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Private Life:
Shakespeare and Selfhood

"*Who is it that can tell me who I am?*" (*Lear* 1.4.230)

Introduction

Shakespearean comedy typically has a tripartite structure: an opening predicament, a central section of confusion and dissolving identities, followed by restoration. We see this in *Comedy of Errors* (Egeon's death sentence; mistaken identities in two sets of twins; family reunion), in *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Hermia's enforced love choice; confusion and exchange of partners in the wood; marriage), in *As You Like It* (banishment; disguise and playacting in Arden; family reunion and marriage), in *Taming of the Shrew* (Baptista's condition that the wooing of Bianca depend on the marriage of her older sister; Petruccio's disorientation of Katherine; delayed marriage banquet), and so on. This dramatic structure has a long tradition. It is both pagan (anthropologists trace it to the three phases of the moon – waxing, waning, reappearing as a new moon) and Christian (the Friday of death, the Saturday of disappearance, the Sunday of resurrection [Frye 1986: 43]). In Shakespeare's plays it is also profoundly psychological, based on the paradox that in order to find oneself, one has to lose oneself.

This losing/finding always takes place in a different environment, in a holiday world: the Forest of Arden (*As You Like It*), a deserted island (*Tempest*), a tavern in Eastcheap (*1* and *2 Henry IV*). But holiday worlds can only ever be temporary, and Shakespeare characters, like real-life characters, must return from vacation to use their restored and renewed selves in the real world.

The loss that precedes finding is often profound, and Shakespeare's vocabulary for this disorientation ranges from melting to outright annihilation. In lacking his mother and his twin brother, Antipholus of Syracuse lacks a part of himself:

> I to the world am like a drop of water,
> That in the ocean seeks another drop,
> Who, falling there to find his fellow forth
> (Unseen, inquisitive) confounds himself.

> So I, to find a mother and a brother,
> In quest of them (unhappy), ah, lose myself. (1.2.35–40)

In *Midsummer Night's Dream* Helena uses images of seasonal extreme to describe the change of heart of her lover, Demetrius, who has fallen in love with Hermia:

> For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
> He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
> And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
> So he dissolv'd, and show'rs of oaths did melt. (1.1.242–5)

The same image of melting characterizes Richard II's loss of identity as king when faced with Bullingbrook's takeover:

> O that I were a mockery king of snow,
> Standing before the sun of Bullingbrook,
> To melt myself away in water-drops! (4.1.260–2)

The vocabulary of the elements and the seasons – sea, hail, snow, sun, thaw – illustrates drama's indebtedness to pagan celebrations in which the changing agricultural year was presented theatrically as a conflict between winter and summer. Francis M. Cornford's seminal study, *The Origins of Attic Comedy*, traces this theatrical structure from Greek drama to mummers' plays. The old season, autumn (often represented as an old king), is challenged by a newcomer; the two struggle for supremacy, and the old season is killed, its death being represented by winter; the new season/king (spring) ascends. It in its turn ripens (summer), decays (autumn), dies (winter), and is replaced (spring). This archetypal structure may explain why Shakespearean history and tragedy follow the same tripartite structure as Shakespearean comedy. But whereas comedy is triumphant and circular (the marriages with which it concludes represent the ascendance of the next generation and herald procreation and birth, the human equivalent of spring's ascendance), tragedy is linear and leads to extinction.

Although the self-discovery of characters in history and tragedy comes too late to create a harmonious resolution, the central section of loss is the same. "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" howls Lear (1.4.230); "I must nothing be" realizes Richard II (4.1.201). In *Othello* both the Moor and his ensign grieve over loss of identity: "Othello's occupation's gone" laments Othello (3.3.357); "I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial" cries Cassio (2.3.262–4).

In this chapter I examine personal identity in nine Shakespeare plays.

1 The Divided Self

"*How have you made division of yourself?*" (*TN* 5.1.222)

Comedy of Errors (1594)

Comedy of Errors opens with Egeon, a Syracusan merchant, relating the events which have brought him to Ephesus. He and his wife, parents of identical twin boys both (implausibly) called Antipholus, adopted another set of identical twins, both called Dromio, to act as servants to the Antipholi. When the twins were still infants the family was separated in shipwreck, so that Egeon lost his wife, one Antipholus, and one Dromio. He brought up the surviving twin and servant in Syracuse until such time as Antipholus reached manhood when (accompanied by his Dromio) he set out in search of his lost brother and mother. Egeon is now traveling in search of his Syracusan son and servant, and finds himself in Ephesus. As it happens, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse have also landed in Ephesus where, coincidentally, the long-lost twins live, and where the lost mother/wife, Emilia, is abbess of a local priory. For four acts, the newcomer Syracusan twins are regularly mistaken for the resident Ephesian twins. Comic chaos is inevitable, until the entire family is reunited and misunderstandings cleared up in act 5.

Comedy of Errors is based on a Roman comedy, Plautus's *Menaechmi*, which gave Shakespeare the story of twins separated in infancy. In Plautus, there is only one set of twins; Shakespeare added the Dromios. Two sets of twins, bearing the same name, raise important questions about the location of identity. (Although Plautus gives the twins the same name, he provides a logical explanation: one inherits his brother's name when the brother is deemed lost. Shakespeare offers no explanation.) The characters in *Errors* assume, not unnaturally, that name confers identity. When Adriana, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, mistakes the Syracusan twins for her husband and servant, she identifies them by name; the astonished Syracusans take this as proof that she does indeed know them. However, as confusions escalate, both Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse grow hesitant in assuming that name and identity are synonymous. "Do you know me, sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?" asks Dromio in anguish at 3.2.73–4. His master reassures him: "Thou art Dromio, thou art my man, thou art thyself" (75–6), but just 100 lines later he is unable

to apply the same confidence to his own situation. "Master Antipholus," hails the goldsmith at 3.2.165; "Ay, that's my name" is Antipholus's guarded response. The duplicatability and detachability of names, the fact that they can have multiple referents, prevents them being a reliable marker of identity.

If names are unreliable, Dromio of Ephesus turns to the individual's body: "That you beat me at the mart, I have your hand to show," he tells the wrong Antipholus as proof that the two have indeed met recently (3.1.12). But any confidence in the fixity of the relation between body and the individual self is soon disrupted when the amorous Ephesian servant Luce claims Dromio of Syracuse as her fiancé on the basis of some "privy marks" on his body – marks that are not exclusively his because they are shared with his twin sibling. Other characters in the play repose trust in material objects – the goldsmith's chain, the courtesan's ring, the rope – whose detachability and transferability render them equally unsuitable as markers of a specific individual (Hopper n.p.). At one stage Adriana suggests that identity is not innate but reflected: she may be married but, if her husband frowns at her and visits prostitutes, she cannot feel like a wife because he does not act as a husband. *Errors* here anticipates the binary of the later *Tempest*, where Prospero can only be ruler of the island as long as there are subjects to rule; he and his slave Caliban are therefore symbiotically dependent on each other for their identities as master and mastered. Cassius points out a similar symbiosis in *Julius Caesar*: Caesar "were no lion, were not Romans hinds" (*JC* 1.3.106). Identities are mutually constitutive (cf. Lanier 1993: 90–101).

Errors does not resolve the difficult questions it poses, for, in the play's last moments, when all confusions have been explained, the twin Dromios cannot even tell themselves apart and have to draw cuts for seniority. This aleatory approach to hierarchy is seriously disruptive in the Elizabethan age, an age which liked to know – and to legislate – an individual's place, and hence social identity, by means of sumptuary legislation. "Sumptuary legislation" is the term given to the legal dress code that structured Elizabethan society: which class of people could wear expensive fabrics, what kind, what color, how much, who could carry a sword, etc. Identity was attached to dress; dress both created and confirmed status. In Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, Faustus's transgressive vision of dressing undergraduates in silk indicates his misuse of diabolic power. The rebel leader Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI* is equally anarchic in his plan to erase sartorial distinction: "all the realm shall be in common . . . and I will apparel them all in one livery"

(4.2.68–74). Similarly in the anonymous *Arden of Faversham*, a play written shortly before *Comedy of Errors* and *2 Henry VI*, the protagonist is outraged less by his wife's adultery than by the fact that her lower-class lover, a steward, is wearing a sword, an accessory to which he is not entitled.

Sumptuary legislation was coming unstuck in the 1590s when *Errors* was written. The dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, when real estate as we now know it began, had first enabled the *nouveaux riches* to acquire the trappings of inherited wealth: land. (Before the Reformation, England had only three categories of landowner: the crown, the nobility, and the church.) From land to coats of arms; from coats of arms to clothing . . . one challenge led to another as the financially successful refused to be restricted in class status.[1] In 1604 sumptuary legislation was repealed, having proved unable to stem the tide of capitalist individualism and self-creation. Apparel no longer proclaimed the man; identity was malleable. *Errors* extends this contemporary debate, moving from clothing to identity as a whole, asking where it resides and how it might be constructed.

As You Like It (1599–1600)

In *Comedy of Errors* the men travel in search of identity, whether physically like Antipholus of Syracuse or emotionally like Antipholus of Ephesus; the latter visits a prostitute and, on one occasion in the first printed text of the play (the Folio of 1623), is given the agnomen erraticus (wandering). The women stay physically at home. In *As You Like It* both the hero and heroine, Orlando and Rosalind, travel to the Forest of Arden.

