in slightly different ways, finally reaching the central focus of the martyr on the cross. These characters, and those in Romeo and Juliet, do the same things in ways different enough to complement each other and throw each set of actions into relief. This is not depth portrayal, but the technical virtuosity seen in the surface detail is clear-cut and interesting, calling to mind Wölfflin's "absolute clarity" and "multiplicity."

We do not notice the absence of depth portrayal because of

the clever manipulation of the planes of action. Romeo has overcome his maudlin indulgence in feeling for feeling's sake. His capacity for real anguish and joy is obvious as the planes reach the vanishing point. His grief in the last scene rings true; it is dignified and mature. But we are not allowed to watch the methodical development of such maturity; we must be content to see only that it does develop. Juliet too has developed far beyond her girlish impetuosity. She calms her fears and dismisses her nurse. She can, at the end, "act her dismal scene alone" (IV, iii, 19).

And yet, in comparison to the later tragedies, the tone of Romeo and Juliet is merely poignant; the drama does not reach the heights nor the depths of the later tragedy, and it has justly been called a "lyric tragedy." In contrast to Othello, it is done as much on a palette of pastels as Piero della Francesca's "Madonna and Child with Saints and Angels" seems to be done so in contrast to the vividly-colored "Night Watch" of Rembrandt.

The expression of the emotions in Romeo and Juliet normally depends upon verbal virtuosity. Thus, for example, does the grief of the parents and nurse when Juliet is discovered in simulated death:

Cap. For shame, bring Juliet forth; her lord is come.

Nurse. She's dead, deceas'd, she's dead; alack the day!

La. Cap. Alack the day, she's dead, she's dead, she's dead!

Cap. Ha! let me see her. Out, alas! she's cold;
Her blood is settled, and her joints are stiff;
Life and these lips have long been separated.
Death lies on her like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.
(IV, v, 22-29)

And only a few lines later in that same scene...

Cap.

...

O son! the night before thy wedding-day
Hath Death lain with thy wife. There she lies,
Flower as she was, deflowered by him.
Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir;
My daughter he hath wedded....
(35-39)

Likewise, much of the word play seems to be indulged in for its own sake and often it seems to endanger the predominant mood of its context. A representative example is Juliet's elaborate pun on "I" and "ay" (III, ii, 43-51) when she thinks Romeo is dead. The virtuosity attracts our attention to itself rather than to the depth of her emotion.

With all this careful attention to detail, our interest cannot help but lose sight of the central focus from time to time, although it is always clear where that focus is. This is what Wölfflin means by his previously mentioned term, "multiplicity." Certain details in renaissance art maintain their independence: the two prologues, the one to the play and the other to Act II; Lady Capulet's tribute to Paris (II, i); Friar Laurence on herbs (and people) in II, iii; Juliet's invocation to night in III, ii, and others.

In spite of its "multiplicity," however, the action of Romeo and Juliet is coherent; it is open and frank. There are no mysteries; even if some of the details do seem to exist for their own sakes, they do not mislead us. For example, the bawdy nurse indulges her taste for gross humor, which does not advance the theme of the play, even though it does serve to lighten the atmosphere. The other characters, like her, are most often quite extroverted; they are what they seem. Even the bawdy humor is not self-conscious nor sly. Verona is the picture of health when contrasted to Denmark.

II. MANNERISTIC STYLE

In the renaissance, the optimistic volley of excitement with man's immense importance to the ordered universe drew attention away from his potential wretchedness. However, when doubts gradually punctured the very theory of the interrelated orders of cosmology, nature, and the political state and when ironically it seemed that reason could be used to question the power of reason, man watched his objectivity, his security, disappear with the old laws of symmetry. This was the impact of Copernicus, Montaigne, and Machiavelli, plus that of many others, upon the cultural context to which the artists responded.

Many artists began to portray man confronting the incomprehensible; their techniques were employed to imitate the effects of the enigmatic. As Friedlander has explained, it was no longer a question of creating a seen object or an experience in an

artistically new way, "just as one sees it," or, if idealistically heightened and ethically stressed, "just as one ought to see it." Neither was it really a matter of recreating the object "as I see it," that is, as the individual artist has observed it as a form of appearance. Rather, to put it negatively, it became a matter of recreating "as one does not see it," but as, from purely autonomous artistic motives, one "would have it seen."¹⁸ Manneristic style is quite another thing than insufficiently controlled technique.

When what was previously regarded as canonical could no longer serve the artist's needs, he gave it up in favor of a new, more subjective creation. Thus, as in El Greco's "Christ at Gethsemane," the proportions of the limbs may seem to be stretched more or less capriciously.

This freer and seemingly more capricious rhythm demands the breaking up of the elements of the painting. No longer would an artist paint a Madonna surrounded on either side by five figures, balanced in weight and color. Now the volumes of the bodies begin to create the space, by simply displacing it. Sometimes a feeling of depth is created by adding up layers of volumes, but all perspective which engages man as the central focusing device is avoided. A peculiarly unstable situation is created. Picture planes seem to be set behind each other in relief layers, but no attempt is made to keep them in proportion, so there is no illusion of depth as such. Yet the use of intense color suggests volume, so figures do not as a result seem two-dimensional.

The viewer must proceed from one "plane" or grouping to another by uneasy jumps. Frequently he must adjust ambiguities and equivocations of structure, as when in Tintoretto's "Presentation of the Virgin," the title figure seems smallest and least significant, or in El Greco's "Christ at Gethsemane" the figures--Christ, the disciples, the angel, and the approaching soldiers--are not adjusted to each other in space nor psychological state. Yet, to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Virgin did seem to be a small and insignificant girl, and the agony of the god-man is on another plane than that of the earth-bound. These phenomena are mysterious, and the manneristic artist freely admits his inability to unravel such complexities; he approaches them always with wonder, sometimes with despair.

Thus this art is intentionally only relatively clear. The rank colors create an uneasy tone, often one suggesting imminent doom which cannot be prevented or controlled because it is insufficiently understood. "Toledo in a Storm," by El Greco (1541-1614), is a famous example. The frame and central axis have disappeared, drawing the viewer into an immediate relationship, but one which is equivocal. The viewer must shift his perspective and cannot see all parts of the painting in the same way nor from the same position. And, because man is no longer "in control," the center from which all of these parts fall into focus is beyond his reach. Artists can only imitate the inscrutable, the unpredictable.

