SYMPOSIUM

Great Books Curriculum of Wright College
A Journal of Research and Inquiry

SYMPOSIUM

Great Books Curriculum of Wright College
A Journal of Research and Inquiry

Dedicated to the Best that Has Been Thought and Said

Volume 4 ***Fall 2006***

GREAT BOOKS CURRICULUM FACULTY SYMPOSIUM

CONTRIBUTORS

ADRIANA ANDRASZ:

JACQUELINE BARRETT:

PROF. DANIEL BORZUTZKY:

ROXANNE A. DOMINGO:

CRYSTAL DYNIA:

CLAUDIA ECHEVARRIA

PROF. BRUCE GANS:

JOI HILL:

KELLY MAHON:

MARIKA MALKERSON:

JOSEPH J. MAURO:

CECILIA MELENDEZ:

NOEL NICOLETTI:

PAUL OTAKE:

PROF. MICHAEL PETERSEN:

JENNIFER PROCE:

WALTER TRENTADUE:

ANTHONY TRUJILLO:

MARIA VILLASENOR:

NANCY WALLACE:

Great Books Curriculum Core Author List

Aeschylus
Dante Alighieri
Thomas Aquinas
St. Augustine
Aristophanes
Aristotle
W. H. Auden
Marcus Aurelius
Jane Austen
Francis Bacon
Bhagavad Gita
Honore Balzac
Karl Barth
Charles Baudelaire
Samuel Beckett
Henri Bergson
Bible
William Blake
Giovanni Boccaccio
Boethius
Niels Bohr
James Boswell
Charlotte Bronte
Emily Bronte
Robert Browning
Edmund Burle
Lord Byron
Willa Cather
Catullus
Miguel Cervantes
Geoffrey Chaucer
Anton Chekhov
Cicero
Samuel Coleridge
Confucius
Joseph Conrad
Nicolas Copernicus
Pierre Corneille
Charles Darwin
Daniel Defoe
Rene Descares
Charles Dickens
Emily Dickinson
Denis Diderot
John Donne
Fyodor Dostoyevsky
Frederick Douglass
Theodore Dreiser
John Dryden
W. E. B. Dubois
Albert Einstein
El Cid
George Eliot
T. S. Eliot
Ralph Ellison
Ralph Waldo Emerson
Epictetus
Desiderius Erasmus
Euclid
Euripides
Michael Faraday
William Faulkner
The Federalist Papers
Henry Fielding
Scott Fitzgerald
Gustave Flaubert
E. M. Forster
Sir James Frazer
Sigmund Freud
Galileo Galilei
Gawain and the Green Knight
Edward Gibbon
William Gilbert
Johann Goethe
Nikolai Gogol
Thomas Hardy
William Harvey
Jaroslav Hasek
Nathaniel Hawthorne
G. W. F. Hegel
Martin Heidegger
Werner Heisenberg
Ernest Hemingway
Herodotus
Hesiod
Hippocrates
Thomas Hobbes
Homer
Horace
David Hume
Zora Neale Hurston
Aldous Huxley
Johan Huizinga
Henrik Ibsen
Henry James
William James
Thomas Jefferson
Samuel Johnson
Ben Jonson
James Joyce
Carl Jung
Juvenal
Franz Kafka
Immanuel Kant
John Keats
Johannes Kepler
John Maynard Keynes
Soren Kierkegaard
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Koran
Antoine Lavoisier
D. H. Lawrence
John Locke
Lucan
Lucian
Lucretius
Martin Luther
Niccolo Machiavelli
Thomas Malory
Thomas Mann
Christopher Marlowe
Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Karl Marx
Herman Melville
John Stuart Mill
John Milton
Jean Moliere
Michel Montaigne
Baron Montesquieu
Thomas More
Lady Shikibu Murasaki
Vladimir Nabokov
Isaac Newton
Friedrich Nietzsche
Flannery O'Connor
Eugene O'Neill
George Orwell
Ovid
Blaise Pascal
Petronius
Francesco Petrarch
Pindar
Luigi Pirandello
Max Planck
Plato
Plutarch
Henri Poincare
Alexander Pope
William Prescott
Marcel Proust
Ptolemy
Aleksandr Pushkin
Jean Racine
Jean-Jaques Rousseau
Mary Shelley
Sophocles
Edmund Spenser
Benedict Spinoza
Lawrence Sterne
Wallace Stevens
Claude Levi Strauss
Jonathan Swift
Tacitus
Talmud
William Thackery
Henry David Thoreau
Bertrand Russell
Sappho
Arthur Schopenhauer
William Shakespeare
Bernard Shaw
Percy Shelley
Leo Tolstoy
Anthony Trollope
Ivan Turgenev
Mark Twain
Upanishads
Thorstein Veblen
Virgil
Francois Voltaire
Evelyn Waugh
Max Weber
Tennessee Williams
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Virginia Woolf
William Wordsworth
Richard Wright
W. B. Yeats

INTRODUCTION

[To Be Inserted]

Sarah Bowman
Editor

"JUDGING FINELY"

A Philosophical Look at Euripides' Medea

Claudia Echevarria

Written by Euripides in 431 BCE, the Hellenic Age of Greece, *Medea* is a play that shocks by addressing cutting edge issues in a time when outsiders and women were considered inferior to men. Euripides was an innovator, anti-traditional immoralist, and stage sophist. Today, we admire Euripides' plays for their originality and innovation.

According to Aristotle, *kalos,* which means fine or beautiful in Greek, usually applies to aesthetic beauty but can also have the narrower meaning of "judging finely." Doing something finely is connected with doing it correctly, which leads to ethics. *Medea,* the contentious play by Euripides, is saturated with ethical and unanswerable questions, such as "What is love?" and "Is murder ever justifiable?" Such questions are brought forth by the actions and the debatable integrity of Jason and Medea, two characters who are agonistic and antagonistic and who do not conform to traditional morals.

Medea, Princess of Colchis, was an outsider and a woman who got what she wanted. After falling in love with the hero Jason, who had traveled to Colchis to attain the Golden Fleece, Medea decides to help him. Her father, the King of Colchis and owner of the Golden Fleece, becomes angry at the thought of his daughter helping Jason. Medea agrees to help Jason escape only if he takes her with him, and in order to escape, Medea chops her brother into pieces and throws him into the sea. Her father is delayed, having to stop to pick up the pieces of his son, and Jason and Medea get away, eventually settling in Corinth. These acts show the extremes Medea goes to for Jason's love. From the beginning, the violation of ethical behavior is evident.

Euripides starts *Medea* several years after these events and Medea and Jason have children. Medea is in turmoil and her pain is so great that she wishes to die over Jason's marriage to Creon's daughter, the Princess of Corinth. Jason tries to convince Medea that he has married the princess for her and for the children's sake; by marrying royalty, he will someday become king and Medea and the children will want nothing. However, in truth, he treats Medea as if she were not equal to the women of Corinth. Jason is selfish, self-serving, and lacks honor. If Jason thought of Medea as an unworthy woman, he should not have agreed to take her out of Colchis, but she was a pawn.

Jason was hailed as a great warrior and hero in Greece, and so King Creon did not hesitate to give his young daughter's hand in marriage to Jason, even though Jason had lived with Medea for many years and had children with her. This is a point to ponder: had Jason been wooing the King and his daughter all of those years? If so, he was a conniving and deceitful man, obviously lacking in moral beauty. Both Jason and King Creon treated Medea as a worthless piece of property, which exceedingly angered her. She was further infuriated when Creon exiled her and her children from Corinth. Both men, however, underestimated Medea.

When Creon confronted Medea about her immediate exile from Corinth, she was able to persuade him to extend her stay until the end of that day, which gave her time to plan for revenge. Medea used her children to deliver a golden robe and crown to Creon's daughter as a token of peace. Upon wearing the beautiful garment and accessory, the princess was set on fire and died a slow, excruciating death. As Creon held his dead daughter in his arms, he too was set on fire and suffered the same agonizing death. Using her innocent children as messengers of death evidently demonstrates Medea's lack of morality.

Medea's eloquent soliloquy when pondering the death of her children by her own hand is heartrending. She is divided by her motherly love, remorse for having such wicked thoughts, and her hatred toward Jason. Medea struggles with her moral dilemma and brilliantly justifies children

dying by their mother's hand: she believes this is better than having them tortured and killed by her enemies, so she commits infanticide. Here, she demonstrates superior mental and emotional cunning; however, she lacks compassion and is destructive. Murdering her children is an ultimate self-serving act to satisfy her wounded ego.

On the surface, *Medea* is a critique of relationships between men and women, Greeks and barbarians, and a contest between self-interest and love. On a deeper level, it is a critique of the quality and condition of one's culture. Euripides' dramatic significance is in the the gap between altruism and greed, which Medea and Jason represent. Even today, the same collapse exists. Euripides' *Medea* reflects how individual desire, when unchecked by the ideals of a culture, brings about destruction.

LOVE AND DIVINITY

Plato's Symposium

Paul Otake

Socrates, through Diotima, says that every soul is pregnant and the ultimate end every person seeks is immortality. The pursuit of knowledge cannot go on forever because the knowledge we obtain is soon forgotten and replaced. So, unless there is an obtainable knowledge that is the end of knowing, something that is eternally good, the pursuit of wisdom is like the pursuit of love: futile. According to Diotima, the end to knowing, where knowledge becomes divine, is the state of Loving, in which the inherent beauty of all things is made clear. Eastern thought has called this condition Nirvana, and Judeo-Christian beliefs identify it as the universal love of God which extends through all things. These two lines of thought, though separated by thousands of miles and generations, are intrinsically part of Socrates' philosophy.