In fact, Arden is the destination for all the characters. Rosalind's father, Duke Senior, is already in residence, having been banished from court by his usurping brother, Duke Frederick. When Rosalind grows up, she too is banished by Duke Frederick and flees to Arden (in male disguise), accompanied by her cousin Celia and the court clown, Touchstone. In the meantime, Orlando is in danger from his wicked brother, Oliver, and retreats to Arden with his aged retainer, Adam, where for several acts he is entertained by a young man, Ganymede (his beloved Rosalind, unrecognized by him). The villains eventually pursue the innocent to the Forest.

Juliet Stevenson recounts her impression of the play's woodland retreat: "What *is* Arden? Not Epping Forest, that's for sure. . . . Arden is a metaphor,

[1] See Duncan-Jones 2001: 82–103 for Shakespeare's attempts to acquire "gentleman" status – and the coat of arms and liveried uniforms that went with it.

a landscape of the imagination and a realm of possibility, a place where gender definitions can be turned on their heads" (Rutter 1988: 97).

Of all Shakespeare's comedies, *As You Like It* is one of the most sensitive to gender. Although Shakespeare heroines often don male disguise for self-protection or plot advancement (Julia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Imogen in *Cymbeline*, Portia in *Merchant of Venice*), it is unusual to find the hero correspondingly feminized. In *As You Like It* Orlando's first appearance in the Forest of Arden is characterized in feminine fashion: he is a nurturing, maternal figure, caring for and feeding his octogenarian servant, Adam; at one point he carries him in his arms; and the vocabulary depicts Orlando as a "doe," looking after a "fawn" (2.7.1128; Rutter 1988: 105). *Mutatis mutandis*, the exiled Rosalind is in male attire with a "swashing and a martial outside"(1.3.120), and she adopts masculine behavior: she initiates conversations, negotiates finance, and arranges marriage. She enjoys her male attire and the freedom it affords her so much that she retains her disguise long after it has served its practical protective purpose in facilitating her flight with her cousin Celia. In act 1 Celia suggests that she and Rosalind go "to seek my uncle [i.e., Rosalind's father] in the forest of Arden" (1.3.103). This goal is accomplished in act 3, as Rosalind reveals in an incidental remark to Celia: "I met the Duke yesterday and had much question with him. He ask'd me of what parentage I was. I told him of as good as he, so he laugh'd and let me go" (3.4.35–8). Nonetheless, Rosalind retains her male disguise for a further two acts, giving up her masculine identity only because her lover Orlando says he can "live no longer by thinking" (5.2.50).

The experiment with selfhood extends into the epilogue where Rosalind plays with her identity as a female character ("It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue"; 1–2) and as a male actor ("If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleas'd me"; 18–19). Her costume adds a third strand to the epilogue's juggling of gender. It is usually assumed that Rosalind is dressed as a bride – "I am not furnish'd like a beggar, therefore to beg will not become me" (9–11). But not dressed as a beggar does not necessarily mean dressed as a bride. Maura Kuhn points out that Rosalind is probably still costumed as Ganymede (1977: 42).

Unlike Shakespeare's other cross-dressed heroines, Rosalind is never given an opportunity in dialogue to reveal to her future husband that *she* has in fact been a *he*; her educative role in the Forest is thus left unacknowledged. Kuhn suggests that costume here reveals what dialogue does not, Rosalind choosing to wear male costume for her marriage to Orlando.

Juliet Stevenson's view of the play as one that allows characters to experiment with identity is amply borne out.

The personal experimentation with identity is not confined to gender. Rosalind's father, the banished Duke Senior, like the later King Lear, finds that he learns more about himself from exposure to the elements than he does from court life: "these are counsellors / That feelingly persuade me what I am" (2.1.5–11). (Productions often present the courtiers gazing at the Duke in amazement as a Siberian wind bellows around them. The Shenandoah Shakespeare Express production of 1995 presented the opposite extreme: evidently blistering heat, with the courtiers swatting mosquitoes from their faces.) Celia, too, changes. Characterized by her initiative in the court scenes, she is less prominent in the Forest. Whereas in 1.2 Celia was the one to cheer Rosalind, offer suggestions, initiate conversations, and prompt the cousins' flight, in Arden she is more passive. In 4.1, for example, the satirical wooing dialogue between Rosalind/Ganymede and Orlando, she is a silent spectator. Directors have to respond to this by giving Celia something to do during the 175 lines in which Rosalind and Orlando converse. In production Celia sleeps, reads, or less passively (and more comically) tries to retrieve a personal object – her shawl in the 1980 RSC production on which Rosalind and Orlando inadvertently, obliviously, stood and sat.

Even stereotypical villains change in Arden. Orlando's wicked brother, Oliver, needs no more than a therapeutic nap beneath one of the Forest's oak trees to metamorphose from bad to good:

> 'Twas I; but 'tis not I. I do not shame
> To tell you what I was, since my conversion
> So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am. (4.3.135–7)

The usurping Duke Frederick and his ill-intentioned military convoy get no further than the outskirts of the Forest before the Duke decides to become a monk and restore his brother's crown and land. Arden enables all the characters to unearth another part of themselves with surprising rapidity.

Personal exploration is not confined to the main characters. Touchstone the clown, a social inferior at court, (play)acts the urbane gentleman in the Forest. "Holla! you clown!" is how he summons Corin in 2.4.66, only to be reprimanded by Rosalind: "Peace, fool, he's not thy kinsman." (Touchstone uses clown in the sense of "low fellow"; Rosalind quibbles on the meaning "jester.") The rustic Corin is indeed socially inferior to a court clown, but

in his repeated rhetorical play with the Forest's shepherds, Corin and William, Touchstone clearly aggrandizes himself. Away from the surveillance of his royal employers, Rosalind and Celia, Touchstone indulges in dazzling displays of pseudo-courtly rhetoric, only to find his adoption of a philosophical self exposed as superficial by Corin's ontological certainty. Unimpressed by Touchstone-as-courtier, and unashamed of his own profession of shepherd, Corin articulates the social and personal coordinates of his own life:

> Sir, I am a true labourer: I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm, and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck (3.2.73–7)

The country Corin knows who he is; the court characters have to find out.

In each personal journey, characters try out another part of themselves. (This pattern was aptly summarized in a *Guardian* theater review of *As You Like It* with the punning headline "Hello Jung Lovers.") Having united the male and the female, or the royal and the rustic, or the dominant and the submissive sides of their personalities, the characters take their unified selves back to court. There is still work to be done, for the flight to the Forest was precipitated by a political crisis (Duke Frederick's banishment), not a personal one (Oliver Hayes, personal communication). Nor do the characters totally shed urban values in their pastoral setting, for the first actions of Rosalind and Celia in the Forest are cued by capitalistic instinct: they buy a cottage, pasture, and flock intended for the lovesick shepherd Silvius, and raise Corin's wages. But Shakespeare is not so naive as to present a polarized opposition between court and country. The pastoral world has serpents, literal and metaphorical (Oliver is attacked by a literal one); it has a shepherd "of churlish disposition," Corin's employer, who, like the court villains Oliver and Frederick, "little reaks to find the way to heaven / By doing deeds of hospitality" (2.4.80–2); and it has characters like the narcissistic shepherdess Phebe who lack self-knowledge. The moralizing lament over the carcass of the hunted deer by the cynical courtier Jaques is enough to show that the pastoral world is not unequivocally kind.[2] But Shakespeare is not interested in environment as a repository of transcen-

[2] Hunting was not yet a target for animal rights activists, but Shakespeare, like More and Montaigne, seems to be unusual in the early modern period in empathizing with hunted animals. Julius Caesar, Lavinia (in *Titus Andronicus*), and Katherine (in *The Shrew*) are all presented sympathetically as cornered animals.

dental value so much as in how characters interact personally with their environment. With their personal identities in holistic health, the court characters are now equipped to return to their prior existence and cure (or attempt to cure) whatever is rotten in court civilization.

2 Naming the Self

"*As if a man were author of himself*" (*Coriolanus* 5.3.36)

Troilus and Cressida (1602)

Sometimes the self is imposed or inherited rather than discovered. This is unproblematic if the inherited self coincides with the evolved self; but if the two are in conflict the result can only be a divided self: "This is and is not Cressid" (5.2.146).

It always seems to me that one of the problems of being a member of the royal family is that no one is going to say in a tone of surprised admiration, "Our Charlie's done well for himself, hasn't he?" The problem of inheriting a life and identity that is pre-scripted is not confined to royal princes – ask any child of a famous parent, anyone who is expected to follow in a parent's or sibling's professional footsteps, anyone who has felt trapped by society's expectations. It is this problem that Shakespeare dramatizes in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Shakespeare's lovers, Troilus and Cressida, already have an identity outside Shakespeare's play: in Benoît de Sainte Maure's *Roman de Troie* (late twelfth century), in Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* (ca. 1338), in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (1385–7), among others. They and their love story do not exist in the earliest account of the Trojan war, Homer's *Iliad*, although it is likely that medieval authors drew their inspiration for Cressida from Homer's Briseis, the slave girl over whom Achilles and Agamemnon quarrel. Boccaccio named his heroine Criseida, Chaucer expanded the story, and by the time Shakespeare came to write his version in 1602 there were many Renaissance stories and plays about the tragic love story of Troilus and Cressida (none of the plays survive).

Troilus, a prince of the house of Troy, falls in love with Cressida, the daughter of a Trojan who has defected to the Greek camp. Immediately after Troilus and Cressida have pledged mutual love and fidelity, and have consummated their love, Cressida is sent for by her father, and the Trojans

willingly exchange her for a military prisoner. Despite her earlier vows of fidelity, Cressida soon yields to the advances of her Greek guard, Diomedes. Consequently, her name becomes a byword for the faithless woman while Troilus's name becomes a synecdoche for the faithful lover. (In *Taming of the Shrew* Petruccio's faithful spaniel is aptly named Troilus.)