The tension between parts of the structure reflects this

turmoil beneath the surface. On the surface the figures often look lethargic, strained, and frustrated. Their energy is not channeled purposefully. It is released in vague directions, in brief flurries of activity which turn out to be futile. No longer is the world seen in repose; it is thrown off center, at least in comparison to the man-centered renaissance world.

This is an art of skepticism, doubt, sometimes of bad conscience. Their uncertainty makes the participants self-conscious. Renaissance artists painted nudes, but when a manneristic artist paints a self-conscious nude she becomes naked. Likewise, in drama, manneristic characters who self-consciously watch themselves act can gain no katharsis. And no epilogue nor grandiose spectacle can summarize such action and help the audience put it neatly in its place.

It is this kind of action that Shakespeare presents in Hamlet. Like Verona, Denmark is in a state of disorder, and, in each case, the Prince must set things right. But there can be no doubt that Prince Escalus has the easier assignment. The terms of the reordering of Verona are harsh but inevitable.

A sense of imminent doom pervades Hamlet's Denmark as it does El Greco's Gethsemane and Toledo. However, as in these paintings, a welter of confusion surrounds any attempt to isolate the cause. King Claudius thinks that the danger is coming from outside Denmark, from the threatened attack of Fortinbras, who is ambitious to regain lands his father lost to King Hamlet. Claudius and Gertrude also feel some apprehension about the

unfavorable response of the Danish subjects to their marriage, which flaunted not only decorum but also the teachings of the church in its rapidity and its legal incestuousness.

However, with the entrance of the Ghost the implications of the disorder become much more perplexing and mysterious. There is uncertainty about the very nature of this visitant spirit. Is it a Christian soul, a pagan spirit, or a devil? Even if it is an honest ghost, how should Hamlet respond? His mind, in I, v, 97, becomes a "distracted globe," a microcosm of the disorder the Ghost claims to uncover in Denmark. That suggestion throws Hamlet's world into the "interrogative mood."¹⁹ Such uncertainty paralyzes his will. Hamlet shrinks from acting unjustly, but the demands of justice are not clear. His revenge must await an analysis of the state of things.

In an ordered state, one can trust the judgment of majority opinion and the essential integrity of what one sees. However, if this ghost is honest, Hamlet must doubt the efficacy of his reason and that of the other members of the Court. And once he accepts his inability to evaluate even the familiar, how can he possibly deal with those things not even dreamed of in his philosophy? This is the skeptic's dilemma.

However, Hamlet sets out resolutely to test the new hypothesis. If "the time is out of joint," then he must at least try "to set it right" (I, v, 189-190). Hamlet is not his usual courtly, scholarly, soldierly self even when we see him for the first time. Since his father's death, he tells Rosencrantz and

Guildenstern, "I have...lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise..." (II, ii, 306-308). Claudius must be thinking of the earlier happy Hamlet when he describes him as "remiss," "generous," and "free from all contriving" (IV, vii, 135-136). But the Hamlet we see feels he must play the fool, "put an antic disposition on" (I, v, 172). If Denmark is populated with experts in duplicity, he will use their own technique, assume an "appearance," so he can, as Polonius would recommend, "By indirections find directions out" (II, i, 66). Therefore, the Hamlet of the play is twice removed from his real self; he "pretends" madness to cover up the tumult already existing in his mind. It is ironic that his confusion prompts him to use the very techniques he despises in others.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern present no real challenge for him. Their "modesties have not craft enough to colour" their real intentions (II, ii, 289-290). However, Hamlet does not underestimate their potentiality for evil. In their very pliability, their lack of commitment to any absolute standards, they are truly pipes to be played upon by anyone for any purpose. How ironic that they should object to Hamlet's rejection of the renaissance world, orderly and harmonious, and his consequently revised estimate of man, now "the quintessence of dust" (II, ii, 310-321). For them, in an even more immediate sense than for Hamlet, "nothing" is "either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (II, ii, 256-257). However, they do very little thinking, and their frightening capacity for evil lies in their

lack of selves to which they can be true. What they may do, Hamlet realizes, is completely unpredictable. They become part of the manneristic uncertainty of the atmosphere.

Likewise, Ophelia's innocence (in the sense of her lack of knowledge of the ways of this disordered world) and her timid nature make her potentially threatening to Hamlet. She is like a fragile hothouse flower; in a well-ordered society, Hamlet could enjoy the luxury of her tenderness, her lack of self-sufficiency. We can indeed envision their life together in terms of another relationship Shakespeare portrays; like Lady Percy, she would not utter what she did not know; in those happy times before the death of King Hamlet, she would have been the perfect complement to Hamlet's self-mastery. But she is now ill-suited to his needs. How fortunate Brutus was to be able to "unfold" his "heaviness" to a Portia!

With his confidence in the health of Denmark, Hamlet has lost his confidence in old relationships and emotions. He had believed in his mother's commitment to marriage as a sacrament. Yet, if the Ghost is honest, her love is merely lust, and her grief only a performance. His trust in Ophelia is likewise shattered when she not only begins to return his letters without explanation but also shrinks in fright from his presence (II, i, 75 ff.). The women Hamlet sees are frail, and in their frailty he can see that they are infinitely corruptible. To love when he cannot trust makes Hamlet vulnerable, but his disillusionment in not being able to love at all makes him bitter

and sardonic.

Yet enough vestiges of the meaningful love affair that has existed do remain in the play to enable us to measure just how rotten Denmark has grown. In V, 1, Hamlet confesses that he "lov'd Ophelia." And surely he did, while the social order enabled him to trust in the validity of such an emotion. However, it is not the Hamlet we see that Ophelia loves; it is rather the courtly, soldierly Hamlet she so eloquently describes in III, 1. The Hamlet "out of tune and harsh," the Hamlet who would kill her father, confuses her; his bitter insults wound her deeply. It is through this Hamlet that the unweeded garden of Denmark stifles her flower-like nature, and in the madness and pathetic death of the "rose of May" the atmosphere of ill health and waste is confirmed.