The love that Socrates and Diotima speak of is the highest type of love: one devoid of personal interests that relishes in the success of its object. The greatest love encourages the best practices, characteristics, opportunities, and if at all possible, the best life. This love is necessarily selfless. The act of loving, in itself, should fill the lover with joy: the feeling need not be reciprocated because unreturned love should never lead to any sense of unhappiness. To say that this is not true would be to put a condition upon love (I will love "only if . . ." love is returned), and in this there is nothing of the eternal state of love. To propose a limit is false and, therefore, no longer love. Love should be given freely and without any consideration of the consequences.

According to Diotima, there is a definite progression to this free state of Loving. After a youth grasps the beauty in one thing, the next step is to see

how that beauty transcends to all other things, or as she puts it, "the beauty of any one body is brother to the beauty of any other."[1] This lofty idea of love extends to divine concepts (particularly in Diotima's speech 211A through 212B) to either the existence of God or its equivalent in Eastern thought.

Similar to Socrates' "beautiful acts" Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, speaks of "active love" through the young monk Alyosha:

> Strive to love your neighbor actively and indefatigably. In as far as you advance in love you will grow surer of the reality of God and of the immortality of your soul. If you attain to perfect self-forgetfulness in the love of your neighbor, then you will believe without doubt, and no doubt can possibly enter your soul. (Book 1, 26)[2]

Both Socrates and Dostoevsky share the idea that love is a process, extending through various steps to achieve an altered perception of the world and one's own existence. Also, both contain the idea that this progression involves loving all people indiscriminately: the love of one necessarily leads to the love of all, and this must be done with a disregard for the self.

Besides its connection to Christian beliefs, "True Beauty," which is the end result of the "State of Loving," contains the principles of the Eastern philosophies Taoism and Buddhism. Lao Tzu wrote that the Tao exists without a beginning or an end; it does not exist singly in anything, but contains within it all things. And if all things, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, exist as a part of "True Beauty," then in the state of Loving, all distinctions drop away, and opposites are perceived as a harmony within the whole. Just as Dostoevsky's Alyosha strove to attain perfect self-forgetfulness, the "goal" of Buddhism is to remove from the mind the self to attain an awareness and harmony with the oneness of existence.

Harmony, or a unification of all contrasting elements, plays an essential role in the speeches of Eryximachus, Aristophanes, and Diotima and is the

1. Plato. *Symposium.* 210a [Need Source]
2. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Knopf, 1992). Reference to book and page number.

central point of their philosophies. In Taoism and Buddhism, there are two universal entities, Yin and Yang, which always represent the meeting of opposites as a unified whole. Aristophanes' harmony, in his myth of creation, comes from the union of men and women to form a perfect bond. He equated harmony with lovers who balance the souls of each other. Eryximachus uses the example of music and how the musician must attempt to harmonize one note with another to make his music beautiful. Music involves the idea of purity brought about by opposites because it is the combination of high and low sounds that makes a harmonious sound. Both, however, fall short of a divine concept that encompasses all things. Aristophanes' idea, limited to the state of lovers, is an explanation of why one seeks another and leaves the rest of the world in question. Eryximachus' ideas, as well, fall victim to narrow perceptions. His harmonious nature is only inspired by the Heavenly Muse, and he says that storms, droughts, and diseases are excluded from this harmony.

According to Diotima and the Tao, all things are by their nature beautiful and, therefore, good and in perfect accord with everything else. In Diotima's speech, she defines no real good or evil and no pure or vulgar forms of anything. There is a beginning that leads to an end, and all things in between are a part of the ultimate good. Distinctions are made: there are people pregnant in body and people pregnant in soul; this can be equated with the idea of two separate branches of love, but does not exclude one or the other in the name of vulgarity. She does, however, mention that ignorance is neither beautiful nor good.

Loving, a universal concept, is the realization of the unbreakable bonds that connect one to the entire world; *all* becomes the ultimate end and the aim of one's ambitions and sacrifices. Achieving this is possible by abandoning self-regard for the sake of love, and by offering oneself to become a lover in the truest sense of the word.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Knopf, 1992.
Plato. *Symposium*. **[Need Source].**

THE NATURE OF LOVE

Plato's Symposium

Walter Trentadue

What is love? One of the problems with trying to define *love* is that we often end up using the word love itself in the definition. This is a fundamental problem. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, love is defined as "deep affection and warm feeling for another." People will understand readily if a person is described as being *in love*, although they may face great difficulty in explaining exactly what that means. Usually, they will end up describing the symptoms of the person who is in love. So, what then, is love? We can gain some insight and perspective by looking at Plato's *Symposium*. According to Plato, Socrates learned about love from Diotima, a Mantinean woman "deeply versed in love and many other fields of knowledge."[1] She taught him that love is something between beautiful and ugly, between mortal and immortal, and a very powerful spirit that is between god and man. There are many kinds of spirits, and they are the envoys and interpreters that allow for the interaction between the gods and man; therefore, they exist between heaven and earth. Love is one of those spirits (*Symposium* 243).

One of the strongest emotions a person might have is love. For one to feel love for another, and to be loved by that person in return, is one of the greatest experiences in life. It can, however, be painful to be in love with someone who does not have the same feelings in return. This is unrequited love, which was experienced by Alceste in *The Misanthrope*, by Moliere. Alceste was in love with Celimene; however, Celimene did not have the same feelings for Alceste. To have *true* love, both people need to have

1. Plato, *Symposium* in *The Great Books Reading &Discussion Program*, Fourth Series, (Chicago: The Great Books Foundation, 1985), 240–241. All references to this edition, hereafter cited in text.

reciprocated and mutual feelings for each other. This can be compared to the analogy of having a tree fall in the woods. If there is nobody there to hear the tree fall, is a sound produced? A scientist would answer in the negative, as the definition of sound requires three things: the source that produces a noise or vibration, a medium in which that noise or vibration can travel through, and someone to hear that noise or vibration. Similarly, if a person loves someone else, the other person needs to have similar and reciprocal feelings in order for true love to exist. It is a willingness between two people that allows love to exist.

There is something divine about the breeding instinct that leads to human procreation; the ability for us to continue our species gives us a sense of immortality, and love is a desire for that immortality (*Symposium* 248). Further, love is a drive to acquire something that we are lacking, something that we do not have. This is the other half we are searching for (246).

I believe Plato's definition of love is inadequate, however, because he does not explain where love itself comes from. This would give us more insight as to the nature of what love really is. Certainly, love exists, but where does it originate? This question must be further explored. If we find the origins of love, it will give us deeper insight as to its very nature, and help us to explain why love is important to us. Plato does not address this issue in *Symposium*.

Since the feelings of love are within us, this must be where love originates. It is a physiological reaction to some stimulus that we are being subjected to. It is our response to something we are experiencing. We may sense attraction or affection from another person; or, we may recognize something in another person that we are looking for. It may be the feeling of security that we craved, and hopefully received, in our childhood. It may be a physical attraction, or it may be an emotional attraction. It may be a combination of both. Whatever it is, it originates within our own body. Since this love is coming from within our own body, it is something we already possess within us. The problem we encounter, then, is not whether we will find love, but whether we will find the right stimulus or person with whom

to share our love. This is the real issue. When this feeling of shared love is reciprocated, we have then achieved true love. Self-centered people who only want to be loved, and do not want to love in return, are ultimately denying themselves of the joy, happiness, and fulfillment that reciprocated love can provide.

There are certain basic needs that we share as human beings. We all need air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat. We also need love. We need to find the right person to share our love with and to help us achieve our full potential as warm, caring, and loving human beings. We need a partner with whom we can share our love so that we feel complete and whole. This is the other half that Plato may have been referring to, but did not fully explain in *Symposium*. Love is, therefore, the result of both a need and an attraction.

It is true, to an extent, that opposites attract; however, I believe certain conditions must exist for this attraction to occur in the first place. Similar backgrounds, interests, or similar outlooks on life help people to meet. The initial attraction, which people go through when falling in love, is often the result of what Plato refers to as earthly love, which is the desire of the body rather than of the soul (*Symposium* 226). While this may be pleasurable at first, it is not long-lasting, and tends to wane after the initial attraction subsides. This can be compared to a fire in a fireplace. A good fire requires a supply of wood, such as logs, and these logs need smaller pieces of wood, known as kindling, to heat the logs sufficiently so they can burn on their own. This kindling ignites readily and burns very hot, but, unfortunately, burns so quickly that the heat it produces is short-lived, much like the attraction of earthly love. This will not lead to a long-lasting fire or a long-lasting relationship. If, however, we are less concerned with earthly love and more concerned with the virtue of our partner, we have achieved what Plato refers to as heavenly love (228). Using the fireplace analogy, heavenly love can be compared to the fire that occurs when the heavier logs ignite. If we not only have a sufficient quantity of kindling, but also truly care for our partner, it will produce enough heat over a period of time to ignite the heavier logs. The heat of the fire can be compared to the passion from being in love. In this state or condition, and under the right nurturing

circumstances (such as warmth, caring, affection, integrity, and open, honest communication between both persons) the heat from being in love can ignite the logs of true love, which will burn for a very long time and provide a constant source of heat, warmth, and beauty. This is heavenly love, and it lasts longer than earthly love.