As Linda Charnes points out, these ghosts of the faithless and faithful haunt the scene in which Troilus and Cressida pledge themselves to each other. Troilus vows eternal loyalty to Cressida:

> after all comparisons of truth
> (As truth's authentic author to be cited)
> "As true as Troilus" shall crown up the verse. (3.2.180–2)

Cressida likewise vows loyalty, offering her name as a paradigm of infidelity if she should break her word:

> If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth, . . .
> Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood,
> "As false as Cressid." (3.2.184, 195–6)

This dialogue has a split-screen quality: it looks forward and back. Troilus cannot be the "authentic author" of his love story because his story has already been written (Charnes 1989: 416). Thus as the characters look ahead to the future they wish to inhabit, a future of faith and loyalty and love, the very iteration of their names points back to the already-written associations of Troilus (betrayed lover) and Cressida (faithless woman).

In this play the characters confront an insoluble dilemma. Their love propels them instinctively toward fidelity and romantic happiness. This is what it means to be true to themselves and their desires, to be Cressida in love with Troilus, and Troilus in love with Cressida. But their very names program them with an alternative behavior, a behavior that is at variance with what they themselves want. Their identity as autonomous characters in a Shakespeare play who want to live happily ever after conflicts with their inherited identity as characters whose love ends in betrayal (Charnes 1989: 418). Shakespeare's Cressida can only be herself by not being herself; she can only be Cressida (a faithful lover of Troilus) by not being Cressida (an emblem of infidelity).

Troilus and Cressida are torn apart, individually and as a couple, by the inherited burden of their names. Cressida is characterized, like Antipholus of Syracuse, by images of doubleness and division, although in her case the

division refers not to herself and an absent twin but to herself in the play and the historical self whose behavior she resists:

Troilus: What offends you, lady?
Cressida: Sir, mine own company.
Troilus: You cannot shun yourself.
Cressida: Let me go and try.
I have a kind of self resides with you;
But an unkind self, that itself will leave
To be another's fool. (3.2.144–50)

When Troilus later observes Cressida's behavior with Diomedes in the Greek camp, he comments, "This is and is not Cressid" (5.2.146). This is Cressida because it is how Cressida is supposed to behave in the play's sources; this is not Cressida because it does not correspond to the character he knows from acts 3 and 4. Although several Shakespeare plays are aware of the difficulty in finding and being oneself, *Troilus and Cressida* is unusual in presenting this dilemma metatheatrically: that is, the characters are aware of their status as characters in a play (Charnes 1989: 419). The dramatic self confronts the historical self; the individual fights against inheritance, striving for autonomy rather than action replay.

The ways in which names signify is seen in the number of early modern dictionaries and books that include glosses of proper names. The Geneva Bible of 1560 adds "A brief table of the interpretation of the proper names which are chiefly found in the Old Testament" (this "brief table" contains over one thousand personal names). Edward Phillips's *New World of English Words, or A General Dictionary* (1658) adds a list of "*the significations of proper names*." Names, like words, required explication. We still accord proper names significance, even if we do not table them in dictionaries. The popularity of books of names to give one's baby caters to our interest in etyma. In November 2001 the Brazilian authorities intervened to prevent a father christening his son Osama bin Laden; he had previously been prevented from christening his first son Hitler. Such intervention is a direct acknowledgment of the fact that names carry baggage (some more so than others).

Romeo and Juliet (1595)

Troilus and Cressida is not the first Shakespeare play to juxtapose name with being. In the earlier *Romeo and Juliet* the lovers' patronymics – Montague and Capulet – carry feelings and codes of behavior (hatred, fighting). No

longer identifying labels, Montague and Capulet, fetishized into icons of enmity, have become rallying cries to battle. As offspring of feuding families, Romeo and Juliet are expected to continue the feud. This they resolutely refuse to do, rejecting the associations of name ("What's in a name?"; 2.2.43) for an individuality that is entirely independent of family label. While both plays concern the relation between inherited name and the quest for personal identity, *Troilus and Cressida* focuses on behavior whereas *Romeo and Juliet* analyzes language.

We are linguistic beings; the self is rooted in language. When Mowbray is exiled in *Richard II* his anguish centers not on loss of family or friends but of language: "The language I have learnt these forty years, / My native English, now I must forgo, / And now my tongue's use is to me no more / Than an unstringed viol or a harp" (*RII* 1.3.159–62).

Names are a subset of language. One of the first human acts in Genesis is naming, an action whose significance perplexed Renaissance exegetes: did Adam's naming of the animals confer identity, or did it label a preexisting identity? They extended this question about the relation between name and identity to the relation between word and thing: does the word create the thing or vice versa? It is thus impossible to talk of naming without invoking language, and vice versa; indeed, the two subjects are often treated metonymically.

Romeo and Juliet embodies problems specific not to Verona or to sixteenth-century England, to young love or ancient grudge, but to language generally: the relation between word and meaning, and between name and being. It is the lovers' attempt to negotiate an identity independent of family name which leads to Juliet's famous antinominalist soliloquy: "What's in a name?" (2.2.43). "That which we call a rose / By any other word would smell as sweet" she responds to her own question (2.2.43–4). Oscar Wilde satirizes this view in *The Importance of Being Ernest* when Gwendolen declares, "My ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you" (1.394–9).

It is significant that the hero and heroine are nameless when they meet and fall in love (Ryan 1988: 114; Weidhorn 1969: 678); their subsequent identification by family labels brings with it emotional and cultural baggage. As if trying to recreate the liberating and unprejudiced anonymity of their first meeting, Juliet muses on a Romeo who is not a Montague. But her speech is fraught with difficulties because of the extreme nature of her

vision which posits a Romeo who is not simply not a Montague but also not a Romeo. Thus she moves from the prejudicial power of the patronymic to the limitations of all labels, and rejects both.

The name of Montague is not problematic *per se*; it is so only because Juliet bears the name of Capulet. Therefore one of the two lovers must relinquish a surname if their love is to be feasible.[3] It is this choice which structures the first few lines of Juliet's soliloquy:

> Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
> Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
> And I'll no longer be a Capulet. (2.2.34–6)

However, Juliet's proposed alternative is not the namelessness implied by these lines, but another name. Even as Juliet is disassociating Romeo from Montague ("Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. / What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot, / Nor arm nor face, nor any other part / Belonging to a man"; 2.2.339–42), even as she is avowing that names are irrelevant ("What's in a name?"), she is also paradoxically asserting their importance ("be some *other* name"; 2.2.42), even as she did in her rhetorical question "wherefore art thou Romeo?" (2.2.33). As Derrida points out (1992: 426), she does not say "Why are you called Romeo?"; she says " 'why *are you* Romeo?' . . . his name is his essence." Romeo's response – to tear the written word of Romeo – shows his awareness of this Platonic point: since he is his name, his offer is synonymous with suicide, as his frantic rephrasing of the offer in 3.3 acknowledges:

> In what vile part of this anatomy
> Doth my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack
> The hateful mansion.
> *Friar*: Hold thy desperate hand! (106–8)

In another play obsessed with names, *Julius Caesar*, the poet Cinna is murdered simply for bearing the same name as Cinna the conspirator:

> *Cinna*: I am not Cinna the conspirator.
> *Fourth Plebeian*: It is no matter, his name's Cinna. *Pluck but his name out of his heart.* (*JC* 3.3.32–4)

[3] This problem did not exist during Romeo's infatuation with that other Capulet, Rosaline, as courtly love does not move toward marriage.

Problem: to pluck the name out of the heart is to kill the individual. Existence is predicated on a name, any name, as Romeo's statement in the orchard indicates. "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd" he says (2.2.50), offering to trade one offense-giving name for another. But when Juliet asks who is there, Romeo realizes his predicament: even if he does not call himself Romeo he still has to find some identifying label to answer Juliet's question about who he is (Lucking 1985: 8). Derrida (1992: 427) unpacks the paradox as follows: "Romeo is Romeo, and Romeo is not Romeo . . . [H]e would not be what he is, a stranger to his name, without this name." A similar predicament is faced in contemporary pop music by The Artist Formerly Known as Prince. In the city of Oxford a plaque identifies a street as "Pusey Street (formerly Alfred Street)," and a Bed and Breakfast sign proclaims "Heather House (formerly Hansa Guest House)." Shedding a name is clearly no easier for pop stars and places than it is for Shakespearean heroes.

Dr. Johnson described language as the dress of thought, a motif also employed by Juliet when she begs Romeo "Doff thy name." However, changing language or name is not as simple as changing hats. It signals the relinquishing of cultural memory, identity, history, the past, the familiar, and the crossing of tribal boundaries. Romeo and Juliet are prepared to give up such inherited identities in exogamous marriage, but their kinsmen are not. Arthur Brooke's long poem, *Romeus and Juliet* (Shakespeare's primary source for this tragedy), concludes by assigning punishments. Shakespeare's conclusion focuses on language: "Go hence to have more *talk* of these sad things; / Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished / For never was a *story* of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3.307–10). The couple's marriage and tragic deaths will be translated into narrative.