However, while she is alive, her presence induces pockets of flurried activity which reveal dramatically the disorder of Denmark and the resulting insufficiency of mankind to control it. Yet, Polonius seldom doubts his self-sufficiency in a world of appearances. He is exhilarated by "policy," by the need for inventing new roundabout ways, "indirections." However, Polonius is earth-bound. When pitted against the "more than natural," he is as ineffective as anyone else. Even he confesses this limitation when he admits that "to define true madness,/ What is't but to be nothing else but mad?" (II, 1, 93-94). However, unlike Hamlet, Polonius enjoys trying plot after plot in his efforts to analyze the cause of the transformation of things.

As "the ecstasy of love...as oft as any other passion under heaven...does afflict our natures" (II, i, 102-106), he concludes that his daughter has thwarted Hamlet's "hot love" for her (II, ii, 132). Polonius has never believed in the nobility of any human emotion. The harshness of such a view makes Hamlet's recent disillusionment all the more poignant.

Shakespeare has given us in Polonius a perversion of the wise and kindly old man. When he foists his advice upon Laertes, who is quite anxious to leave for Paris, it is easy to agree with Hamlet that he is a "tedious old fool" (II, ii, 223). Such gnomic wisdom is common in any age, and could have been gleaned from such popular works as Euphues.²⁰ But Shakespeare has undoubtedly revised this material for a more complex purpose. Roy Walker, in a very careful examination of these lines, finds them not "a string of platitudes" nor "a set of fine moral principles somewhat fussily expressed." They serve rather as "the epitome of that horrible ambiguity...which most profoundly expressed the character of the speaker."²¹

Not only can the sententious precepts be interpreted to advocate the basest sort of self-interest, of which Polonius is unquestionably guilty, but we must also recognize an intrinsic ambiguity in that the "self" to which Polonius is true is not easily defined; it shifts with the momentary demands of any pursuer of policy, making him perhaps even more elusive than Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

He is using his own advice the next time we see him. In

II, 1, he shows the same cynical estimate of the baseness of his other child, Laertes, that we could deduce from his "advice" to Ophelia. Reynaldo is to supply Polonius with the details of Laertes's follies in France; he will encourage the boy's acquaintances to reveal such scandals by "forging" stories of Laertes's previous minor lapses. What is this but to "Give every man thine ear but few thy voice!" Thus Shakespeare presents dramatically Polonius's acute awareness of human psychology, and we recognize him as a potential threat.

It can, of course, be repeated that Polonius does not understand Hamlet's "pregnant replies"; madness hits on what "reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of" (II, ii, 210-213). Yet he will sacrifice anything, even his daughter, to his courtly ambition, and Hamlet accordingly calls him "Jephthah" (II, ii, 422). With Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Polonius and the unaware Ophelia help to compose the atmosphere of perplexing plots and counterplots which move manneristically in sudden and fragmentary spurts. Although these characters are in the service of Claudius, the new King is forced to keep secret his real fears, and thus he cannot be very explicit in giving directions; in addition, he cannot be sure that the limitations and private interests, which blind his agents to his real purpose in using them, will not turn on him. Thus, the layer upon layer of appearance and suspicion of Claudius and his forces make the atmosphere oppressive and unnerving, and we, like Hamlet, wish to escape, similar to the way Bernini statues try to writhe out

of their niches.

The reassuring renaissance frame has disappeared; yet although the action has already begun before Act I and continues after Act V, only a small area of space is involved. Within this confining space, the uncertainty that results from the wiliness of the "actors" and paralyzes Hamlet's will actually assumes a manneristic personality all its own in the imagery of the play. Caroline Spurgeon discusses the dominant imagery of ulcers, of disease eating away from within and only gradually becoming evident on the surface, of poisoning, of imprisonment, and of the unweeded garden, all symbolizing disorder.²² What El Greco achieves by rankness of color and ambiguity of spatial relationships, Shakespeare suggests with his images.

This imagery reinforces our awareness of the levels of duplicity of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Polonius, Ophelia, and Gertrude, who are confusing because of the absence or else the excessive malleability of any core of being we could call a "personality." But in Claudius, if anywhere, Hamlet confronts the fountainhead of corruption; the Ghost claims that he is the poisonous source who has "envenomed" the state.

And yet the Claudius we see "seems," in the words of Mr. Harley Granville-Barker, an "urbane, considerate, and convivial gentleman, going quietly and confidently about the business of his Court and State."²³ A. C. Bradley finds "courtesy, dignity, ability, courage, and real affection for Gertrude" in the man.²⁴ And we are asked to believe that this is the "incestuous,

murderous, damned Dane" (V, ii, 336). Although King Hamlet deplores the uses to which Claudius puts them, even he acknowledges "the witchcraft of his wit" and other "gifts" that are able to seduce Gertrude. The audience and Hamlet find it incredible that the "smiling" King is really a cunning and voluptuous villain.

Yet it is this superb cunning in Claudius that draws audience sympathy toward Hamlet's skepticism and hesitancy. We usually see the King among those whom he must deceive. It is not until the prayer scene (III, iii) that we see him alone and hear him definitely confirm his guilt. There is, of course, his earlier aside in III, i, when Polonius, giving Ophelia a prayer book to carry while she helps set the trap for Hamlet, comments that with "pious action" we often "do sugar o'er/ The devil himself." The King then comments upon the disparity between his own "deed" and his "most painted word." Whether or not Granville-Barker is correct in calling this aside "a subsequently applied patch" is irrelevant so far as Hamlet is concerned, of course; however, if he is correct, the fact that Shakespeare found it necessary to add such a "patch" would make even stronger the case for Claudius's successful duplicity at all other times.

It is interesting that in the only two moments of his self-revelation we should see the perpetrator of such a monstrous and well-calculated crime as remorseful and self-torturing. He does not delight in villainy, but rather he feels constantly the horror of his "bosom black as death" (III, iii, 67). In a sense,

Hamlet's mouse-trap play catches easy prey. Claudius too has "bad dreams."

Claudius's self-knowledge is complete. He knows that he is damned. Machinations may keep him from a reckoning on earth, but there is "no shuffling," no circumvention of justice, in heaven. Yet his love for Gertrude and for the power of his office is too strong, and so when he finds it impossible to repent he commits himself instead to whatever villainy is necessary to keep his throne and his queen. How ironic that it should be Claudius who affirms the existence of absolute standards of behavior!