This is what most people search for: a steady and constant source of mutual nurturing that we feel even when we are apart; this is the warmth we feel from each other. Plato's *Symposium* gives us insight and perspective into what love is. Love is strong: it energizes, vitalizes, and motivates us to reach our pinnacle. Love is the high point in our life. It is quite natural for us to want to prolong the incredible feeling it gives us, for we are only then truly at our best. Love is the desire for satisfaction and all that is good (*Symposium* 246). This, to me, is the ultimate goal in life: to achieve true love. Then, and only then, are we free; our desires can come to fruition and we are at our creative best. New ideas are conceived, and this inspiration can take a variety of forms from going back to school, building bridges and skyscrapers, to creating works of art, or starting a new life by having children. And all is good.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Plato. *Symposium.* In *The Great Books Reading & Discussion Program,* Fourth Series. Chicago: The Great Books Foundation, 1985.

CATO

Master of Hegemony

Joseph J. Mauro

This essay will argue that Cato the Younger's constant and unbending opposition to The First Triumvirate, specifically Pompey, caused the Roman democracy to crumble and Caesar to emerge as dictator. First, I will examine how Cato's unnatural abhorrence for Caesar obscured rational political debate, which would have been vital in sustaining a democratic republic. Second, I will discuss the consequences of Cato's irrational fear that Pompey and his troops would rise against the Republic and seize power; for Cato's unwavering resistance to the reasonable requests made by Pompey compelled that general to federate with Caesar. Finally, I will discuss the result of the destructive tactics that Cato used in the Senate to deny a request from the tax collecting Knights in the East, who were supported by the very wealthy and influential Crassus, to renegotiate their contract after they had realized that they made a grievous error in calculating their profits. Also, it is important to explore the original feelings Crassus had for Pompey and how the actions of the Senate tempered that sentiment.

Before examining these areas, though, I feel it is important to acknowledge the very favorable account of Cato given by Plutarch. I could hardly find another author who shared his conviction that Cato's efforts, while a member of the Senate, were always helpful to democracy. By canvassing Plutarch's life, we will gain perspective, however, behind his obvious omission of Cato's real anti-democratic practices.

Plutarch was born in Greece and lived his whole life in the small town of Chaeronea. He served as priest of the temple of Apollo and also held the office of mayor for a time, exposing his interest in political matters. At his estate in the country, Plutarch "presided" over large gatherings of wealthy citizens from across the Roman Empire. The purpose of these gatherings

was to engage in serious political and philosophical discussions. Here, it is possible that Plutarch began to present an ideal of upper-class values. His essays and lectures were very popular amongst the elite and members of the Roman government, specifically Statesman Socius Senecio who influenced the emperor to make copies of Plutarch's work. In the midst of all that political influence, it would not have been in Plutarch's best interest to criticize former Roman Statesmen if he wished to continue having his writings distributed throughout the Roman Empire. It is also significant to mention that Plutarch thought of himself as a philosopher rather than a historian and saw history as a moral theater that could be a lesson for a more virtuous life.[1] During this time in Rome, there was a large demand for moral guidance. The depravity and decadence of the Roman culture had seemed to wear thin on her citizens and they yearned to lead a more exemplary life. In the *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch appealed to this need and offered a perspective with moral implications.[2]

First, let's begin by examining the unnatural abhorrence Cato had for Caesar. The origin of these feelings are unknown but one could speculate that possibly it was the very nature of Cato, virtuous and self-sacrificing, which was in stark contrast to the more devious and expedient nature of Caesar. Cato, for example, while traveling throughout the Roman Empire, would never ride horseback or wear sandals, choosing to walk barefoot among the soldiers or the so-called "common man." His convictions were rooted in a time that had long since past, when the leadership in Rome was more concerned about integrity, sustaining the democracy, and manifesting the strength of Rome throughout the known world. From his early childhood, Cato demonstrated his loyalty to Rome and his passion for democracy and seldom, if ever, compromised. As head of the treasury, he discovered blatant corruption throughout the office: debts that were never paid and credits that were never collected. Instead of ignoring or engaging in the corruption, Cato restored the office to its original integrity and began to acquire respect and admiration from many members of the Senate, including

1. Kimball 1[need source]
2. Ibid.

Cicero. This fact alone might have sparked an animosity that Caesar had toward Cato because of the deep respect Caesar had for Cicero and his desire for the orator's acceptance.[3] But Caesar's disposition was contrary to the ideals of Cicero and Cato. Caesar desired, above all, to be the ultimate authority in the Roman Empire and to be feared and admired by all the Roman citizens, showing his propensity toward what was popular rather than what was just.[4] Caesar, however, was a great leader and did much to fill the coffers and pockets of the aristocracy while expanding the Roman Empire. His heroic efforts while in battle are well documented and it must be acknowledged that these endeavors did much to strengthen Rome's position throughout the world. Yet, despite this, Cato felt it necessary to vehemently oppose any request made by Caesar or his allies no matter how reasonable they seemed. When Caesar returned from Spain in 60 BC, for example, he requested, as was his right, a triumph as well as permission to run for the consulship. While Caesar waited outside the city walls (as was the custom for all Generals returning victorious) for an answer from the Senate, Cato began a long, convoluted speech that did nothing but obstruct Caesar's request. What was more significant were the measures the Senate took to further estrange Caesar from the democratic process. Knowing that Caesar would win the office, Cato and the Senate bribed Calpurnius Bibulus, an ardent adversary of Caesar's, to stand as his associate. It is important to mention that the "incorruptible" Cato supported and initiated this measure stating that it "was for the public good." The Senate, certain that Caesar would win, selected inauspicious provinces for the prospective office winners—provinces which were formerly forests and cattle-drifts. By doing this, the Senate conspired to ruin Caesar financially by denying him the opportunity to repay his financial obligations. But nonetheless, Caesar was at the pinnacle of political influence, and the Senate's endeavors to destroy him politically did nothing but encourage Caesar's anti-aristocratic sentiment.

3. Oman 128 [need source]
4. Robinson 223 [need source]

Prior to the elections of 60 BC, there arose a call for revolt from certain factions disappointed over recent decisions made by the Senate that favored the upper class; also, the consulship to Catiline was denied three times. The Catiline Conspiracy, as it is called, was a plan to overthrow the government, burn down the aqua-duct, and murder all the Senators.[5] Through some fortunate events, the Senate learned of this conspiracy and called hearings to decide how to address the problem. The original intention was to have the conspirators put to death immediately. But Caesar, who would be later known for his clemency, urged the Senate to consider the precedent and how dangerous it would be to sentence these men to death without a fair trial, the founding principle that democracy is built around. However, Cato spoke out against the future Emperor, reviving the Senate's thirst for blood with an impassioned speech that included accusations that would implicate Caesar as co-conspirator. Denying Caesar his right to a triumph, granting him useless land, and opposing every bill and request that he brought before the Senate can be perceived as a personal affront rather than a well considered resolution that would benefit the commonwealth. This shortsighted approach to government proved to be the catalyst that brought together the essential elements which would tear down the democracy.

Second, the most significant event that led to the eventual end of democracy in Rome was the irrational fear that Cato displayed over the possibility that General Pompey, on his return to Rome, would rise against the Republic and seize power. Less than twenty years earlier, General Sulla returned to Rome, and with his military might, he overthrew the government. Knowing that Pompey was a solider who served under him, Cato, as well as the Senate, had good reason to believe that the General would assert his military strength and take control of the city.

But Pompey did something rather unexpected for someone plotting to overthrow the government. He delayed his return to Rome for almost a year, and he relieved his soldiers of their duties. Also, upon his return from the East, Pompey deposited a large sum of money in the treasury. The tax

5. Lintott 87 [need source]

revenues that were collected due to the annexations in the East were quite substantial. These acts alone should have persuaded the Senate to dismiss the idea of a siege and welcome Pompey back with the acknowledgment he deserved as a hero of Rome. However, the Senate, including Cato, refused to acknowledge the sacrifices the General had made and denied every request he brought before them. For example, when Pompey asked the Senate to provide land for some of his discharged soldiers, the request was denied because of the ardent opposition of Cato and other factions in the Senate; Pompey's bill was rejected on the grounds that the treasury was empty. This, of course, was a lie and obviously portrayed deep resentment the Senate had for Pompey. According to Sir Charles Oman in *Seven Roman Statesmen of the Later Republic*, long before Pompey's return from the East, the Senate conspired to ruin him politically and render him powerless. According to Oman, the Catiline Conspiracy was still fresh in everybody's mind and Cicero went to great lengths to remind the Senate of the tremendous contribution he made on behalf of Rome.[6] If the Senate began to recognize the efforts of the General, they would forget Cicero's "heroic" endeavors to stifle the conspirators and save Rome from eminent destruction, and his popularity would falter. Another mistake made by the Senate was in failing to ratify the treaties Pompey made with the Princes of the Orient. This was simply an effort by the Senate and Cato to demean the General and to refuse this *acta* (the ratification of his actions in the East). This, as well as rejecting the request for land for his soldiers, gave Caesar an excellent opportunity to appeal to Pompey's frustrations and persuade him to conspire with Caesar to overthrow the democracy.

Unlike the Senate, Caesar realized the benefits of aligning with the General. The vast fortune of Crassus, the popularity of Caesar, and the military strength of Pompey would have created a formidable force. But, without the land grants for his soldiers, this union would have been rendered impotent because Pompey would have lost the loyalty of his soldiers by not giving them what he had promised. So, when Caesar won the office of

6. Sir Charles Oman, Seven Roman Statesmen of the Later Republic: The Gracchi, Sulla, Crassus, Cato, Pompey, Caesar (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), **[page ref].**

Consul, he surrounded the forum with Pompey's soldiers and used force to throw out those, including Cato, who tried to oppose his request for both the land grants, the ratification of Pompey's *acta*, as well as allowing him to marry his daughter. These acts formed the first Triumvirate and the beginning of the eventual fall of the democracy.