In comedy, narrative is not a problem. Even in its most shorthand form, as in the reduction of Marina's life in *Pericles* to three nouns (a tempest, a birth, a death; 5.3.33–4), language is never problematic, and names unite families as quickly and easily as in *Romeo and Juliet* they divide them: "Is it no more to be your daughter than / To say my mother's name was Thaisa?" asks Pericles's daughter, Marina, as she is united with her long-lost father (5.1.209–10).

In tragedy language is dangerous, and equivocation undoes us. To Cordelia in *King Lear* "nothing" is a declaration of honesty, to Lear an instance of ingratitude. For Desdemona in *Othello* insistent questions

about Cassio's reinstatement represent connubial intimacy, for Othello marital infidelity. In *Hamlet* stable family relationships collapse linguistically (the marriage of Hamlet's mother to his uncle makes Gertrude an "aunt-mother," her new husband an "uncle-father") just as in *Romeo and Juliet* "my only hate" becomes "my only love."

It may seem disconcerting then that *Romeo and Juliet* gives the last word to language but, as the grieving families prepare for narrative at the end of 5.3, the play registers a new civic attitude to names. "For never was a story of more woe / Than this of *Juliet* and her *Romeo*" says Escalus (5.3.309–10), identifying the young couple not patronymically as Capulet or Montague but as persons independent of family. The personal name still signifies, of course – Juliet means a woman born in July (she was born on "Lammas Eve" – July 31 – her Nurse tells us), Romeo means a pilgrim – but the signification is local and individual rather than historical and multiple. A play that began with "two households" ends positively (given the baggage attached to the two households) with two individuals. In this concluding focus on the personal rather than the patronymic, Verona takes a step closer to recognizing individuals rather than feuding tribes.

Taming of the Shrew (1590–1)

If Romeo and Juliet find selfhood to be independent of name, Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew* displays her selfhood by insisting on retaining her name. Katherine has a reputation as a "shrew," the label the Renaissance gave to any woman who talked too much. (Frances Dolan notes, incidentally, that there is no equivalent term for a man who talks too much; male speech is not a crime.) Petruccio, attracted to Katherine's dowry, and perhaps also to the challenge she represents, determines to woo her.

Petruccio's unorthodox tactic is to disorient Katherine by opposing everything she says and does:

> Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain
> She sings as sweetly as a nightingale;
> Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear
> As morning roses newly wash'd with dew. (2.1.170–3)

If she is silent, he will praise her "piercing eloquence" (2.1.176); if she rejects him, he will act "as though she bid me stay by her a week" (2.1.178). When Petruccio meets Katherine he proceeds rhetorically as planned,

countering her shrewish reputation by claiming he has heard her praised for mildness and obedience.

The tactic is familiar in the psychology of behavior modification. It is a standard weapon in the arsenal of the parent or nursery teacher. "Who's the good boy/girl who wants to help me tidy the toys?" is more likely to elicit cooperation than the same request phrased as a command; the desire to match the description encourages the child to alter his/her behavior. Similarly, psychologists argue, Katherine will grow to match the praiseworthy woman Petruccio describes: "thy mildness prais'd in every town, / Thy virtues spoke of" (2.1.191–2). (This rhetorical ploy contrasts with that of his literary predecessors in shrew-taming who resort to physical violence.)

Petruccio's first linguistic tactic, however, is one he has not advertised: he renames Katherine. "Good morrow, Kate, for that's your name, I hear" (2.1.182). Katherine immediately corrects him, perhaps seeing in the diminutive an attempt to diminish her, perhaps feeling (understandably) defensive about her name: "They call me Katherine that do talk of me" (2.1.184). Undaunted, Petruccio bombards Katherine with her new name:

> You lie, in faith, for you are call'd plain Kate,
> And bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curst;
> But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom,
> Kate of Kate-Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
> For dainties are all Kates, and therefore, Kate,
> Take this of me, Kate of my consolation – (2.1.191–4)

Petruccio here offers Katherine an alternative reality but whether the gesture represents a creative opportunity or sadistic oppression is debatable. Is he offering her a new identity or asserting his control over the old one? If the former, may that not equally be a form of control, challenging and overriding her autonomy? What is clear is that Katherine resists his revision, insisting on her name, her identity, on her way of being and seeing.

Relabeling someone without their invitation or agreement is a powerful statement, as the Bastard realizes in *King John* when he fantasizes about the social power to hurt which attends his elevation: "and if his name be George, I'll call him Peter; / For new-made honor doth forget men's names" (*KJ* 1.1.186–7). In *Henry V*, when Henry goes through a pro forma wooing scene with the French princess whose country he has just conquered, he addresses her unexpectedly as Kate; as invader and conqueror he can

remake a nation, individuals, and names. *The Shrew*'s Katherine, however, has her full name – and thus the independent identity associated with it? – restored to her on three occasions, all of them in scenes of apparent wifely submission.

On the road from Verona to Padua Petruccio willfully calls the sun the moon. Katherine corrects him. Asserting imperiously that it "shall be moon, or star, or what I list" (4.5.7), Petruccio prepares to return to Verona. Their traveling companion, Hortensio, advises Katherine to humor Petruccio: "Say as he says, or we shall never go" (4.5.11). Katherine now yields.

In performance Katherine's acquiescence often follows a moment's hesitation in which she assesses the situation and clearly decides to beat Petruccio at his own game. Certainly, she yields in terms so exaggerated as to suggest competitive playing: "be it moon, or sun, or what you please; / *And if you please to call it a rush-candle*, / Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me" (4.5.13–15). Petruccio quickly tests her, calling the sun the moon (Katherine agrees) and then the sun (Katherine agrees again). Again, her vocabulary is hyperbolic – if Petruccio says it is the moon, Katherine *knows* it is the moon. Her subsequent acknowledgment that Petruccio's mind is as changeable as the moon leads to her agreement that he can rename anything he wants.

However, the speech in which Katherine gives Petruccio this power slyly reasserts her preferred version of her name:

> What you will have it nam'd, even that it is,
> And so [therefore] it shall be so [thus] for *Katherine* (4.5.21–2)

This fluctuation in name should alert us to the possibility of Petruccio's bona fides in act 5 when he asks his wife to demonstrate uxorial obedience. He asks Katherine to display her new identity as an obedient wife (the non-shrewish "Kate" persona) but addresses her by the label associated with her old, independent identity, Katherine:

> Katherine, that cap of yours becomes you not;
> Off with that bable [bauble], throw it under-foot. (5.2.121–2)

> Katherine, I charge thee tell these headstrong women
> What duty they do owe their lords and husbands. (5.2.130–1)

The unexpected double reappearance of Katherine indicates that Katherine's identity is not extinguished in marriage, nor does Petruccio

wish it to be. The dutiful "Kate" and the independent "Katherine" can coexist.

This conclusion is in accord with Petruccio's earlier avowed intent, as revealed in a soliloquy which describes his tactics: "And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humour" (4.1.209). "Curb" is the crucial word, for the plan is to restrain his wife, not to break her. Although the speech is structured round falcon-taming imagery (Petruccio's wife-taming tactics – sleep deprivation, starvation, disorientation – come from the world of falcon-taming), the verb "curb" belongs to the world of horse-training. The vocabulary of horse-training influenced that of wife-taming (Hartwig 1982; Roberts 1983; Wayne 1985). Wives, like horses, had to be broken in ("paced") and taught to respond to signals ("obey the manage"); in *Pericles* the Bawd explains to Lysimachus that the sexually uncooperative virgin Marina "is not pac'd yet, you must take some pains to work her to your manage" (4.6.63–4). Part of Katherine's erotic appeal must surely have been her wildness, and critics maintain that no man, then or now, would want to destroy this. Coppélia Kahn (1981: 117) speaks about "the most cherished male fantasy of all – that woman remain *un*tamed."

Margaret Loftus Ranald (1974: 153) makes a similar point in the context of *The Shrew*'s falcon-taming imagery:

> The falcon must be taught obedience to her master, but at the same time her wild and soaring nature must be preserved. This is a cardinal principle of hawk-taming. The bird must retain her hunting instinct; otherwise she is useless. But she must be taught to exercise her wild nature on command, to hunt under the government of her keeper/master.

Falcons can be trained; they cannot be tamed. And Katherine is not tamed, at least not in the sense made popular by shrew-taming tradition in which taming leads to extinction of identity. She conforms to a social norm for the sake of appearance, while retaining her own persona in private.

This point is made by Linda Bamber and Coppélia Kahn, neither of whom is happy with it. "Kate's compromise is distressing," writes Bamber (1982: 35); "Kate . . . is trapped in her own cleverness. Her only way of maintaining her inner freedom is by outwardly denying it, a psychologically perilous position," laments Kahn (1981: 113). We will consider these objections, and Katherine's potentially Pyrrhic victory, in chapter 2, but for now it suffices to note that Bamber and Kahn regularly deny Katherine her most basic request: her full name. Given the relation between name and identity, a play that ends with a husband addressing his wife as

"Katherine" bodes well for the heroine's retention of her own identity within marriage.

3 The Self and Language

"*Language most shows a man: speak that I may see thee*" (Jonson 1947: 625)

Measure for Measure (1603–4)

Isabella's language in *Measure for Measure* reflects both her personal spiritual commitment and her professional status as a nun (the former leads to the latter). Her lexicon is theological (grace, mercy, forgiveness, heaven), as are her thoughts: her analogies and references are to forfeited souls, martyrs' wounds, Christ's passion. When she is asked to plead a point of law with Vienna's acting governor, Angelo, her instinct is not to negotiate legal niceties but to appeal to Angelo's mercy, to awaken his Christ-like capacity to forgive. Isabella has only one language, and this language reveals her principles, her morals, her faith: in other words, who she is. No other Shakespearean character so clearly illustrates Jonson's equation between language and identity, above.