In probing the hypothesis that Denmark is rotten, Hamlet's testing of other people as well as himself leads him to ask questions which he cannot answer. Hamlet gives up his confidence in man's ability to order the world and in man's ability to know himself. Contrary to Claudius, he never reaffirms his confidence in either. Claudius believes he could square himself with orthodox medieval and renaissance Christian demands. He does not do so because he feels that the price is too high.

Hamlet confronts skeptically the orthodox system of the renaissance and finds that it has not prepared him for the appearance of the Ghost. There is more in heaven and earth than could ever be learned by philosophy. In II, ii, 384-385, Hamlet says, still hopefully, that "there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out." But philosophy cannot deal with "thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls..." (I, v, 56). He therefore faces an all but unresolvable ethical

choice: Is the Ghost supernatural or preternatural? However, his reason can do no more than question the efficacy of reason, and he can find no basis for faith.

In his skepticism, words become detached from their common referents; he reconsiders the suitability of each emotion for the situation which normally occasions it. With nothing in a fixed state, Hamlet thinks of himself as an actor. He assumes, as Levin notes, attitudes and attributes as if they are clothes to be put on or taken off at will.²⁵ It is virtually impossible to say what Hamlet is like in the play. He himself admits to Laertes that he was mad for a time (V, ii, 237-254). Even in his assuming of appearances, his wit becomes increasingly more poisoned, and he seems to become increasingly less horrified by insincerity and craft.

By the end of Act III, Hamlet has rationalized his part in the death of Polonius and is actually anticipating with some relish the opportunity to pit his cleverness against that of Claudius. Although he knows that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern only do what they are told, he will "blow them at the moon" (III, iv, 209). The Hamlet who says, "O, 'tis most sweet, / When in one line two crafts directly meet," (III, iv, 209-210) is at a far remove from the Hamlet who, before the appearance of the Ghost, could say honestly, "I know not 'seems'" (I, ii, 76).

After Hamlet has sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths, he explains each detail to Horatio with evident satisfaction and even jubilation. This scene is central to each of

the many arguments which try to show that Hamlet achieves heroic stature by the end of the play. Undoubtedly Hamlet now engages in larger actions, leaving behind the abrupt, futile sallies of unchanneled energy we watched in the early part of the play. However, action for its own sake is hardly praiseworthy; it is the basis of the action that is important.

After Hamlet has consciously decomposed his "self," as the result of his long periods of skepticism, he considers several of the people around him as patterns to imitate in his own responses. One of these people is Fortinbras, the man of military might who "for fantasy and a trick of fame" will send twenty thousand men to their deaths contesting for a piece of ground not large enough to provide burial plots for the dead. Hamlet says,

Witness this army of such mass and charge
 Led by a delicate and tender prince,
 Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
 Makes mouths at the invisible event,
 Exposing what is mortal and unsure
 To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
 Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
 Is not to stir without great argument,
 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
 When honour's at the stake....
 (IV, iv, 47-56)

Hamlet questions whether honor is at stake in the Polish battle. What more could he say toward a condemnation of his own murder of Polonius and all other rash actions! His diction in this soliloquy is reminiscent of his earlier compliment to Horatio, the man whose "blood and judgment are so well commingled" that he is not "passion's slave" (III, ii, 74-77). In his soliloquy, he

says that right action must be based upon "Excitements" of "reason" and "blood" (IV, iv, 58).

However, in V, ii, he has given up all trust in reason and its "plots." He now praises "rashness" and "indiscretion." His encounter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern did not give him a chance to use his "craft," as he had anticipated, but rather the situation itself provided an opportunity for Hamlet to change the orders. It is interesting, of course, that he orders the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Surely merely sending them to England would have been sufficient. Can such an action be intended to recommend rashness?

Yet it is in this action that Hamlet struggles "towards the realization of order in human affairs" which enables him to "hold his hand until the right moment comes" to avenge his father's death, according to Roy Walker.²⁶ Or, in the words of Hiram Haydn, this is the scene in which the "struggle toward integration and consequent resolution is complete."

His house is in order, its owner in possession.
He has made his peace with himself, and hence
with the order of things in general, and with
the eventualities of life and death. He has
become that man he would wear in his heart of
hearts--"that man that is not passion's slave."²⁷

Haydn feels that Hamlet has found the Stoic's solution, that he now accepts destiny and willingly fits himself into "the main sway of the universe," much to the approval of the Stoic Horatio.

However, Haydn is forced to wrench the lines of that scene to make it render such an interpretation. After Hamlet has praised "rashness," he continues to say, "There's a divinity that

shapes our ends,/ Rough-hew them how we will." To this, not Hamlet's praise of "rashness," Horatio replies, "This is most certain." Horatio would never confuse the chance success of a rash act with the truly virtuous act performed with certain knowledge of a good and conscious purpose. As a matter of fact, it is dramatically clear that Horatio's, "So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't," is spoken disapprovingly. Hamlet's reply is defensive.

Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience. Their defeat
Doth by their own insinuation grow.

When Hamlet asks for Horatio's blessing on his plan to kill the King, his friend does not give it. He replies ambiguously, "It must be shortly known to him from England/ What is the issue of the business there." When Osric invites Hamlet to duel with Laertes at Claudius's suggestion, Horatio has misgivings and urges Hamlet to consider such action more carefully. Hamlet's reply that it is "special providence" goes by without comment from Horatio.

When an act is not prompted by the "sovereignty of reason," it is madness, Horatio had earlier shouted after Hamlet as he chased after the Ghost (I, v, 73-74). Horatio too is confused by the implications of the Ghost, but he would probably agree with Hamlet's earlier estimate that an ethical solution to the revenge would have to await an answer to the questions raised by the Ghost from the "undiscovered country."

Surely the Hamlet who announces his return from England by

letter to the King and sweetly assents to a duel with his now-avowed enemy, Laertes, because Claudius, who has already tried once to kill him, wishes it, is making irrational, unconscious choices. By "the readiness is all," Hamlet is quite clearly expressing the hope that once again an act planned by others will play unexpectedly into his hands and give him the opportunity to further his own confessedly "bloody" ends. His choices, made under the influence of immoderate impulses and in the passion of unexpected success, may thereafter seem to have been made under the sway of destiny, but to the true Stoic, rapid, ill-considered decisions seem rather to be madness.