Finally, I want to discuss the results of the obstruction tactics Cato used to deny a request made by the tax collecting Knights in the East to renegotiate their contract. Apparently, the Knights had made a grievous error while calculating the profits they hoped to receive and tried to persuade the Senate to arrange a more favorable settlement. The Knights appealed to the very wealthy and influential Crassus to pressure the Senate into granting their petition. But Cato, seeing through this obvious misappropriation, urged the Senate to ignore the request, which they did. Although this saved the Republic from losing revenue, it caused Crassus to break from his initial decision to side with Cato and the Senate to block the requests of Pompey. This decision was based on a deep-seated animosity Crassus had for Pompey that was sparked when both of them fought under Sulla. Simply, Crassus was jealous of the success Pompey enjoyed, and with typical upper-class Roman envy, he sought to ally himself with the Senate to deny any request made by the General when he returned from the East.[7] However, when the Senate rejected the pleas of Crassus to reconsider the contracts of the Knights, Caesar took advantage of the opportunity and entreated him to join the effort to undermine the Senate and take control of the Republic. By granting the Knights their request when he obtained the office of consul, Caesar secured an alliance that, along with the military strength of Pompey and the idolatry of the people, would prove to be a formidable opponent to democracy. Caesar was hard pressed to sway Crassus to league with Pompey, but the opposition of Cato and the Senate did much to alter his sentiment. The rebuff of Crassus by Cato was indeed in the best interest of the commonwealth, but as I have previously argued, the result of this opposition brought the essential pieces together that were needed to topple the democracy.

7. Grant 336 [need source]

Throughout history there have been few men who could compare with Cato the Younger. He exemplified the ideal that one's honor is more important than one's own personal safety and he gained the respect and admiration of the people by simply doing what he felt was the right. While head of the treasury early in his career, Cato not only reestablished the integrity of the office by rooting out the elements of corruption but also secured the highest esteem from the Senate and the commonwealth that would precede him throughout his life. But Cato's inability to compromise or consider the long term effects of his decisions made him responsible for the end of democracy in Rome. What other possible result could come from opposing such influential and powerful men like Caesar or Pompey or Crassus? How is it that Cato could not perceive the inevitable bitterness and resentment that would arise within Pompey after denying such reasonable requests? If Cato might have realized the benefits of a good relationship with the General and encouraged the Senate to acknowledge Pompey's achievements and grant him his requests, Caesar would have lacked the strong military position needed to intimidate and threaten the Senate. The nature of democracy assures that every voice has a right to be heard and considered. It is obvious that Cato had a difficult time comprehending this very important expression of freedom and his shortsighted and antidemocratic decisions proved to be the catalyst that brought together the essential elements to end democracy in Rome.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Grant

Kimball

Lintott

Oman, Sir Charles. *Seven Roman Statesmen of the Later Republic: The Gracchi, Sulla, Crassus, Cato, Pompey, Caesar*. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971.

Plato. *Symposium*

Robinson

ROMAN PROPAGANDA

Women Admired and Condemned

Jennifer Proce

It has been commonly observed that during the time of the late Roman Republic, society was feeling the destructive effects of many years of civil wars. These wars were responsible for a breakdown in Roman ideals. Rome's people had become dissatisfied with their quality of life and had developed a lack of patriotism. Political corruption and moral decline among the ruling class was prevalent. Within this affluent group, marriage as an institution had lost its appeal, and divorce was on the rise. This led to relaxed social relationships between the sexes and the licentiousness of women from the respectable classes.[1]

Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, was concerned with current social attitudes. Sullied conduct presented a problem that Augustus intended to correct. He idealized the valiant and virtuous life of early Rome, and he wanted his country to embrace these traditional Roman moral ideals again.[2] "As sole ruler of Rome [Augustus] used his power to establish a period of peace and stability, and endeavored to reawaken in Romans a sense of national pride, and a new enthusiasm . . . [for] their traditional moral values; those of bravery, parsimony, duty, responsibility, and family devotion."[3]

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate how de facto propaganda was employed through the inculcation of Roman legends and written histories to initiate social reform and encourage high moral conduct by its women. In trying to renew traditional Roman values, Augustus tried to

1. H. H. Scullard, From Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 BC to AD 68 (London: Methuen, 1976), 238–248.
2. Ibid., 238–240.
3. "Virgil" entry in *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115695 (last accessed September 2006).

strengthen the decaying social fabric of Rome. He knew that legislation could not achieve this alone. "[Therefore], poets and writers proclaimed the ideals that Augustus wished to instill into the Roman people . . ."[4] It is through these writers that the Augustan Propaganda of Roman ideals was born.[5]

During this Augustan reform, great Roman writers arrived on the scene. Livy and Virgil shared the same hopes for Rome as Augustus and hoped to initiate a Roman revival of its former glory through their work. Both of these writers had a close association with Augustus. In his book *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 BC to AD 68*, H. H. Scullard observes it was

> no less natural that [Augustus] should gather these [writers], as so many other threads into his own hands, because even in Augustan Rome, without printed books and the broadcast word, writers could exercise great influence on public opinion. He wished to spread abroad the ideals and hopes of the new age. He might command the pen of publicists, but he was in fact most fortunate in winning the loyal and enthusiastic support of three writers who proved to be among the greatest the world had known.[6]

Virgil's and Livy's desire to see the empire returned to its former glory was an elemental factor that can be detected in their work. Of these men, "Virgil was regarded by the Romans as their greatest poet.[7] The *Aeneid*, his most famous poem, is still considered one of the most influential poems of all time. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil writes his version of the divine events that would lead to the founding of Rome. The *Aeneid* is accepted as presenting "a prototype of the Roman way of life."[8]

---

4. Scullard, H. H., *From Gracchi to Nero*, 241.
5. Ibid., 239–241.
6. Ibid, 241.
7. "Virgil" entry in *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115695 (last accessed September 2006).
8. Ibid.

One of the most memorable characters in the *Aeneid* is Dido, the queen of Carthage. In Virgil's portrayal of Dido as "the opponent of the Roman way of Life," we see a woman who is powerful, ambitious, and capable.[9] Dido leads her people from Tyre to Africa and founds Carthage. Then, she meets Aeneas. She immediately falls in love with Aeneas, and becomes "a victim to her own passion."[10] Due to this passion, she neglects her kingdom and forsakes her vow to remain faithful to her recently murdered husband, for a man who ultimately rejects her. Dido's tragic tale is an example of Augustus' social reform: it provides instruction to women through criticism of female behavior. Virgil draws attention to Dido's emotional and moral weaknesses because she is a woman. Dido demonstrates this weakness by forsaking her country for the passion of a man.

In her book *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, Pomeroy states that "The weakness and light mindedness of the female sex were the indulging principles of Roman legal theory that mandated all women to be under custody of males."[11] This custody was enforced through the institution of the Paterfamilias, legislation that restricted women's activities outside the home.[12] In other words, Romans felt so strongly that women should not interfere in the man's world that they created legislation to support this attitude. Therefore, a Roman environment in which a woman could attain Dido's exclusive power did not exist. However, toward the end of the Republic, some women managed to work around the Paterfamilias to successfully command real life responsibilities. Since the Romans disapproved of this, Dido's predicament in the *Aeneid* helped promote the idea that women should remain uninvolved in the practice of power and politics. Therefore, it is through Dido's fate that the Roman Empire warned women to heed this advice or the results could be ruinous.

---

9. "Virgil" entry in *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115695 (last accessed September 2006).
10. Mark Morford, Daniel Holmes, and John Ashenfelter, A*ncient Paths through Text and Images: Virgil's* Dido, http://www.cti.itc.virginia.edu/~mpm8b/ (last accessed February 2006).
11. Sarah B. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity (New York: Schocken Books), 150.
12. Ibid., 151.

The second example that links Dido to Augustus' social reform is seen through the consequences Dido faced by abandoning her sense of duty to her country. As evident in many Roman tales, upholding one's duty to Rome is a value held in the highest regard. According to Suzanne Cross, "Both men and women growing up in an increasingly powerful Rome [were] imbibed with concepts of heroism and duty . . . Roman women were expected to embody and support that cultural greatness as much as her man."[13] A sense of duty was one of the very values that Augustus hoped to revive through his reform. Virgil indicates that when Dido neglected her country's needs, it led not only to her own demise through her suicide, but to the demise of Carthage as well. This is also emphasized by Virgil's portrayal of Aeneas, the idyllic Roman hero, who never abandons his "divine" duty. He, in contrast, forsakes his own desire and leaves Dido and Carthage to found what would become Rome. The *Aeneid* teaches that had Aeneas not followed his duty, Rome would never have existed. This very idea would have been reprehensible to any Roman. It also suggests that by fulfilling one's duty to Rome, even greater glories could be expected.

The third way that Virgil's treatment of Dido can be interpreted as instructive propaganda for women can be seen in Dido's abandonment of her vow to remain faithful to her dead husband. The Romans held great respect for the wife who, after her husband's death, never remarried. One of the most revered women in Rome was Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. She married once, bore twelve children, and after her husband's early death, never remarried. Due to her devotion to her husband, she even turned down the proposal of King Ptolemy. Cornelia's devotion to her husband and family was so admired by the Romans that they erected a statue of her to honor her name. Augustus later restored the statue.[14] Virgil would have us believe that had Dido remained true to her husband, then the outcome may have been different for her and Carthage.

---

13. Suzanne Cross, "The Republican Paradigm: Heroines of Early Rome" in *Feminae Romanae: The Women of Ancient Rome,* http://www.dominae.fwsl.com/Index.html. (last accessed September 2006).
14. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves, 149–150.