Isabella is sent to Angelo to beg for her brother's life. The situation is, in one respect, straightforward. Isabella's brother, Claudio, has fallen foul of a newly resurrected law which condemns lechery. But Claudio is not a lecher. He is what the Renaissance recognized as a married man and what we know as an engaged man. The Elizabethans had two or three stages of marriage: a promise in front of witnesses, a religious ceremony, and sexual consummation. Stages one and two could be combined, making the witnessed promise in church. Claudio and his fiancée Juliet have performed the first and third stages. As Claudio explains, they have delayed the church ceremony until they can win the support of Juliet's family (1.2.149–53). Technically, then, they should also have delayed consummation. The public promise is, however, legally binding. Claudio is no more a lecher than is any man who makes love to his lawful wedded wife, although a rigid interpreter of the law might judge otherwise, as has Angelo.

Angelo's judgment could easily be challenged; Claudio's case invites a debate about legal interpretation. But Isabella is no Portia. After a hesitant beginning in which she attempts a sophistical distinction – "Condemn the fault, and not the actor of it" – she admits defeat and is ready to exit

(2.2.42). Angelo has been curt and unencouraging (in the 1991 RSC production David Suchet opened his mail, only half attending to Isabella). But then she recovers and tries to persuade Angelo in the only language she knows: the language of theology. Pardon, mercy, remorse, mercy, God, mercy, pity, merciful heaven follow in quick succession, and her sentences grow in length and confidence. She is on familiar territory. Affected by the passion of the girl, Angelo asks her to return the next morning.

In the second interview, Angelo introduces a new topic, presented as a question: "Which had you rather, that the most just law / Now took your brother's life, or, to redeem him, / Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness / As she that he hath stain'd?" (2.4.52–5). Isabella evades the question of life versus body by introducing a third term, soul – "I had rather give my body than my soul." There is clear exasperation in Angelo's response, "I talk not of your soul" (2.4.57). Angelo suspects guile (2.4.74–5) but Isabella's spiritual monolingualism is genuine. When Angelo indirectly suggests sex, she responds in bewilderment: "I have no tongue but one; gentle my lord, / Let me entreat you speak the former language" (2.4.139–40). The language she speaks is the language of mercy; she enters a legal situation from a spiritual point of view.

The position is reversed, however, in the dénouement of act 5 when Vienna's Duke asks Isabella to beg for Angelo's life – for the man who, she believes, killed her brother and who attempted to seduce her (Angelo believes he succeeded in the seduction but, in fact, his abandoned fiancée, Mariana, substituted for Isabella in bed). Isabella's short argument (11 lines) is entirely legal. Angelo meant well until he saw Isabella; Claudio actually committed the sexual fault for which he died; Angelo didn't (even if he thought he did); you can't punish someone for his thoughts.[4] I do not recognize this voice of Isabella. The distinctive passion of her faith is gone, and an opportunity to wax lyrical about mercy is missed (Riefer 1984: 166).

The reason for this change, as Marcia Riefer observes (1984: 164–5, 168), is the Duke, who interferes with Isabella's character in a manner as nefar-

[4] In Sir Thomas More's ideal society, however, the Utopians do punish thought crime. "A man who tries to seduce a woman is subject to the same penalties as if he had actually done it. They think that a crime attempted is as bad as one committed, and that failure should not confer advantages on a criminal who did all he could to succeed" (More 1978: 68). The gods in *Pericles* act in the same way, killing Cleon and Dionyza for the intended murder of Marina, as Gower explains: "The gods for murder seemed so content / To punish, although not done, but meant" (5.3.99–100).

ious – and for reasons as selfish – as Angelo's attempts to interfere with her body. He plans Isabella's actions, directs her movements, withholds information (of Claudio's survival) from her; he tests her by making her beg for Angelo; he humiliates her by making her confess publicly to violation by Angelo (even though Mariana took her place). Isabella complies with all his plots, despite her reservations ("To speak so indirectly I am loath. / I would say the truth"; 4.6.1–2), because of his status: a figure of (apparent) religious authority. But his authority is directed, like Angelo's, to his own ends: he proposes to Isabella. Isabella's loss of voice is both personal (legalese usurps theology) and literal (she does not reply to the Duke's proposal). Her loss illustrates the threat to female individuality in a world ruled by strong but flawed men.

Troilus and Cressida (1602)

We are linguistic beings, as nominalist narratives such as Genesis and psychoanalytic authors such as Lacan remind us. Formed in and by language, defined in and by speech, we can therefore be injured by words. "Sticks and stones may break my bones / But words will never hurt me," asserts the children's playground chant, defiantly but erroneously. Quite simply, words wound. Hence censorship (in both early modern and contemporary society); hence the category of "verbal abuse"; hence Supreme Court action against racist speech, hate speech, "fighting speech." In *Troilus and Cressida* the scenes between men and women (Helen, Cressida, Cassandra, Andromache) illustrate a number of different ways in which speech can wound.

To readers of Greek drama, Hector, Trojan warrior-hero *par excellence*, is equally famous for his domestic role as beloved husband of Andromache. In *Troilus and Cressida* 1.2 we are offered a glimpse of Hector's private life, but it is a picture of masculine power and petulant temper rather than marital bliss. Cressida's servant Alexander reveals that the usually patient Hector was moved to anger because Ajax had defeated him in the previous day's battle. Hector's anger manifests itself as violence: "he chid Andromache and strook his armorer" (1.2.6). Verbal violence is directed at his wife, physical violence at the servant; but both are social subordinates, Hector's property, and we know from plays like *Taming of the Shrew* that violence directed at a servant functions as a reminder to the wife that "she, too, is his [the husband's] subordinate and that he could beat her if he chose" (Dolan 1996: 19). Nor, despite Alexander's depiction of Hector as an exemplar of patience, is this an isolated example of ill-temper. Act 5,

scene 3 opens with Hector's brusque response to Andromache's petition that he unarm and shun combat: he orders her inside (5.3.4) and tells her to be quiet (5.3.7). David Bevington (1998: 32) speculates, not unreasonably, that Andromache leaves the scene in tears. Hector's peremptory verbal domination not only reflects social control, it "enacts it, becoming the vehicle through which that social structure is reinstated" (Butler 1997: 18).

Cressida, as we will see in detail in chapter 2, is similarly controlled by anger, whether by the explosions of her camp-guard, Diomedes, or by Troilus's admonitions and reprimands. She is also used to being verbally humiliated if her uncle Pandarus's conversation is any gauge: he talks about his niece and addresses her directly as "it," a pronoun used for children (3.2.33; 4.2.32–3), confronts her bluntly about sexual activity (4.2.23–4, 31–3), and tries to maneuver her into articulating sexual vocabulary (4.2.27–8). Although Cassandra is dismissed and ignored, her situation illuminates by its stark contrast Cressida's acceptance of verbal mistreatment, for, if we are constituted in language, derogation is preferable to "not being addressed at all" (Butler 1997: 27).

The languorous scene between Helen of Troy and her captor-seducer, Paris, in act 3, scene 1 is often dismissed as an example of Helen's frivolity, idleness, and disregard for the war conducted in her name. However, it seems an example of linguistic health when compared to the other male – female relationships and communications in the play. Paris, unlike Hector, listens and responds to his "wife": "I would fain have arm'd today, but my Nell would not have it so" (3.1.136 – 7). His homely use of the diminutive "Nell" here and at line 52 is in marked contrast to the other characters' talk of Helen and helps explain her interest in him: for Paris, Helen is a real-life woman, not an icon of beauty, not a disembodied "theme of honor," not an adjunct (or loss) representing sufficient (or inadequate) manhood (cf. Bevington 1998: 29). The couple *converse*: Paris shares a joke with Helen (3.1.52–3); they assess Pandarus's mood (3.1.127–30); Helen volunteers information in response to Paris's general question about Troilus (3.1.137–40); Helen compliments Paris (3.1.99–100), and he compliments her (3.1.150–4).

Paris's mode of address to Helen is permissive and petitionary rather than peremptory: "*Let us* to Priam's hall . . . / Sweet Helen, *I must woo you* / To help unarm our Hector" (3.1.148, 149–50). Given his position in Troy as Helen's lord, he might put his requests more into command than entreaty – as do Hector, Troilus, and Diomedes. Instead, we have a scene

of conversational give-and-take remarkable in the play for its straightforward honesty. Stage productions offer many variants on this scene: indolence, love, foreplay, selfishness, hypocrisy (Paris does not fight in the war he began); a scene of conversation between Helen and Paris interrupted by Pandarus; a scene of conversation between Paris and Pandarus interrupted by Helen; a public scene; a private scene (in the 1996–7 RSC production, Helen and Paris entered naked from a Turkish bath).

Paris's concluding expression of love – "Sweet, above thought I love thee!" (3.1.159) – seems a "thank you" to Helen for her elegant speech at 3.1.155–8. Helen's speech is dutiful and would not be out of place in *Taming of the Shrew* – she believes a woman derives more beauty from dutiful service to a lord than from her physical appearance – but Paris's response shows that he does not take such statements for granted. The prince whose action prompted the Trojan war (his "rape" of Helen being abduction and perhaps also sexual violation) is presented by Shakespeare as the most verbally sensitive partner in the play.