Horatio is quite easily talked out of his "antique Roman" decision to commit suicide. And, although he will tell Hamlet's story, there can be no doubt that his interpretation is not the one Hamlet would urge. He still disapproves of the manner in which Hamlet has responded. When the resulting slaughter has occurred, therefore, he does not agree that it was inevitable, that any universal law of reason demanded it. He will tell the world instead

Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads: all this can I
Truly deliver.
(V, 11, 392-397)

When Fortinbras sees his chance not only to regain lands but also to accede to Denmark's throne, Horatio does not tell him of

Hamlet's favor for such a plan. He urges instead that no more action occur "while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance,/ On plots and errors, happen" (404-405).

What kind of Ghost could have thus "drawn" Hamlet into madness? If Claudius is to be damned for murder, what will be the punishment for Hamlet's "casual slaughters"? It is tempting to recall The Revenger's Tragedy (1607), in which Vendice, offended by the corruption of the Italian court, and grief-stricken at having lost his "bethrothèd lady" to it, sets about to test the honesty of every member of court by matching his plots against those of his opposition. Like Hamlet, he begins to feel that he is "Heaven's scourge," but he does not notice how sullied he is becoming by immersing himself in the corruption. The just Antonio, who succeeds the corrupt Duke, has been equally harmed by the decadence of the court, yet he cannot permit Vendice's passionate revenge, and demands that he be punished by execution. If Hamlet could hear Horatio's estimate of what he has done, would he not echo Vendice's shocked cry in his own defense: "Thou hast no conscience, are we not revenged?/ Is there one enemy left alive amongst those?"

Hamlet dies feeling that since no man understands what it is he leaves, death is not unkind (V, ii, 234-235). But Horatio is not so ready to give up his belief in reason and in self-knowledge and self-mastery. It is still true for him that reason should rule the man as it does the world. The "wonder" of the Ghost is indeed beyond anything dreamed of in this

philosophy, but his inner strength and calm enable him to await a rational course of action. When we last see him, he has not changed; he is urging Fortinbras to control himself as he had earlier urged Hamlet--and failed.

The final scene is a slaughter rather than a spectacle. Claudius is dethroned and may face the consequences he dreaded, but those whom he poisoned must also die before any new order can reclaim them. Hamlet dies, hoping that the state is set right, but we must question that possibility when we see that Horatio feels Fortinbras's hot-headed opportunism must still be controlled by others.

When we survey the carnage and realize that Hamlet's questions still go unanswered, we may well keep asking whether the Ghost was a spirit of health or a goblin damned. Would King Hamlet have approved a resolution which allows his enemy to inherit the kingdom he fought to protect?

Shakespeare has carefully designed this play to show the effects of uncertainty within a man who was formerly confident in a closed and coherent world order. Hamlet's resulting skepticism about not just the honesty of those around him, but also about the validity of any emotion or the efficacy of any human effort, causes him to isolate himself. In his soliloquies, he questions critically each of his responses, and his tireless examinations invite the audience to participate in the mystery he faces, with an effect similar to that achieved by Tintoretto's use of the Sprecher (German, "speaker"), a foreground figure who

beckons the audience to an immediate relationship with those who watch and wonder at the presentation of the virgin.

Hamlet attempts, by sudden and violent outbreaks and by frequent jesting, to achieve some measure of katharsis. However, he watches himself act and joke, and consequently his efforts result only in more self-consciousness and bad conscience. No audience can watch this play in comfort. Horatio's final remarks leave the audience in "woe and wonder." We wonder whether Hamlet might not have looked back at his violent outbreak, as he did after his earlier encounter with Laertes, and see again that it was "madness." Yet, Hamlet's soul was noble, and if we see the catastrophe as unsuccessful it is not because there was an obvious alternative.

III. BAROQUE STYLE

The baroque artist has reintegrated his world to his own satisfaction. The basis, however, is often provided not by a logical resolution but by a majestic proclamation, more satisfying to the senses than to the mind. A typical proclamation is that of the Council of Trent, convened in manneristic doubt, but closed by urging priests to encourage ecumenicalism by avoiding "the more difficult and subtler questions which do not tend to edification," and by reaffirming the essentials of sound doctrines "believed, held, taught, and everywhere preached."²⁸ It was willing to exercise temporal authority and secular pomp; heresy was to be overcome by splendor; the majestic voice would

not argue but proclaim. As Sypher states, "it guaranteed truth by magniloquence."

The baroque style reaches its decisions through spectacle. It resolves the uncertainties in manneristic art by overstatement in the flesh, energy, mass, space, height, color, and light. After the bloodless and shrunken manneristic forms, the baroque is a style of plentitude, capable of absorbing, and robustly transforming to grandeur, every sort of realism. It is an art given to superlatives.²⁹

The result is also a very public art. Manneristic techniques--insistence upon mobile foci, disproportion, imbalance, double functioning of members, shifting levels of statement, uncertain intervals, and rank colors and tone--could not serve this new purpose.

Whereas renaissance art was "linear," Wölfflin claims that baroque art is "painterly." Limits, boundaries, and contours of forms and images are blurred. This is quite another thing than manneristic lack of clarity. When Wölfflin says that baroque art is only "relatively clear" he means that, because the baroque composition gives the impression that it is in the act of "becoming," it does not include the fussy precision of a posed scene. When a wheel is moving, one sees only a blur; only when it stops, can we see each individual spoke. Yet we never have any doubt that the spokes are there.

In baroque art, details are submerged in a total rhythm or direction, with an insistent dominant force driving the viewer or reader in a given direction. One senses in the total composition the structure of an act of will: decision, release, and

fulfillment. The energy is not compounded from small fragments; large masses are compressed or concentrated, and then they are expended in one great motion. Baroque art is extroverted; it finds an adequate katharsis.

But this is not a mere explosion of energy. Baroque extravagance is carefully planned and directed to appeal to the human spirit via the senses. The baroque feeling of plentitude makes the composition seem "open," that is, limitless, without boundaries. The more natural portrayal of subjects, as they appear when they are neither posing nor acting self-consciously, also demands that the renaissance planes and "flat" characters disappear.

A comparison of Piero della Francesca's "Madonna and Child" with "The Night Watch" of Rembrandt (1606-1669) will emphasize the latter's robust, healthful colors and its unposed characters, in the act of forming a group. Although Rembrandt's background arch is presumably composed of individual bricks, just as Piero della Francesca's is, the broader rhythms of the painting encourage his painterly blurring, thereby submerging the arch into the total design and preventing renaissance "multiplicity." There are no planes of action nor fragmented individual elements. There are many characters, but they are all engaged in the same large action. The recession is easy and natural.