This theme of promoting admirable woman from Roman legends with intent to influence conduct is also represented in Livy's written histories. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* assents that "Livy's histories were deeply rooted in the Augustan revival."[15] Livy himself wrote that "in history you have the infinite variety of human experiences, and in that record you can find for yourself both examples and warnings."[16] This promotion of admirable qualities is recurring in his *Histories of Rome* and exemplified in his retelling of the rape of Lucretia.[17] In this legend, Collantinus, a relation of the ruler Tarquin, was away on military duty where he wagered with the other men over whose wife was the most virtuous. To gather their proof, the men decided to surprise their wives without notice. All the wives, except Lucretia, were found cavorting at parties while their husbands were away. Conversely, Lucretia was found diligently spinning wool throughout the evening, waiting for word of her husband's safety. Collantinus won the bet, but fatefully Sextus, heir to the Tarquin throne, had seen his wife, and fell immediately in lust with her. Later, he returned to her home and threatened to kill her and leave her to be found in bed with her slave if she would not sleep with him. Since Lucretia knew that this would destroy her honor as well as her husband's, she regretfully agreed to his demands. Following this incident, Lucretia summoned her husband and family and told them what had happened. Although they absolved her of her crime, she took her own life because she felt the shame of committing adultery to be too great. After the public learned of the great injustice to the noble Lucretia, a great revolt arose that toppled the Tarquin dynasty.[18] Lucretia embodied many of the things that the Romans considered honorable: the devotion she showed to her husband by dutifully remaining at home in his absence and how she spun

15. "Livy" entry in *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115695 (last accessed September 2006); quoted in "Livy."
16. Ibid., quoted in "Livy."
17. Suzanne Cross, "The Republican Paradigm: Heroines of Early Rome" in *Feminae Romanae*, http://www.dominae.fwsl.com/Index.html (last accessed September 2006).
18. John Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (London: Bodley Head, 1962), 27.

wool to occupy her time.[19] In addition, Lucretia's resolve to take her own life due to the shame of losing her chastity also caused the Romans to admire her.

Another major source of Roman propaganda was Plutarch's *Lives.* The *Lives* provides historical and biographical accounts of the Romans during the time of the Republic. While Plutarch wrote after the time of Augustus, Livy, and Virgil, much of his work seems to embody the same theme. Although his work was not a political act designed to formally promote moral ideals, Plutarch himself was interested in promoting high moral conduct through his work. In his Introduction to *Lives*, John Dryden writes that Plutarch wrote to "arouse the spirit of emulation." Writing used in this way, in order to influence and incite emulation, can be seen as a form of propaganda and instruction.[20]

A most distinct example of this is demonstrated in Plutarch's relation of the tale of Brutus' wife, Portia. Based on Plutarch's account, Portia could see that her husband was deeply troubled. Because she cared for him so deeply, his torment was agonizing to her. She wanted to help rid him of his troubles, but she knew that because she was a woman she was not considered strong enough. Therefore, she devised a method to prove her strength and devotion to him.[21] Portia proved her worthiness by taking a dagger and inflicting a deep wound upon her leg. She then hid her wound from her husband and proceeded to make a lengthy speech about her resolve to stand by him no matter what. It was only after she concluded her speech that she revealed her wound to him. She proved herself worthy to bear his secrets and absolved him of part of his burden. In Portia's speech, she confesses to the inferiority of women to men, and thus pronounces it to all women. Portia ends her test of devotion by proclaiming "I have tried myself,

19. M. I. Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity: Discoveries and Controversies* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 142.
20. Introduction, *Plutarch: Lives*, trans. John Dryden and ed. Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: The Modern Library), xiv.
21. See Plutarch, *Plutarch: Lives*, trans. John Dryden and ed. Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: The Modern Library), 580. Hereafter cited in text, *Lives*.

and find that I can bid defiance to pain" (*Lives* 580). Later, when Portia hears that her husband has been killed, she takes her own life as well.

It is in this text that one sees the propagation of the Roman ideals of courage, devotion, and duty. Portia promotes women who are strong, courageous, fiercely devoted to their husbands, as well as one who knows her place. According to Pomeroy, Portia's acts qualify her as an ideal Roman woman by her defense that "the ideal-wife motif stresses that not only should a woman have only one husband, but she ought not to survive him."[22]

In another instance, Plutarch discusses a woman's negative behavior, and thus instructs his audience on how not to behave. According to Cross, Roman histories were "held up by the Romans as cautionary tales of the disastrous impact of ambitious women."[23] Virgil's treatment of Dido is one example of this. Here, Plutarch provides an example from the later Republic that is more likely to be based on fact as opposed to the *Aeneid's* myth. For instance, in *The Lives*, we learn about Terrentia, the wife of Cicero. Whenever she is referred to, a negative connotation is conveyed. Regarding this, Plutarch writes, "Terrentia [was] in her own nature neither tenderhearted nor timorous, but a woman eager for distinction who, as Cicero himself says, 'would rather thrust herself into his public affairs, than communicate her domestic matters to him' " (*Lives* 421). However, we do learn that during her husband's absence, she was successful in managing both money and property. Terrentia displayed undesirable behavior when she managed to engage in business practices without the use of a tutor. She was crafty enough to evade the law of Paterfamilias. Fortunately, for her, and the future of other women, Rome was otherwise engaged in a nasty civil war at the time. Otherwise, Terrentia may have been prosecuted for her unlawfulness. The punishment that Terrentia received for her behavior was divorce from her husband. Divorce, as the Romans put it, was referred to as "doing away with" a wife, implying, in quite a callous way, that divorcing one's wife was a mere trifle. It also implies that a wife was not of

22. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 161.
23. Suzanne Cross, "The Republican Paradigm," http://www.dominae.fwsl.com/Index.html.

much importance to her husband if he could so easily rid himself of her without much concern (*Lives* 421; 428).

Within the roughly 350 pages in Plutarch's vol. 2 of the *Lives,* Portia's tale occupies the most significant passage devoted to Roman women: a mere one and a half pages. This can be interpreted as propaganda in two ways. First, it sends a strong message about what female behavior was admired in Roman society. Second, it promotes the idea that women were considered insignificant to the Roman national idea of who they were and what they accomplished. This aided Roman men in keeping women in their submissive roles.

Psychologists generally agree that our social roles are learned. "We internalize the attitudes of the society around us by making the attitudes our own . . . [therefore] people internalize cultural expectations about how to behave. This is usually accomplished through the imitation of role models."[24] Therefore, the works of Virgil, Livy, and Plutarch all can be interpreted as propaganda by how they helped to define the roles of women in the Roman Empire.

24. "Psychology of Behavior," in *Understanding Human Behavior,* Thinkquest, http://library.thinkquest.org/26618/en-1.3.1=social%20rolls.html (last accessed October 2006).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balsdon, John. *Roman Women: Their History and Habits*. London: Bodley Head, 1962.

Cross, Suzanne. "The Republican Paradigm: Heroines of Early Rome." *Feminae Romanae: The Women of Ancient Rome.* http://www.dominae.fwsl.com/Index.html. Last accessed September 2006.

Evans, John K. *War, Women, and Children in Ancient Rome.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Finley, M. I. *Aspects of Antiquity: Discoveries and Controversies.* New York: Viking Press, 1968.

"Livy." In *Encyclopedia Britannica Online.* http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115695. Last accessed September 16, 2006.

Miles, Rosalind. *The Woman's History Of the World.* Massachusetts: Salem House, 1989.

Morford, Mark, Daniel Holmes, John Ashenfelter. *Ancient Paths through Text and Images: Virgil's Dido.* http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~mpm8b/dido/21.html. Last accessed Feb. 2006

O' Faolain, Julia, and L.Martines, eds. *Not In God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians.* New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Pomeroy, Sarah B. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity.* New York: Schocken Books, 1975.

Plutarch. *Plutarch: The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans.* Trans. John Dryden and edited by Arthur Hugh Clough. New York: The Modern Library, 1992.

"Propaganda." In *The New World Dictionary and Thesaurus.* New York: Macmillan 1996.

"Psychology of Behavior." In *Understanding Human Behavior.* Thinkquest. http://library.thinkquest.org/26618/en-1.3.1=social%20rolls.htm. Last accessed Oct. 1, 2006.

"Virgil." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115695. Last accessed September 16, 2006.

Scullard, H. H. 1976. *From Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 BC to AD 68.* London: Methuen, 1976.

BEAUTY IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

The Tale of Genji

Noel Nicoletti

Many of the greatest novels of all time center their themes on issues of morality and the consequences of living righteous or evil lives. *The Tale of Genji* is no exception. Written by Murasaki Shikibu in the early part of the eleventh century, *The Tale of Genji* follows the exploits of Prince Genji and his descendants in the imperial city of Heian Kyo. The novel bursts with a wealth of knowledge of early Japanese culture and its fascination with beauty in many different forms. The characters in *The Tale of Genji* spend their lives seeking out aesthetic beauty while disregarding any concern for others. From Genji's lack of respect for his father's marriage vows to the subservient roles that women assume, the imperial palace swarms with vulgarity and inhumanity.