In act 5 Troilus dismisses a letter from Cressida as "words, words, mere words" (5.3.108). The play, however, reveals that there is no such thing as a "mere" word. Words hurt emotionally. Injurious language enacts power relations as well as reflects them.

4 The National Self

"*What ish my nation?*" (*HV* 3.2.122)

Othello (1604)

The title of *Othello, the Moor of Venice* is an oxymoron: Moors do not come from Venice. Othello is a North African, who, as a resident of Venice, has only a partially Venetian identity. His martial expertise has given him both military and social prestige in Venice. He is invited to dine with senators and their families, he is the one to whom the Duke turns when Venice is under threat from the Turks, the one who is sent to Cyprus to thwart the Turkish invasion, the one in whom Venice reposes trust. Thus, Othello is securely and happily the Moor *in* Venice. That he can never be the Moor *of* Venice is brought home by Brabantio's reaction in the first scene to the news of Othello's secret marriage to Brabantio's daughter: "it is too true an evil" (1.1.160).

Brabantio's outrage, provoked by Iago's visually salacious images of difference ("an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe"; 1.1.88–9) culminates in a complaint to the Duke. Like Egeus in *Midsummer Night's Dream* who can only explain his daughter's choice of husband by assuming she has been bewitched, Brabantio accuses Othello of employing magic. When Othello's magic charms prove to be none other than romantic eloquence, when Desdemona reveals that she was "half the wooer," and when the Duke admits that he himself would be proud of Othello as a son-in-law, Brabantio is defeated and rejects both Desdemona and Othello. Although Brabantio had admired Othello as a military leader, had entertained him regularly in his household and had trusted him alone with his daughter, he is now shown to be blinkered by a particularly complex form of racism, the kind that says "you can defend our state but you can't marry our daughters." Happily, the Duke sees beyond skin color, pointing out to Brabantio that Othello's "virtues" make him "far more fair than black" (1.3.290), and Desdemona reveals that she saw Othello's "visage in his mind" (1.3.252). Brabantio nonetheless remains unreconciled to his daughter's choice of husband.

The Elizabethans inherited from the middle ages an iconographic color-coding which equated black skin with the devil and hence with moral blackness (because God was light). In medieval plays the devil was portrayed as black (a stage effect achieved by soot, or, less messily, a black face stocking) and in the Elizabethan printing house the printer's assistant, covered in ink dust, was known familiarly as the "printer's devil." Black became a metaphor for evil, as in *Henry VIII* where the Chamberlain says of Cardinal Wolsey, "No doubt he's noble. / He had a black mouth that said other of him" (1.3.57–8). The Renaissance understood two categories of Moors. Tawny or "white" Moors were North Africans, like the Prince of Morocco who woos Portia in *Merchant of Venice*; "black" moors or blackamoors, with ebony skin, came from the south and west of Africa. With their predilection for theological symbolism the Elizabethans had little choice in the way they viewed these two groups of Moors. Tawny Moors, like the Prince of Morocco (dressed symbolically in white), were noble. Black Moors were lascivious, jealous, and villainous. Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* proudly lists his nefarious achievements, concluding "I have done a thousand dreadful things, . . . And nothing grieves me heartily indeed, / But that I cannot do ten thousand more" (5.1.141–3).

Iago talks about Othello as if he were a blackamoor: he is a sexually active "black ram," with a "sooty bosom" and "thick lips" (1.1.88; 1.2.70;

1.1.66. These descriptions presumably influenced Laurence Olivier's film interpretation in 1964). But there is a discrepancy between Iago's rhetoric and Othello's appearance. Othello is calm, dignified, noble in speech and behavior; he specifically counters lascivious stereotypes by explaining that his advancing years have reduced his interest in sexual intercourse. By the end of the play, however, Othello feels passionate sexual jealousy, commits barbaric violence, and speaks in a syntax which is reduced to expostulation ("Goats and monkeys"; 4.1.263) and which loses all grammatical structure ("Handkerchief – confessions – handkerchief"; 4.1.37). His behavior is now closer to that associated with the barbaric blackamoor than with the civilized Venetian. Iago's triumph is to break down the Venetian half of Othello's identity, making Othello match the earlier stereotypical description.

Othello's outsider position relates to more than variant skin color. Othello is doubly "Other" because of color and non-Venetian origin. The problem is not that he is a Moor but that he is not a Venetian. This makes him vulnerable to Iago's manipulations. Iago assures his general that, unlike Iago, he does not understand Venetian women. Venetian women, Iago says, are sexually cavalier:

> I know our country disposition well.
> In Venice they do let God see the pranks
> They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
> Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown. (3.3.2001–4)

These generalizations are representative of contemporary Elizabethan attitudes: Venetian wives had a reputation for licentiousness (Ranald 1987: 147).

To complicate matters further, Othello is an older man, "declin'd / Into the vale of years" (3.3.265–6) married to a younger woman. Thus, Othello is triply insecure. He has a white wife; hence he feels insecure because he lacks civic social skills: "I am black, / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers [gallants] have" (3.3.263–5). He has a Venetian wife; hence it is easy for him to believe Iago when the latter insists that Venetian customs are unknown to him. He has a younger wife; hence it is easy for him to believe that his wife might ultimately prefer the youthful Cassio as a sexual partner. Certainly Roderigo is convinced that "she must change for youth" (1.3.349–50).

The play approves Desdemona's choice of the black Othello as husband by showing us the inadequacies of the white Venetian alternatives: the

Plate 1 This portrait of the Moorish Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth I (1600) bears little resemblance to Iago's deliberately misleading description of Othello, the Moor of Venice. Nonetheless, Iago's stereotypical description of a blackamoor influences most stage and film representations of Othello.

lovesick Roderigo is a gull, and Cassio, for all his charm, is someone who deifies Desdemona but who belittles Bianca, the woman with whom he sups and sleeps. Cassio's heroine-worship of Desdemona is evident early on. He describes Desdemona hyperbolically as "a maid / That paragons description and wild fame; / One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens, / And in th'essential vesture of creation / Does tire the ingener" (2.1.61–5); when she lands in Cyprus he enthuses, "The riches of the ship is come on shore!" (2.1.83). In a conversation between Cassio and Iago the latter attempts to steer the lieutenant into irreverent locker-room talk, which Cassio consistently resists:

Cassio: Welcome, Iago; we must to the watch.
Iago: Not this hour, lieutenant; 'tis not yet ten o'th' clock. Our general cast [dismissed] us thus early for the love of his Desdemona; who let us not therefore blame. He hath not yet made wanton the night with her; and she is sport for Jove.
Cassio: She's a most exquisite lady.
Iago: And I'll warrant her, full of game.
Cassio: Indeed she's a most fresh and delicate creature.
Iago: What an eye she has! Methinks it sounds a parley to provocation.
Cassio: An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest.
Iago: And when she speaks, is it not an alarum to love?
Cassio: She is indeed perfection. (2.3.12–26)

In the 1989 RSC production, this scene took place in the officers' mess with Ian McKellen's Iago indulging in the verbal equivalent of reading *Playboy*.

Cassio's attitude to his girlfriend, Bianca, is less respectful than his attitude to Desdemona. Although the text identifies Bianca in stage directions and speech prefixes as a courtesan, the Renaissance used this noun to label a woman who lost her virginity to a boyfriend as well as one who is paid for professional sexual favors (Wayne 1998: 192). Despite the fact that Cassio and Iago talk about her as if she belongs to the latter category, I think Bianca comes into the former: she waits for Cassio to come home for dinner; she embroiders for him; and she distinguishes herself from Cassio's "hobbyhorse" [prostitute]. However, Cassio describes her as a "bauble" [a plaything] at 4.1.135, and when she exits the scene in distress, his instinct is simply to shut her up:

Iago: After her, after her.
Cassio: Faith, I must, she'll rail in the streets else. (4.1.162–3)

Plate 2 Carreño de Miranda, *Santiago en la batalla de Clavijo*. Iconographic tradition depicts Santiago (St. James), the patron saint of Spain, during his greatest triumph: conquering the Moors. The name of Shakespeare's Iago means that his identity is inextricably bound up with the extinction of Othello, the Moor.

Like Othello he silences an innocent woman (we note that, in one of the play's many twists on color, her name, Bianca, means white). Thus, erroneous and extreme racial stereotypes (black = bad, white = good) are paralleled by erroneous and extreme gender stereotypes (women are either goddesses – Desdemona – or whores – Bianca).

In the nineteenth century Coleridge inaugurated an influential critical tradition when he described Iago as suffering from "motiveless malignancy"; that is, his evil does not have any specific cause or aim. But racism is its own origin and its own destination. That Iago's self is a racist self is seen in the associations of his name: Moor-hater or Moor-conqueror. Santiago (Saint Iago or St. James) is the military patron of Spain. One of his most famous exploits occurred in 939 CE when he helped King Ramirez deliver Castile from the Moors, killing 60,000 Moors in battle. Consequently "Santiago" became the war-cry of the Spanish armies, and Santiago is traditionally depicted on a white charger trampling the Moors underfoot.

Shakespeare's Iago targets not just the black but the non-Venetian. Cassio is denigrated as a "Florentine" (1.1.20), whereas Roderigo is valued as Iago's "countryman" (5.1.89). Iago hates all racial Others. His racism affects all Venice, causing social categories to disintegrate – father, husband, wife, lieutenant, general, governor. Robert N. Watson argues (1990: 339–40) that Iago's tactic is to annihilate both personal name and position: "Brabantio declares in anguish he no longer has a daughter, Cassio that he has lost his name and rank, Desdemona that she has lost her lord, and Othello that his occupation is gone, that he has no wife, and finally that he is no longer 'Othello.'" Racism leads to the destruction of identities beyond that of the outsider and to an assault on the society of which he is a fully functioning part.