It is interesting, when speaking of baroque art as extroverted, to note that actually Rembrandt began with a dark canvas, working outward, letting his objects grow toward the

final effect. Renaissance artists, in contrast, seem to have "carved" or imposed their objects, and, in contrast, they began with a light canvas.

In "The Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite" by Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), one method of managing the easy, confident, and unified movement is evident. The artist has us move in spirals, outlined by the flowing scarves. The characters are aware that they are observed, but they are not self-conscious. Poussin's putti (cherubs) make contact with the audience and invite us to participate; however, the effect that they create is not disconcerting, as is that of Tintoretto's Sprecher. In baroque art, we welcome the disappearance of the renaissance frame, the insistence upon making the picture space merge with our own.

Othello is such an extroverted, publicly-accessible play. The drama results from Iago's act of sheer will. He drives it compulsively in one direction, toward the devastating outburst of the final scene. Although there are several characters developed regularly in realistic depth rather than on planes, as in Romeo and Juliet, or equivocally, as in Hamlet, the mass of material is concentrated into the one powerful action.

For example, the play begins during the course of a conversation between Roderigo and Iago. There is no frame; the motivation for revenge has already been produced, but we are told about it frankly. Iago is an open villain; he enjoys the power of his craft for its own sake, as Claudius does not. Iago is

exactly what he seems. He is jealous of Cassio's promotion to Othello's lieutenantship, a promotion he wants for himself. He lusts after Desdemona. He has also been led to suspect that Othello has cuckolded him and says, "But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,/ Will do as if for surety" (I, iii, 395-396).

However, the sheer delight in his power to reduce the nobility that shames his own baseness is enough to sustain him even after he has ruined Cassio and become lieutenant and has untuned Othello's harmonious marriage. He exalts in the thought of a perfect revenge, the strangling of an unfaithful wife in the marriage bed she has contaminated (IV, i, 211-220). That Desdemona is not guilty has never made any difference, and Iago never leaves Othello alone so that he can try his doubts or ask any questions. We can watch Othello's passion mount as it is steadily renewed and goaded by Iago.

Even if he were given time to ponder, Othello is not habitually introspective. Once his confidence has been shaken, it is a small matter to induce his lapse in self-control. He tries in his one soliloquy (III, iii) to analyze what Iago has told him, but his mind is muddled. From that point on, he is carried by passion. He is undone because of this weakness in his character. He cannot dwell long with doubt, as Hamlet does. He soon decides that "'tis better to be much abus'd/ Than but to know a little (III, iii, 336-337). And he says to Iago,

Why, why is this?

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No! to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolved...

...
Away at once with love or jealousy!
(III, iii, 177-180, 192)

His is an "unbookish jealousy" (IV, i, 102).

Although there is much improbability about the "proofs" Iago offers, the swift pace and rising tension as well as Othello's natural inclination not to deal with difficult problems at any length satisfies the eye and ear enough so that the mind of the audience is not troubled by them. Iago provides simplifications and the audience rides along on the high tide of Othello's passion.

Iago is a man of swift and reckless decision who enjoys unusual success. His act of will is made even more baroque by its painterly progress. In contrast to the myriad of plot lines which come together in Romeo and Juliet and the uncertain relationships between the pockets of action in Hamlet, Iago's plot with strict economy shapes means to his end. He assimilates lucky accidents into his plot (for example, Emilia's finding of Desdemona's handkerchief and the arrival of Bianca) and announces to the audience, while he is alone or in "asides," his changes in plans. These sections of plans are the painterly patches, and we move easily from one to another. When his plans go awry, he steps in himself; for example, it is Iago who finally kills Roderigo when his failure to kill Cassio threatens the success of the plot (V, i).

Only once is there a seeming lag in the plot. Emilia, Desdemona, Iago, Cassio, and a few others arrive in Cyprus before Othello does (II, 1). However, not only is this time used to show Desdemona and Iago matching wits on the "deserving woman" and Desdemona's impatience for and mute fears about Othello's arrival; it also gives Iago the economical idea of undoing Cassio and Desdemona at the same time. Economy is exercised again in showing the complete happiness of Desdemona and Othello. During the course of twenty-five lines, the reunion of the pair establishes that fact. It is used at the same time to pique Iago's jealousy as he watches, and he comments,

O, you are well-tun'd now!
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.
(II, 1, 202-204)

Similarly, Cassio's undoing by drunkenness is achieved quickly during Iago's sixteen-line soliloquy (II, iii, 50-65). All that we see is the ensuing fight and the prompt arrival of Othello. It is Cassio's repentance that is important to Iago's plan, so these preliminaries are subordinated to the unity of the main plot line.

We see that this is true throughout the play. Details which would assume their own importance in Romeo and Juliet are subsumed into the great moving mass. Roderigo, whose gulling would very likely have been developed into a comic sub-plot in Romeo and Juliet, in Othello is used not only as a foil to the main character but also to get Brabantio's attention (I, ii), to fight with Cassio (II, iii), and to try to kill him (V, i).

Emilia and Bianca also are not merely foils for Desdemona, but they are also involved in the main action. Even Othello's Clown is used to procure access to Emilia for Cassio (III, 1) and to bring Desdemona's promise of aid, also to Cassio, in III, iv. He is much more utilitarian than amusing.

This same economy is characteristic of the word play which in both Romeo and Juliet and in Hamlet often called attention away from the plot and mood. Iago uses it to cause doubts in Othello, by insinuating enough to start his imagination running. Emilia's bawdiness not only emphasizes Desdemona's purity but it also serves to warn her about Othello's suspicions (IV, iii). Othello's bawdy humor late in the play shows us just how far from nobility he has fallen.

Lodovico's surprise at seeing the changed Othello (IV, 1) serves as an objective measuring rod, because he has not watched its gradual development. He has come to take Othello and Desdemona back to Venice, leaving Cassio in charge of Cyprus. So far from being rational is Othello that he does not notice his wife's pleasure at this opportunity, despite the necessity of parting from Cassio. This scene provides the last real opportunity for thwarting Iago's plan--and it fails.