It may be helpful to gain some understanding of the author before proceeding. It was her life at court and experience in the class system that influenced her views of her culture. Murasaki Shikibu was the daughter of a provincial governor. Shikibu was a very bright girl but was held back because of her gender. Her father allowed her to be educated with her brother, and she excelled; in fact, she displayed greater skills than those of her brother, and this caused her father to mournfully declare, "If only you were a boy, how happy I should be!"[1] Then, while in her late twenties, she received an invitation to court where she obtained knowledge of the court life. "She had the reputation of being virtuous (an unusual one in her circle) and . . . [some might say] she was something of a prude."[2] It is note-worthy that someone who was believed to be a moral and virtuous person could bring to life a story that depicts so much depravity. It is also worth

1."The World of the Tale of Genji" **[need source]**
2. Morris 251 **[need source]**

mentioning that Shikibu's authorship of the masterfully written *Tale of Genji* disturbed many Japanese Confucians because it was upsetting for a woman to have crafted such a beautiful and well-known piece of literature.[3] Shikibu achieves ultimate revenge by becoming one of Japan's most gifted authors and the creator of what some say is the world's very first novel.

What might be moral to some may not be to others. Scholars have asked, "What are morals?" but they have never arrived at a universally accepted answer. Thus, for the purpose at hand, morals are defined as actions and conduct that further the greater good. There are three striking examples of immoral behavior that can exemplify the Heian culture's lack of morality. First, Genji had an affair with his father's wife, which tormented her and brought shame to the throne. Second, Genji kidnapped a child in order to marry her. Last, the women in the Heian culture were objectified and treated as pawns in a political game.

Respect for one's parents is moral, and Genji shows a complete lack of respect for his father when he seduces his wife. Genji is infatuated with his father's wife, Fujitsubo, from a very young age. As a boy, his father allows Genji to visit with her, and it is during this period of time that his obsession begins. When he is older, he visits her in order to seduce her, and although she shows restraint, he is eventually successful.[4] Fujitsubo becomes pregnant with Genji's child and although she is tormented with guilt, she allows the emperor to believe that the child is his. This scenario seems a better fit for daytime television than it does to the beautiful culture and heritage of Japan. Both Genji and Fujitsubo show little concern for the emperor by allowing such an immoral affair to occur. Furthermore, by allowing the emperor to believe that their child is his own, they commit an unspeakable crime against the child and bring disgrace to the thrown. This lack of concern for others is a constant theme in *The Tale of Genji*.

Respect for the sanctity of childhood should be an aspect of morality, but the "Shining Prince" participates in deplorable acts of selfishness and

3. Morris, 259 **[need source]**
4. Shikibu, 86 **[need source]**

treachery against a child. Genji becomes seriously ill, and after various rituals and prayers prove to be unsuccessful, he and some of his attendants take a trip outside the palace to a temple to see a wise-man who is rumored to be a great healer. While there, Genji becomes awe-struck with a child who lives in a home that is visible from the sage's cave. He pays a visit to the girl's grandmother and asks if he may adopt her. The grandmother senses that he has odd intentions and respectfully declines his request. After the grandmother's death, Genji abducts the child. It is after the abduction that Genji's true intentions become apparent. He raises the child so that he can marry her when she is of an appropriate age.

Does Genji ever face the consequences of his despicable behavior? Absolutely not. The child's father does not even attempt to recover his daughter. Where, then, is the accountability for evil doing? Genji participates in pedophilia and is still considered a pillar of morality and beauty among those at court.

It should not require a large stretch of the imagination to say that women deserve respect in society, but this, too, seemed like an alien belief in Heian culture. Women were used as devices for political ambition in the imperial palace. Men used their daughters to achieve higher rank or to position themselves in a more desirable political position through arranged marriages. In fact, during the Heian period, the Fujiwara family maintained control of the capital strictly through this process of endogamy.[5] Women had no say in the choice of their own mate, and these women were often married to their own relatives. In some cases, they were wed to their own nephews. Not only is it immoral to wed one's own relatives, it is also genetically risky, but this was done to maintain control of the capital. And, this objectification of women was acceptable.

Further proof of the lack of respect for women can be observed in Genji's treatment of the women who dared to rebuff his sexual advances. The best example of this behavior occurred while Genji was on his way home from the Festival of the Cherry Blossoms. Genji finds an open door in

5. Morris 48 **[need source]**

the house of Lady Kokiden. He slinks around until he finds a woman to force himself upon. He even goes so far as to tell her, "It will do you no good [to fight off my advances]. I am always allowed my way."[6] This is not an isolated incident; it recurs throughout the novel. The lack of morality displayed by Genji in his heinous behavior is sickening. The fact that rape was an accepted form of fornication bares further witness to the immoral treatment of the women of the Heian period.

One could argue that the people of the Heian period acted in these less than admirable ways because it was the accepted way of life. Although tradition and custom help dictate behavior, it is possible that these people were aware of the inappropriate nature of their acts. Human beings are blessed with an inner voice, known as a conscience, which helps to decipher right from wrong. Surely, the people of Genji's time possessed this faculty. One might also argue that people were prisoners of this system and that there was little that could have been done to change these customs. It is true that it is a difficult task to look at years of improper behavior and declare, "This is wrong!" Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once wrote, "an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal or natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust."[7] This philosophy is easily applied to make distinctions between immoral and moral behavior. The people of Heian Kyo consistently and willingly participated in behavior that degraded their fellow human beings. Just as Dr. King fought against racism in his time, the Heian aristocracy should have recognized the immorality that existed in their culture and taken action against it. Tradition is no excuse for immorality, and it is truly sad that a culture that puts so much emphasis on beauty could not see the lack of beauty in their behavior.

The Heian period's idea of a "good" person was one who was well versed in ancient literature and song, wrote with both grace and eloquence, and dressed in an attractive fashion. "Artistic sensibility was more highly valued than ethical goodness"; in fact, their word for good, *yoki*, was used to

6. Murasaki, 138 **[need source]**
7. King, 57 **[need source]**

describe physical beauty rather than goodness of deed.[8] In *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu paints a picture of this world as she saw it: flawed and cruel. Genji lacks the most common of human decency. Throughout the novel, he and his fellow "beautiful people" mistreat one another and perpetrate various crimes against humanity without the slightest sign of remorse. One might think they are oblivious to the error of their ways. This is where *The Tale of Genji* delivers its most potent message. Murasaki Shikibu witnessed this behavior, and in an effort to shine light upon a subject that disturbed her, she produced this amazing tale of moral dilemma.

8. Morris 195 **[need source]**

BIBLIOGRAPHY [NEED SOURCES]

King

Morris

Murasaki

"The World of the Tale of Genji"

Shikibu

MARITAL NOBILITY IN CHAUCER'S CLERK AND FRANKLIN TALES

Maria Villasenor

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* includes four tales that deal at length with views of marriage. In his essay, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," George Lyman Kittredge was one of the first to recognize the debate about marriage, which the Wife of Bath initiates. He noticed that three pilgrims on the journey respond to the Wife's arguments about how, in marriage, the woman should dominate the man: the Clerk, who tells a tale of the patient and noble Griselda and defends the traditional orthodox view of wifely submissiveness within marriage; the Merchant, who tells a tale about a wife who is the opposite of Griselda, who is not noble but deceitful; and the Franklin, whose tale is about mutual love and respect. Kittredge believes that the Franklin's tale presents the noblest example of marriage because of the mutual openness and generosity of the knight and his wife. These are the tales that make up the "marriage group," and all focus on the arguments about what a marriage should ideally be.[1] The argument I make is based solely on the views of the Clerk and Franklin, whose tales are somewhat related in the marriage views that they express.

It is not the *Franklin's Tale* that presents a higher and more noble example of marriage, but rather the *Clerk's Tale.* This is a bold critical position for a college student to adopt; it challenges not only the view of George Lyman Kittredge, even today a highly respected Chaucer scholar, but also the received opinion about Chaucer's views on marriage held by most Chaucer scholars. My position on the nobility of Griselda's marriage also contradicts contemporary feminist views on marriage, views widely held in modern Western countries like the United States.

1. See George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," in *Chaucer Criticism: The Canterbury Tales,* ed. Richard T. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960).

Before addressing the core of my argument regarding which of the tales is considered the most noble, I must first analyze the *Wife of Bath's Tale* because she is the one who initiates the argument on marriage. The Wife is a woman who violates the traditional Christian views of marriage, yet she quotes from St. Paul and misinterprets what he said in order to get her point across. One of her arguments is that God made our sexual organs for pleasure as well as procreation. In her essay, "The Wife of Bath and the Problem of Mastery," Patricia Anne Magee, a medieval literature critic, points out that, in Chaucer's language," 'God made marriage in paradys . . . to multiplye mankind to the service of God.'"[2] This indicates that sex was made for the creation of human beings to serve God and not for pleasure. The Wife argues that the Bible does not specifically say whether re-marriage was forbidden by God and states that Solomon had "a thousand wives or so." Magee further adds to the views of the Church, "the Wife has had a series of marriages, violating the medieval notion of a 'clean wydewe.' "[3]

The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* states clearly that second marriages were discouraged by the Church in the Middle Ages.[4] By marrying five times, the Wife demonstrated that she is deceitful and cunning because she never followed or believed in the orthodox views of marriage. She mentions the teachings of St. Paul as a justification of multiple marriages, but twists his meanings by ignoring what doesn't fit her argument. St. Paul says, "Just as Christ is head of the Church so the husband is head of the wife. Just as Christ loved his Church, so ought men to love their *wives*" (Ephesians 5:22–23). In her prologue, the Wife of Bath describes each of her husbands and how she mastered all of them and got her way through manipulation. She admits marrying her first four husbands because they were old and close to death and she would inherit their wealth. She also admits that "the one" (her fifth husband) she married for love: "The

2. Patricia Anne Magee, "The Wife of Bath and the Problem of Mastery," in *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1984), 180.
3. Ibid., 259.
4. William M. Foley, "Marriage (Christians)," in *Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribners, 1958), 436.

one I took for love and not for wealth . . ."[5] The fact is that she loved him because he dominated her and he would not allow her to master him. She tells the pilgrims, "And yet he was my worst, and many a blow / He struck me still can ache along my row / Of ribs, and will till my dying day" (272). He dominated her by physically abusing her.