King Lear (1605–6)

If Othello's identity is stripped away, so too is King Lear's. If Othello's identity is attacked in an adopted city-state, Lear's is stripped away on home territory. As in *Othello*, identity is analyzed in relation to nation and nationality.

"He hath ever but slenderly known himself" is the opinion of one of Lear's daughters (1.1.294) and her comment about her father is borne out by Lear's behavior in act 1. He fails to see that the exaggerated protestations of love for him voiced by his eldest daughters, Goneril and Regan, are insincere, and that the tongue-tied love of Cordelia, his youngest, conceals

(and so reveals) true emotion. He fails to realize that one cannot give away the responsibilities of rulership and yet retain the title of king. And he fails to recognize that dividing a kingdom in three is a recipe for political disaster. The Renaissance audience had watched the rebels in *1 Henry IV* try to divide their kingdom in three just a few years before. Although the scene in *1 Henry IV* is full of exaggeratedly comic incompetence, it is impossible to imagine a sixteenth-century audience not taking it seriously given that the memory of civil war was so recent. For a king to initiate territorial division would be even more alarming.

Lear's poor judgments – staging a love-test among his daughters, dividing his kingdom, taking partial early retirement – have disastrous consequences for his family (some of which are discussed at greater length in chapter 5), and the first acts are full of blows to Lear's parental identity. In 1.4 he asks Goneril incredulously: "Are you our daughter?" (line 218). A few lines later incredulity increases to sarcasm – "I should be false persuaded / I had daughters" (1.4.233–4) – which Alice Walker glosses as "Am I your father?" (1953: 65). Identity is under threat.

As Lear moves closer to finding himself, he moves further from the court. By act 3 he is homeless, Regan having, in effect, denied him entrance to Gloucester's castle by denying entry to his knights; his entourage has been reduced from 100 to 0; he has stripped himself bare ("Off, off, you lendings"; 3.4.108). He is assaulted by the elements, welcoming them for the same reason as Duke Senior in *As You Like It*: they do not flatter, they "feelingly persuade me what I am" (*AYLI* 2.1.11). He is now close to poor Tom, the mad beggar he meets in the hovel: "the thing itself: unaccommodated man" (3.4.106–7). Thus reduced, he can begin to investigate the essentials of human nature. The question "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" (1.4.230) may be answerable.

Because he is a king, Lear's personal journey is also a national journey (history is what we make of our geography). Lear is one of the ancient kings of Britain, descended from the legendary Brute; his search for his own identity parallels Britain's search for its origin as a nation.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period of significant achievements and advances in mapmaking (Gillies 1994; Mikalachki 1998). World maps had existed since the middle ages, but they were theological symbols not geographic representations: Jerusalem was at the center, Paradise at the top. Sixteenth-century England developed an interest in more detailed maps of smaller geographic units: English counties. In 1574 Christopher Saxton was commissioned to survey all the counties of

England and Wales and to provide detailed maps of them, a project he completed in 1579. The maps distinguished landscape (forests, rivers). Symbols were used: steeples and weather vanes for cities; sea-monsters and waterspouts for oceans; Aeolian gargoyles with puffed cheeks to indicate wind. So popular was the new cartography that maps were woven into tapestries, painted in the backgrounds of portraits, and printed on playing-cards (Morgan 1979: 150–3; Mikalachki n.p.).

Lear's journey in self-discovery is that of the mapmaker. He leaves the comfort of court and explores the land. As Mikalachki notes, Lear's wanderings trace the triangular shape of Britain, from Goneril and Albany in the north, to Regan and Cornwall in the southwest, to Dover in the east. Lear's anguished speech on the heath as he is buffeted by the storm comes from the language of cartography (Mikalachki 1998: 89):

> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! [Lear addresses the wind gods who decorated the borders of maps] rage, blow!
> You cataracts [the waterspouts of maps' sea-monsters] and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! [the steeples and windcocks which are cartographic icons for cities]
> You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat [make one-dimensional; turn into a map] the thick rotundity [the three-dimensional globe] o' th' world! (3.2.1–7)

In getting to know his land – in experiencing its wild heath rather than its cartographic representation, its storms rather than their ornamental depictions – Lear is getting to know himself, not just as a human but as a Briton.

But Lear's encounter with the elements is not just local. His experience of deluging rain, and his attempt to divide his kingdom among his three children, replays the experience of an Old Testament ruler, Noah. In turn Noah's experience parallels that of Utnapishtim in the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh*, of the Greek Deucalion, and of the hero in two separate Sumerian myths. These stories may share a common origin in some historical disaster (the flooding of the Tigris–Euphrates plain has been suggested). Seasonal flooding was a regular occurrence in the ancient Near East and is understandably allied to myths of origin. In Genesis the story of Noah offers a second creation narrative. God realizes His mistakes and begins again; the second creation inverts the first (the earth is covered with water rather than created from formlessness); Noah becomes a second Adam,

commanded to "be fruitful and multiply" (Bowker 1998: 33; Davis 1998: 62, 64).

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of Genesis to the Renaissance mind: Genesis represented the beginning not just of the Bible (the first book of Moses), but of agriculture, domestic relations, political science, philosophy, law, history, geography, language. Adam was the first gardener, farmer, logothete, husband, father, negotiator, thinker; Nimrod was the first monarch, Noah the first vintner, Moses the first author, poet, historian, philosopher, astronomer, and Rebecca or Rachel the first dutiful wife (Williams 1948: 1–2). Renaissance histories of the world (those of Grafton and Ralegh, for example) begin with Genesis; Renaissance geographers plot the location of Paradise; Renaissance poets from Du Bartas to Milton turn to Genesis for inspiration in hexameron or theodicy. And Shakespeare's *King Lear*, a play about historical origins and geography, is, as Fred Flahiff reminds us (1986: 25), indebted to Genesis. Noah's history is Britain's history because British monarchs traced their ancestry to Noah; "Britain's history began when, after a great flood, an old man, the world's 'first Monarch,' called together his three children and divided the known world among them."

Theologians point out that, despite its narrative appeal, Genesis is hermeneutically one of the most difficult books of the Bible. Renaissance exegetes rose to the challenge: over forty commentaries on Genesis, ranging from three hundred to one thousand pages, in English and in Latin, were printed between 1525 and 1633. Arnold Williams (1948: 31) assesses these commentaries and their readership:

> Men merely felt a deep desire to know whence they had come. The remains of Greece and Rome told them much, but these remains were neither aboriginal in time nor divine in authority. The Book of Genesis was both, but it was not complete. The commentators completed it.

The commentaries show the finest metaphysical minds of the day – Babington, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli – wrestling with large questions: "What is meant by this: The earth was without form and void?"; "What waters are they which are above the firmament?"; "How do these lights in the firmament separate the day from the night?" (Gibbens 1601: B2r, C1v, C4r). Amongst such interrogatives Lear's demented question, "What is the cause of thunder?" (3.4.155), is not altogether fool.

Personal, national, and theological origins can be investigated through geography: Eden, the world, Britain. Lear's land, however, like Lear himself,

is confused. *King Lear* is notable for the number of historical characters who have geographic names: (Earl of) Gloucester, (Dukes of) Albany and Cornwall, (Kings of) France and Burgundy. The titles are frequently omitted, the name reduced to its toponym. Where Shakespeare changed a name in his sources for *King Lear*, the change was in the direction of geography; the servant Kent is called Perillus in one of the sources, the anonymous play *King Leir*. The result is, in dramatic terms, the aural equivalent of Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane in *Macbeth*. The characters literally enact the division of the kingdom. We hear of Kent going to Gloucester, of Albany to Cornwall, of Gloucester to Dover. The play unmakes the map (Flahiff 1986: 19).

Dover is, however, not a character name but a place name, and it is where British history begins. When Julius Caesar arrived in England, he arrived in Dover. When in the play we hear that King Lear is sent to Dover, that Gloucester is led to Dover, that the unnamed gentlemen meet at Dover, that the French invasion designed to rescue Lear begins at Dover, we might be inclined to ask with Regan, "Wherefore to Dover?" (3.7.53). One possible answer is: it's where a study of British identity, of the British nation, begins (Mikalachki n.p.).

In the play Dover and its famous cliffs are given the most detailed topographical description. There are flora, fauna, cliffs, danger:

> How fearful
> And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
> The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
> Show scarce so gross as beetles. Half way down
> Hangs one that gathers sampire, dreadful trade!
> Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
> The fishermen that walk upon the beach
> Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
> Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy
> Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
> That on th'unnumb'red idle pebble chafes,
> Cannot be heard so high. (4.6.11–22)

The irony, of course, is that this detailed topocosm has a purely rhetorical existence in the play. The blind, despairing Gloucester has asked a beggar to lead him to Dover so that he can commit suicide. The beggar is the disguised Edgar, Gloucester's son, who is intent on saving his father's life. The cliffs that he describes as being vertiginously, precariously close are

false, none other than rhetorical creations. When Gloucester jumps, he jumps on flat ground, on the bare boards of the Globe stage. Origins are unreachable. The idea that you can find your national origins is as chimerical as the idea that one can control nature through cartography. In *King Lear* the map is divided, the heath inclement, Dover Cliff unreal. Rather than celebrating Britain, the play presents a pessimistic vision of man's attempts to master his land and find his historical origins (Mikalachki 1998: 94–5).