The last act is a prolonged spectacle. Othello's sorrowful madness, torn between his love and his wounded pride, is given the final test. He must smother an awakened Desdemona, her womanly dignity contrasting sharply with his madness. The arrival of Emilia before Desdemona is dead provides momentary

hope, but such is not to be. Desdemona's final superhuman forgiveness provides baroque antithesis to Emilia's accusation of Othello as "devil." At this moment the prolonged and complex antithesis between the whiteness of Desdemona and the blackness of the Moor reaches its peak.

In Romeo and Juliet, Friar Laurence and Prince Escalus summarize all that has happened. In Othello, the growing awareness of Emilia and Othello is dramatized in their prolonged sorrowful railing at each other, while Iago listens. Out of this comes Emilia's grief-stricken recognition that she provided the "ocular proof" that convinced Othello. Iago's luck at that moment has run out, and his vulgar ranting at Emilia throws into relief Othello's regaining of dignity. Iago is not even allowed the dignity of death.

The diction and syntax of the play partially explain the sensation of weight and depth. In Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare delighted in rapid surface cleverness to convey emotion. In Hamlet, the rankness and uncertainty of the atmosphere is reflected in the morbid and equivocal diction, the rapid alterations of tone, and the frequently tortured syntax. However, in Othello, the diction and syntax reflect the grand but simple structure of the play and its hero. Desdemona is, for the Moor, either heavenly or else she is a devil. When Othello considers the possibility that she is the latter, his diction is eloquently simple, interrupted by frequent pauses. Often, additional weight is achieved by repetition of words and phrases

or their synonyms, verbally paralleling the baroque artistry of a Bach fugue. For example, Othello's first declaration of revenge is, "O, blood, blood, blood!" (III, 111, 451). Surface virtuosity could never have revealed the tortured soul of Othello as does his, "But yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!" (IV, 1, 206-207), or his "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul..." (V, 11, 1). Like Rembrandt's richness and depth of color, such speeches as these and the following make their appeal to the senses rather than to the intellect:

Emilia. Villany, villany, villany!
 I think upon't,--I think I smell 't,--O villany!
 I thought so then,--I'll kill myself for grief--
 O villany, villany!
 (V, 11, 190-193)

Oth. O! O! O!
 (V, 11, 198)

Oth. ...
 O Desdemon! dead, Desdemon! dead!
 Oh! Oh!
 (V, 11, 281-282)

Familiar words are supercharged with emotion, and the audience is drawn into the action, which becomes almost ritualistic. In his grief, Othello asks, "Who can control his fate?" However, there is no other mention of anything that could be called determinism, and he assumes full responsibility for his action.

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
 Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate
 Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you
 speak
 Of one that lov'd not wisely but too well;
 Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
 Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdu'd
 eyes,
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
 Their medicinal gum.
 (V, ii, 341-351)

Likewise, Othello's Christianity is mentioned occasionally, but baroque art admits no speculation about the future rewards of Othello's murder and suicide. Othello is "unbookish" to the end. His strength, like that of the play, is not of the mind. He is "great of heart" (V, ii, 361).

In the splendor of the final scene, order is restored. Othello has earlier said, thinking of Desdemona, "I do love thee! and when I love thee not,/ Chaos is come again" (III, iii, 91-92). And with Iago, chaos does come, sullyng the values in which Othello and Desdemona trusted. The faithful Desdemona, who previously could not even imagine a breach of wifely faith and modesty, is the victim of her own innocence. But what a powerful reaffirmation of nobility and goodness we see in the final scene! The evil of an Iago is complete and unflagging. But the simple antithesis of his total blackness and Desdemona's "whiteness" is dazzling; the appeal to the senses alone makes evil seem unnatural.

The reader or viewer can have no doubt that love and trust are valid, after Othello has ended, just as he could not help but

distrust them in Hamlet. Yet Othello has not answered any of the difficult questions raised by Hamlet. In a very real sense, Othello argues by proclaiming that evil is abnormal, that man can regulate himself and his world with dignity and splendor. To contend that the play does not logically justify such a conclusion is to miss the entire point of baroque art, which so inundates with massive splendor as to render logical argument superfluous.

IV. CONCLUSION

There seems to be an irresistible urge for critics to fit art works and ideas into neat periods, and then to try to anchor their periods biographically and historically. C. J. Sisson, in a British Academy lecture (1934) later published as The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare, reviews most of the attempts to link Shakespeare's plays with events in his biography. Sisson debunks such efforts, and perhaps nearly everyone agrees that it is dangerous to assume that Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, etc., are personae for Shakespeare.

It is amusing that, after expending so much energy insisting that the plays do not echo the chronology of Shakespeare's personal development, Sisson says in his final paragraph that the tragedies show that Shakespeare "experienced and faced the twin problems of pain and evil in no spirit of petulance, but with an insight into immanent good...." Shakespeare also displays there "his robust and transcendent faith in God and his creature

Man."³⁰ What is this but falling into the pit he has so carefully defined!

In general, however, Sisson's warning should be heeded. We have no certain dating of many of the plays, and our factual knowledge of Shakespeare's life is too limited ever to corroborate any theories which divide the plays according to periods in their author's life. And yet, although the relationship of an author's works to his changing moods is a problem the aestheticians may never solve completely, it is certain that Shakespeare, as all artists, was of his time, as well as for all time. And, although Coleridge spoke wisely when he remarked to Southey that "When a man is unhappy, he writes damned bad poetry,"³¹ it is nonetheless true that artists are drawn to consider those matters which interest them as men. To say otherwise is to erect only ivory towers and fantasies.

The consideration of works from the point of view of style helps us to gain some necessary distance. It recognizes that the artist transforms what he sees and experiences into the form in which he would have it seen. In contrast, a system which makes style a secondary consideration has been constructed by Professor Edward Dowden, whose phrases "In the Workshop," "In the World," "In the Depths," and "On the Heights" point clearly enough to the kind of significance which he finds in the changes of mood and type of play. The implication is that the tone and mood of each play reflect the emotional experiences through which Shakespeare was passing at the time of its composition.³² G. B. Harrison

also has tried to categorize the plays into four periods, and his system, as Dowden's, considers style in conjunction with the subjects and moods of the plays. However, he does weigh style quite heavily, as is indicated by the labels given to his periods: "Early," "Balanced," "Overflowing," and "Final."³³

Both systems place Hamlet and Othello in the same category. Dowden feels that both plays reflect Shakespeare's hypothesized "dark period," the period he labels "In the Depths." On the other hand, Harrison thinks that the style and mood of both plays indicate that the thoughts and feelings which prompted the plays were such that they permitted clear, logical expression. He therefore includes both plays in the "Balanced" period. It is evident that both critics cannot be correct. And when these two tragedies are considered stylistically, deducing Shakespeare's intention from the finished art products and not presupposing it, differences can be isolated which suggest that the two plays should not be placed in the same category.