Why didn't she do something about his abusive ways by controlling him? The fact is that she loved the idea that he was the one who dominated her. Magee observes, "It is clear that she does not really desire power but yearns for it."[6] There is truth to this observation because once the Wife gained power over her husbands, she instantly grew tired of them. It was no longer a challenge for her after that. Her fifth husband, though, was a challenge because he was the one who had the power over her. At the end of her prologue, she tells the pilgrims that she gained power over the last husband by making him angry and tearing a page out of his favorite book so that he would strike her. She made him believe that she was dying and accused him of only wanting her for her money. He asked for her forgiveness and gave her back her freedom by telling her that she could do whatever she pleased for the rest of their marriage. Thereafter, she became kind and faithful and treated him better than she had treated any of her other husbands. This does not mean that she is finally a "true wife" as Griselda in the *Clerk's Tale*, but the Wife of Bath does show some progress in her marital understanding at the end of her prologue.

The *Clerk's Tale* can be understood as an example of higher religious idealism in marriage because of Griselda's virtue and patience toward Walter and his demands. In this tale, the husband dominates the wife. Griselda submits, under the most trying circumstances, to her husband, Walter; therefore, it reflects a traditional ideal in Christian marriage. Did Griselda love her husband or did she act out of a sense of duty? Griselda represents the highest love because she continued to love even when it was

5. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1951), 272.
6. Patricia Anne Magee, "The Wife of Bath and the Problem of Mastery," 180.

not reciprocated. Walter asks for her hand in marriage on the condition that she does whatever he asks, no matter what pain he may cause her. She accepts this condition and promises him that she will abide by his commands without complaint. The testing of her patience and fidelity thus begins.

The first test comes when her firstborn baby is taken away. Her second child is taken in the same way, and both are apparently killed. The final test comes when Walter tells Griselda that he intends to marry a younger woman. Through these three tests, Griselda is hurt but never questions or shows her grief, rather, she patiently accepts whatever Walter demands of her. As a wife, it is her duty to be submissive and do, in a patient manner, whatever is asked of her by her husband; as St. Paul said, "they are to be submissive as the law also says" (1 Corinthians 14:34–35). The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* describes the position of the man and the wife within a marriage during the Middle Ages: "The supremacy of the husband as the head of the wife is recognized, and the duty of wifely obedience declared."[7] In promising Walter that she will do whatever he asks, she declares the duties she has to fulfill.

Immanuel Kant said, "For any action to have moral worth, including a loving one, it must be motivated be a sense of duty."[8] In making a promise to him, Griselda accepts the duties of a wife, mother, and one subject to her husband. It is her duty to handle his affairs when he was away. It is her duty to bear him a son who will someday reign from his father's throne. It is her duty to be a mother to her children for the little time that she has them. It is her duty to love Walter no matter what terrible pain he causes her to go through; Griselda says, "My heart will never turn or change its place."[9] It is her duty to be subject to her husband, as St. Paul said in Ephesians.

Griselda does indeed follow the teachings of St. Paul. She endures the most terrible tests but passes all of them without showing emotion, because it is her duty, as she declared when she made that fateful premarital vow to

7. William M. Foley, "Marriage (Christians)," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 433.
8. John K. Roth, *Ready Reference Ethics: Love* (Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 1994), 511.
9. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1951), 335.

Walter. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* states that, "Love is perfected when its most laborious duties are performed with gladness."[10] Indeed, Griselda has to accept having her two children taken away from her and later find out that her husband is to marry another, yet she keeps to her word and never questions her husband's authority or shows grief. It is as though she believes her vow is recorded in Heaven. The testing she undergoes certainly qualifies as filled with "laborious duties." She performs all of those duties well and with patience. I am not trying to imply that she was glad that her children were taken away; I am simply saying that she performed her duties without showing her sadness.

Griselda keeps her word, and without the slightest objection she does everything that Walter requests; it is not an accident that in the end their marriage is blissful. Their love is perfected because of her patience and the performance of her duties; their marriage is ultimately ennobled. Who is responsible for this marital nobility? Griselda. The protagonist in the tale is Griselda. She is the one who had power over Walter, and not Walter over her, as many readers today believe. In terms of reading the tale, most people may associate it with the *Wife of Bath's Tale* because it is the complete opposite. Yes, indeed the spirit of this tale is contrary to the Wife's argument, but more importantly, the *Clerk's Tale* can be seen as the most idealistic conception of marriage in the *Canterbury Tales* because Griselda follows the ideal Christian view of marriage. Griselda can be seen as the powerful figure in this tale because she never lets Walter break her will with his cruel tests. She has power over him because he obsesses about her patience and fidelity. In the end, Walter confesses that her children were alive and that she had been lied to in order to test her patience. He realizes that she is the noblest possible wife because she fulfills her promise and never stops loving him.

Griselda is not just a symbol of sentimental Christian patience, though patience is a virtue and of fundamental importance in achieving emotional stability and wisdom. She is also a woman who followed God's will, as

10. James Strahan, "Love (Christians)," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribners, 1958), 167.

expressed when He said ". . . and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16).

I conclude with the *Franklin's Tale*, which in Kittredge's view, presents Chaucer's highest example of marriage because of the mutual love, respect, and generosity that Dorigen and Arveragus have for one another. In his essay, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," Kittredge states that, "[this is] the ideal relation, that in which love continues and neither party to the contract strives for the mastery."[11]

In the beginning of the tale, Dorigen and Arveragus vowa to each other that they will always respect each other's words and actions. Then they are married. A year passes and Arveragus has to leave home for a lengthy period in search of knightly deeds in Britain. Dorigen, who loves her husband more than life itself, is overcome with sadness and grief during his absence. The Franklin states that she is noble because "She wept his absence, sighed for him and pined / As noble wives will do . . ."[12] While Arveragus is away, she meets a young squire by the name of Aurelius at a dance. Aurelius had been in love with her for two years and finally worked up enough courage to go to her and confess his love. Of course, since she loved her husband so much, Dorigen ignores his statement. She must have sensed that she has burned a hole through his heart, so to raise him from his despair, she decides to make a bargain with him instead: He is to remove all the rocks on the coast of Brittany, and if he is successful, she would love him more than any other man on earth. Well, this seems to be an impossible condition to Dorigen; she believes that he will never be able to get rid of the rocks. But Aurelius, desperate for her love, finds a student who has knowledge of magic to perform the task. Aurelius tells Dorigen that the task has been done and demands the fulfillment of her promise.

Arveragus returns to find his wife miserable, and he asks her why she is crying. She then confesses to him about her bargain with Aurelius. In doing

11. George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," 151
12. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1951), 411. Hereafter cited in text, *Franklin's Tale.*

so, she does not act in accordance with her vows, which would have led her to commit suicide in order to free herself from her bargain. Instead, she takes the problem to her husband to ask what she was supposed to do; therefore, she is following the teachings of St. Paul, in which he stated "And if they [women] want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home . . ." (1 Corinthians 14:35). Arveragus tells Dorigen that she must abide by her promise by telling her,

> All may be well, but you must keep your word . . .
> I rather would be stabbed than to live to see
> You fail in truth . . .
> Truth is the highest thing in a man's keeping . . .
>
> (*Franklin's Tale* 429)

In telling her to abide by her promise, he thereby reasserts that he is the "head" of the marriage, which is the Bible's abiding principle: the husband is the dominant figure in the marriage. He does not want to see her fail in truth, but what about her vow to Arveragus?

> . . . God grant there never betwixt us twain,
> Through any fault of mine, dispute or strife.
> Sir, I will be your true and humble wife . . .
>
> (*Franklin's Tale* 429)

By making the bargain with Aurelius, Dorigen has already failed in staying true to her husband. So what means more, her words to her husband or her words to Aurelius? Surely, her words to Arveragus take precedence over her rash promise to Aurelius, which makes the bargain to commit adultery invalid. Arveragus did not want to see her fail in truth, but the truth of the matter is that she had already failed as a true and humble wife because of her lack of prudence and her lack of respect for her husband. Dorigen, like Griselda, had duties to fulfill, but did not fulfill the main duty of being a wife, which is to keep one's marriage vow. Arveragus should have commanded Dorigen to stay instead of giving her consent to abide by her promise to Aurelius, which makes it acceptable for his duped wife to commit

adultery. D. W. Robertson argues that no one can validly give up anything he has the right to hold.[13]

A wife is to submit to her husband as the Church submits to Christ. Griselda is an example of a true and loyal wife who not only submitted to her husband, but to God's will as well. The marriage of Dorigen and Arveragus does not truly qualify as noble because of the lack of truth in Dorigen's words and her readiness to be unfaithful not only to her husband but to her marriage vow. It is true that Dorigen and Arveragus were reluctant that she fulfill her rash promise, which made adultery necessary, but they were both ready to look the other way as far as the adultery was concerned. Therefore, the highest example of nobility within the marriage group is Griselda because of her obedience and fulfillment of her words to her husband. Again, we simply cannot dismiss Griselda as a woman who represents passive suffering; she is a model of patiently yet actively cooperating with God's will. In patience, she rises far above the Wife of Bath and Dorigen in the *Franklin's Tale*.