5 The Self at Play

"*Go your ways and play*" (*Merry Wives* 4.1.79)

Love's Labour's Lost (1594–5)

If the civilized world of court and of county maps does not aid Lear in finding himself, neither does academic life offer an adequate education in *Love's Labour's Lost* to those who commit themselves to its cloistral existence.

The play opens with the King of Navarre and his three friends vowing to devote themselves to study for a period of three years. They will fast, read books, sleep only three hours a night, and forswear the company of women. It sounds a lot like university, but Shakespeare had a healthy skepticism for such ascetic modes of study. In *Taming of the Shrew* the servant Tranio cautions his master, who has come to Pisa to study:

> Let's be no Stoics nor no stocks [blocks of wood and hence incapable of feeling], I pray,
> Or so devote to Aristotle's checks
> As Ovid be an outcast quite abjur'd. (1.131–3)

Love (as represented by the Roman love-poet Ovid) is important, he explains, because "no profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en" (1.1.39).

The King of Navarre could benefit from Tranio's advice. His vows are impractical – and not just because book learning isolated from life is impractical. It turns out that the French princess and her ladies are scheduled to visit Navarre's court. They must be entertained. And so the first of the men's visionary vows is broken.

In fact, in meeting, loving, and debating with the French ladies the men learn things they could not get from books: they learn about themselves. If the purpose of study is, as the King says, "that to know which else we should not know" (1.1.56), it is obvious that life and empirical experience are as educative as books. (Shakespeare himself did not attend university.) The women realize this and at the end of the play impose tasks on the men to help expand their experiences. Educative tasks are necessary because the men seem persistently unaware of reality. (Set in the 1930s, Branagh's film presented a countdown to war but the court of Navarre seemed naively unaware of the grave political situation.)

The vows the men make as lovers are as un-self-aware as the earlier vows they made as students. They send courtship presents to the princess and her three ladies. When the ladies swap the presents and reappear masqued with only the love-tokens to identify them, the men declare love to the wrong women. Once again their vows are broken of "necessity." Both roles – student and lover – turn out to be poses, in the Elizabethan sense of "supposes": pretense, playacting. But playing in the play repeatedly has to confront reality, from the arrival of the French princess's court to the arrival of Mercade (in which the men's wooing is forced to yield to the princess's public duty: she returns to France to mourn her dead father and inherit his crown).

Throughout the play the women are more astute than the men: they see through their lovers' games and affectations, from their pick-up lines to their proposals. "Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?" Berowne asks Rosaline. "Did not *I* dance with you in Brabant once?" Rosaline counters. With the ball back in his court Berowne admits, "I know you did." Rosaline now delivers the romantic put-down: "How needless was it then to ask the question" (2.1.114–17). Her point is: words must not just sound fine; they must serve a purpose. Thus at the end of the play Rosaline asks the witty Lord Berowne to work in a hospital for a year to see if he can "move wild laughter in the throat of death" (5.2.855). His jesting will now be put to use in the real world.

The women agree to meet the men again in a year to discuss love, but, as Berowne observes, "that's too long for a play" (5.2.878). Shakespeare thus denies his audience not one but four happy endings. Finding identity takes more time than a play can accommodate.

Identity change cannot come for the lords in *Love's Labour's Lost* through playacting, nor can it come in the two hours' traffic of the stage. But sometimes it can. Let's return to *Taming of the Shrew*.

Taming of the Shrew (1590–1)

In act 5 Vincentio, the father of Bianca's suitor, Lucentio, arrives in Padua, where he meets someone impersonating him. The audience has witnessed the reason for this impersonation early in the play: Lucentio, in need of a financial guarantor in marriage, tricks/persuades an anonymous passing merchant to act as his father, Vincentio. However, because his beloved, Bianca, has been forbidden to receive any suitors, Lucentio disguises himself as a Latin tutor to gain access to her. (Note the appropriateness of his disguised character's name: Cambio, Italian for "exchange.") While he acts the part of the Latin master he needs someone to maintain his Paduan household and existence, and to be an official suitor (in the form of financial competitor) in Bianca's household; so he seconds one of his servants, Tranio, to pose as Lucentio; another servant, Biondello, therefore has to act as servant to Tranio/Lucentio. By the time Vincentio walks on stage in act 5 he is almost the only character in the play not to have assumed a false identity.

Vincentio immediately recognizes his household servants, Biondello (impersonating Tranio) and Tranio (dressed as Lucentio), but the servants deny all knowledge of him. Like the Syracusans in Ephesus, Vincentio insists on the primacy of name in confirming identity: "as if I knew not his name! I have brought him up ever since he was three years old, and his name is Tranio" (5.1.81–3). From name he moves to biographical fact – Tranio's father is "a sailmaker in Bergamo" (5.1.77–8) – but his repeated insistence on what he knows only results in the police being called to take him to prison as an impostor. Nothing he can adduce can convince anyone that he is the real Vincentio. Juliet Dusinberre observes that

> Vincentio almost doubts his own identity under reiterated accusations of impersonating the man he is. In the concrete world in which these people move, so many of the characters are impersonating someone else that those who are not impersonating anyone have as tenuous a hold on reality as those who are. (1975: 107)

In other words, Vincentio's real world is affected by others' playworld. Although he is simply minding his own business he is still at risk of losing his identity.

The play began with Christopher Sly's identity being affected by others' playacting. The first two scenes – labeled "Induction" in all modern edi-

tions but scene 1 and 2 in the first printed edition, the Folio of 1623 – introduce Sly, a comatose, drunken tinker who is the victim of a trick. While out hunting, a lord and his fellows come across Sly, decide for their aristocratic amusement to take him home, dress him in rich clothes, and convince him that he is a lord. As part of this ploy, the Lord and his companions perform the role of servants, with one commanded to impersonate Sly's wife. The plan is to change Sly's reality by playacting: "we will play our part / As he shall think by our true diligence / He is no less than what we say he is" (Ind.1.69–71).

The trick is successful. Convinced by material surroundings ("I smell sweet savors, and I feel soft things"), by the servants' reiteration of his title, and by their insistence that he is who they say he is, Sly rejects his previous self: "Upon my life, I am a lord indeed" (Ind.2.72). Nor is this change of identity entirely fictitious: Sly now speaks in verse. Theater has the power to alter reality.

In the taming plot Petruccio's playacting similarly interferes with and alters Katherine's identity. His ludic buffoonery and Petrarchan exaggerations provide a verbal picture of a new personality which Katherine grows to match; the mild, obedient woman Petruccio describes in act 1 is very much in evidence in act 5. Vincentio's reality is also affected by characters' impersonations. Sly, Katherine, Vincentio . . . the sequence continues to us, the audience: our lives and selves will be changed by our experience in the theater.

But although these transformations are similar they are not identical. Katherine's transformation may or may not be permanent, and it may or may not be genuine. Since the induction's first scene gives elaborate instructions about how to impersonate a dutiful wife (curtsy, speak softly, shed tears – assisted by an onion in a handkerchief, if necessary), we are entitled to be suspicious of Katherine's performance in act 5. Sly's position is more (unhappily) straightforward: his elevation to the aristocracy can only be temporary.

Oddly, Shakespeare does not complete the Sly framework. Perhaps he never wrote a Sly ending; perhaps he wrote one and it has not survived; perhaps practical reasons enforced a change of mind: it squanders a good actor to have him watch the action from above for four acts, as the stage direction at the end of act 1, scene 1 instructs – "they sit and mark." The question of whether Shakespeare completed the Sly framework arises because of the existence of a play published in 1594 called *The Taming of a Shrew*. The play is a derivative adaptation of Shakespeare's

play (Miller 1998: 260–2), intermittently close in language and almost identical in plot. *A Shrew* extends and completes the Sly plot. *A Shrew*'s Sly interrupts the play from time to time: he gets very excited about the fool, and he objects to the imprisonment of Vincentio (obviously an experience which is rather close to home). In act 5 he falls asleep, and when the play is over the Lord returns Sly to the wood. When Sly awakes he, like Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, remembers his metamorphosis as a dream, from which he has learned "how to tame a shrew" (Dolan 1996: 153).

Although *A Shrew* provides structural symmetry, it reduces subtlety. Sly interprets the title literally, taking only a plot-related message from the play – how to tame a wife. Shakespeare's plot is shrew-taming but his theme is theater: the ways in which life and personal identity can be transformed by drama. His refusal to revert to the Christopher Sly story leaves us suspended in the world of drama; the play's five acts have usurped reality's two scenes. Theater has the power to overtake life.[5]

At least, this is one way of approaching the play. In chapter 2 I offer a less benign interpretation, for one of the joys of reading Shakespeare plays is that their identities, like those of the characters who read them, change in different times and circumstances. If we turn our critical lens to the reality of marriage rather than the transformative power of drama, *The Shrew*, post-1960 at least, is a very different play. To marriage we now turn.

[5] The theatrical motif was to the fore in Gale Edwards's RSC production in 1995. Tranio's elevation to Lucentio was every understudy's dream: the chance to play the romantic lead. (The occasion was not without its attendant nerves: after his first encounter with Baptista, Tranio had urgent recourse to his asthma inhaler.) Petruccio's blustering "Have I not heard lions roar" speech was obviously his best audition piece (behind him, Grumio mimed Petruccio's gestures – rehearsed movements with which he was clearly all too familiar). Katherine's long speech of obedience in act 5 was not the recitation of a dutiful wife but a long-awaited moment in which one actor upstaged another.