It may be that the new method of seeing the plays attempted in this paper will not achieve a generally accepted regrouping. But the method has interesting possibilities, because it can study the use of techniques exclusive of genre divisions, i.e., histories, comedies, and tragedies, and it does not make one susceptible to the "intentional fallacy." It can also help to define Shakespeare's participation in the undeniable artistic and intellectual movements of his age. But finally, and perhaps most significantly, it helps to show that Shakespeare's plays are

not really "native Wood-notes wild." Ben Jonson, perhaps the contemporary of Shakespeare who would have been most conscious of craftsmanship, said of him:

Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art,
 My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
 For though the Poets matter, Nature be,
 His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he,
 Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
 (such as thine are) and strike the second heat
 Upon the Muses anvil: turne the same,
 (And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame;
 Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
 For a good Poet's made, as well as borne.
 And such wert thou....

Perhaps each succeeding age can profit from a new method which helps it to renew its appreciation of the "anvil" on which Shakespeare turned his "living lines."

NOTES

- ¹(Latrobe, 1951), p. 25.
- ²Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Painting (New York, 1957), p. 5.
- ³(Garden City, 1955), p. 4.
- ⁴Sypher, p. 8.
- ⁵Sypher, pp. 6-7.
- ⁶Sypher, p. 16.
- ⁷Principles of Art History, M. D. Hottinger trans., 7th ed. (New York, 1932), p. 11.
- ⁸As quoted by Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York, 1950), p. 33.
- ⁹Haydn, pp. 29-30.
- ¹⁰Sypher, p. 38.
- ¹¹Sypher, p. 45.
- ¹²Haydn, p. 64.
- ¹³Sypher, p. 63.
- ¹⁴As quoted by Sypher, pp. 72-73.
- ¹⁵(New York, 1960), p. 171.
- ¹⁶Sypher, pp. 26, 30.
- ¹⁷The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, ed. William Allen Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill (Cambridge, 1942).
- ¹⁸Friedlander, p. 6.
- ¹⁹Harry Levin, The Question of Hamlet (New York, 1959), p. 19.
- ²⁰Edward Dowden, Shakespeare: A Critical Study of his Mind and Art (New York, 1880), p. 125.

²¹The Time is Out of Joint (London, 1948), p. 37.

²²Shakespeare's Imagery (Boston, 1935).

²³Prefaces to Shakespeare, I (Princeton, 1946), p. 217.

²⁴Walker, p. 33.

²⁵Levin, pp. 111-112.

²⁶Walker, p. 152.

²⁷Haydn, p. 635.

²⁸Sypher, p. 180.

²⁹Sypher, p. 181.

³⁰C. J. Sisson, The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare, Annual Shakespeare Lecture, April, 1934, p. 26.

³¹Sisson, p. 21.

³²Dowden, passim.

³³Shakespeare: Major Plays and the Sonnets (New York, 1948), pp. 67-73.

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ROMANISMS, ROMANTICISM, AND BAROQUE
STYLE IN SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

by

JEWELL MAY WOODLAND

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Following the stimulus of Heinrich Wölfflin's Renaissance und Barock (1888) critics have begun to see "parallels" or "analogies" between the techniques of various art media of the rather amorphous period from 1300 to 1700. These interdisciplinary studies have led to the recognition of at least three major trends in artistic "mode of representation" and purpose during the period referred to generally as the "renaissance." This study attempts to see Shakespeare's techniques for representing tragic situations within the framework of these larger artistic trends, finding stylistic parallels between his drama and contemporary paintings.

The first stylistic trend, renaissance, involves a provisional formulation of rules to which artists adhere strictly, producing art which appeals primarily to the intellect. Romeo and Juliet (1594/1595) is strictly ordered by the Prologue, which explains and limits the action of the play. This action is implemented by myriads of small plot lines which move toward the catastrophe on one plane at a time, shifting from Capulet to Montague, from plan to counter-plan. Painstaking craftsmanship of details, such as word play and "set pieces," often attracts attention for its own sake. The expression of emotions depends upon similar virtuosity of language, reaching neither the heights nor the depths of later tragedy.

Evidence of a second artistic trend, mannerism, can be seen in Hamlet (1600/1601). The disintegration of confidence in man's ability to comprehend and control his world is reflected in the artistic imitation of disorder and doubt. The mood is "interrogative." One fears imminent doom which cannot be prevented

because a welter of confusion surrounds any attempt to isolate the cause. Brief flurries of unchanneled energy turn out to be futile. The characters become introspective and self-conscious, and interactions are uneasy and ambiguous. The rankness and uncertainty of atmosphere are reflected in morbid and equivocal diction and tortured syntax.

A third artistic trend, baroque, optimistically reintegrates the world and renews man's confidence by majestic proclamation rather than argument, by appeal to the senses rather than to the intellect. Shakespeare's hero in Othello (1604) cannot live long with doubt; therefore, once his self-control has been shaken, Iago moves him easily and rapidly toward the final devastating outburst. Lucky accidents are subsumed into the great moving mass, and the eloquently simple diction and syntax, punctuated by frequent pauses, adds to the sensation of weight and depth. By the simple antithesis of Desdemona's dazzling "whiteness," Iago's unflagging evil seems unnatural. In the splendor of the final scene Othello's dignity is restored, and logical argument is rendered superfluous.

When the plays are considered from the vantage point of style, the valuable critical distance gained allows one to question the systems of classification which place Hamlet and Othello in the same category because of a supposed similarity in "intention." Moreover, seeing Shakespeare's style within the artistic framework of his time enables us to appreciate more than "native Wood-notes wild." We acknowledge, with the craftsman Ben Jonson, that Shakespeare struck "the second heat/ Upon the Muses anvil" to forge his "living lines."