Patience is the noblest quality of a marital relationship according to Geoffrey Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales*, especially when patience is practiced within the context of single-minded adherence to the truth of a Christian's relationship with God and the sincerity of one's vows. Griselda's devotion to Walter is the result of her patience and her determination not to play with words. Such an attitude may be too much to expect in real life, but Chaucer shows that spiritual wisdom is possible in rare persons like Griselda. The poet also shows that while mutual generosity in the dealings of a husband and wife is an important virtue, the truly indispensable virtue in a successful marriage is patience, which is defined as willingness to accept unwelcome events and to let the future unfold on its own.

13. See Saul N. Brody, "The Comic Rejection of Courtly Love," in *Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature*, ed. Joan Ferrante and George D. Economou (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 253 n. 25.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Holy Bible: The New King James Version: Containing the Old and New Testaments. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982.

Brody, Saul N. "The Comic Rejection of Courtly Love." In *Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature*. Edited by Joan Ferrante and George D. Economou. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975. 221–261.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. "The Clerk's Tale." In *The Canterbury Tales.* Trans. Nevill Coghill. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1951.

Foley, William M. "Marriage (Christians)." In *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.* Edited by James Hastings. New York: Scribner's 1958.

Kittredge, George Lyman. "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage." In *Chaucer Criticism: The Canterbury Tales.* Edited by Richard T. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960.

Magee, Patricia Anne. "The Wife of Bath and the Problem of Mastery." In *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800.* Detroit: Gale Research, 1992.

Roth, John K. *Ready Reference Ethics: Love.* Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 1994.

Strahan, James. "Love (Christians)." In *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Edited by James Hastings. New York: Scribner's, 1958.

WHY SHAKESPEARE MUST HAVE BEEN THE AUTHOR OF HIS OWN PLAYS

Roxane Buss

Editor's note: The history plays and classical tragedies of William Shakespeare are of such unsurpassed insight that for at least a century prominent people like Sigmund Freud have argued that Shakespeare could not have written them at all. The "evidence" cited is that William Shakespeare came from a middle class home located in a relatively small town outside London and received no advanced education. The argument then runs that since Shakespeare must have been a parochial and unlettered bumpkin, and since only a highly educated man or well placed member of the English Court , would have had the knowledge or direct experience to observe the mighty and write plays about power politics, Shakespeare probably agreed to put his name on plays actually written by someone like the Earl of Essex who preferred anonymity to avoid legal persecution.

The "problem" of who wrote Shakespeare's plays has been a source of contention. However, it can be largely solved by simply considering William Shakespeare's home life. Undoubtedly, Shakespeare had abundant opportunities to learn how politicians thought and how power politics worked on a smaller scale by observing and experiencing his father's failed political career.

Shakespeare's father, John, was an ambitious man who became actively involved in local government. He was not content to remain a mere whittawer (a producer and merchant of leather goods). Terry Gray states that John Shakespeare "was a solid, middle class citizen at the time of William's birth [in 1564], and a man on the rise."[1] During this time, it was customary for sons to carry on the family business. Because William was the eldest son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, it was likely that William served as his father's apprentice.[2] While working together, William would have certainly been privy to the details of his father's rise to local power in Stratford, England.

1. Terry Gray, "1564 Birth & Early Years," in *A Shakespeare Timeline*, http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/timeline/timeline.htm (last accessed September 2006).
2. Ibid.

In 1557, John started his political career by serving as a member of Council. He held the offices of constable, chamberlain, and alderman, before being appointed high bailiff in 1568.[3] Although these were not high posts, they still left an impression on the young William Shakespeare who listened to and observed his father's experiences. Shakespeare was about thirteen years old when his father's decline from Stratford's political arena became public knowledge. Gray indicates: "about 1577, John Shakespeare's fortunes began to decline for unknown reasons."[4] However, they were obviously not unknown to John or his family. The kinds of forces that underlie the tragic experience of a Julius Caesar, then, were familiar to Shakespeare. The same events that led to the demise of Caesar may also have led to the end of his father's political career. It may explain why William Shakespeare portrayed Caesar not as an ambitious man, but an honorable one; this may well have mirrored Shakespeare's view of his father.

Shakespeare presented three dark characteristics of human behavior in *Julius Caesar* to illustrate man's ambitious nature: deception, jealousy, and manipulation through demagoguery. The first characteristic, deception, played a key role in *Julius Caesar*. Cassius claimed to be Caesar's ally so he could remain close to him. His display of reverence allowed Cassius, as well as the other conspirators, to have access to Caesar in order to murder him.

In John Shakespeare's political circle, the men who were thought to be his friends may have betrayed him. If William worked with his father or listened to conversations, he would have been exposed to the different forms of political interaction which his father maintained with his colleagues. These various relationships would have caused William to gain knowledge of politics in general.

The next characteristic, jealousy, also played an important role in *Julius Caesar*. It was apparent that many of the conspirators resented Caesar's rise to power. Shakespeare illustrated this point when Cassius stated "Ye gods! it

3. Terry Gray, "1564 Birth & Early Years," in *A Shakespeare Timeline*, (1995; 1998). http://www.shakespeare.palomar.edu/timeline/timeline.htm.
4. Ibid.

doth amaze me a man of such a feeble temper should get the start of the majestic world and bear the palm alone" (1.2.137).[5] Cassius considered Caesar an ordinary man, like himself, who did not deserve such accolades from the Romans. He feared Caesar would become dictator and eliminate the Roman Republic. Similarly, given human nature, there were likely political opponents or allies who felt John Shakespeare was also not worthy of his political status. Shakespeare portrayed Cassius as jealous and vindictive. Growing up in the shadows of his father's political power, William Shakespeare was undoubtedly aware of the motives of his father's associates—if only through his father's conversations with colleagues and discussions with his son.

John Shakespeare may have also shared his mistrust of his colleagues with William or others, as Julius Caesar shared with Mark Antony. Shakespeare demonstrated Caesar's concerns when he confided in Antony, "Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look; He thinks too much: such men are dangerous" (1.2.137). Since William was a boy during his father's appointment as high bailiff, he may likely have overheard his father entrust a friend with his suspicions. Shakespeare revealed the close relationship between Caesar and Antony in *Julius Caesar*, when Cassius recounted Decius' insightful words: "I think it is not meet Mark Antony, so well beloved of Caesar, Should outlive Caesar: we shall find of him a shrewd contriver" (2.1.163).

Julius Caesar's rise to power caused much concern among the Roman Republic's supporters who were against a dictatorship. John Shakespeare's rise to power also could have caused concern among his adversaries and competitors. Jealousy from a fellow politician, who claimed to be his ally, could have been a contributing factor to John Shakespeare's failing political career. Moreover, his family might have endured public ridicule for John Shakespeare's perceived inappropriate actions. William may have suffered some of the shame and torment his father did, which would have enabled him to write *Julius Caesar* with such authenticity.

5. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar,* ed. Shane Weller (New York: Dover, 1991). Text references to act, scene, and line to this edition.

The third element, manipulation through demagoguery, was also an underlying theme in *Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare used this technique when Mark Antony gave the funeral speech for Julius Caesar on the steps of the senate house. Antony gave his speech after Brutus proclaimed that he killed his best friend so that Rome could remain free. Brutus told the Roman crowd, "I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death" (3.2.48). Brutus convinced the masses that an honorable deed had been done.

Antony knew he was at the mercy of Brutus, his fellow conspirators, and the supporters of the Roman Republic. He had to prove that Caesar was benevolent. Antony, therefore, used Caesar's death and seized the opportunity to put himself into power. He proceeded to persuade the masses that a great injustice had been committed. Antony manipulated the masses by using irony to discuss the actions of Cassius, Brutus and the other conspirators. He spoke of Brutus and the others as honorable men, who had done an honorable deed to save Rome. Caesar was accused of being ambitious, but Antony pointed out several examples where Caesar was a kind and generous friend. Antony stated, for instance, that "when the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept: Ambition should be made of sterner stuff" (3.2.101). Antony convinced the Roman people to avenge Caesar's death. In turn, the Romans looked to Antony for his leadership. Antony used the death of his close friend to further his political career. He saw an opportunity to rise to power and took full advantage of it. Shakespeare showed that man will often use whatever means necessary to achieve power and success.

It is quite conceivable that William Shakespeare compared his father's failed political career with Julius Caesar's. He portrayed Julius Caesar as a compassionate man and noble leader, while his colleagues were self-serving and dishonorable. Doubtlessly, given what political activity is inevitably involved at every level, Shakespeare had intimate knowledge of deception, jealousy and manipulation in the Stratford political arena, and therefore was able to write *Julius Caesar* with such profound accuracy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Caesar." In *Biography Online Database.* Edited by J. S. Bowmen. Cambridge, University Press, 1995.

Gray, Terry. "1564 Birth & Early Years." In *A Shakespeare Timeline*. http://www.shakespeare.palomar.edu/timeline/timeline.htm. Last accessed September 2006.

Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. Edited by Shane Weller. New York: Dover, 1991.

CORIOLANUS

Nancy Wallace

In *Coriolanus,* Shakespeare discusses the gap between how we should act and how people with their own agenda really do act. The play looks insightfully at the flaws of social classes to illustrate why society does not always function in a way that serves the greatest good for the greatest number. In society, leaders gain success through appeasing the masses, making political calculations, and playing to the vulnerabilities of others. An example of this is Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Coriolanus tried to do what was best for Rome but failed because he did not use moderation, political calculations, or play on the vulnerabilities of others.

First, Coriolanus' pride does not allow him to make proper judgments. John Palmer notes that when the plebeians (the majority of the Roman population) demanded fair distribution of goods and social justice, Coriolanus viewed their demand as simple ignorance stating, "They said they were an-hungry; sighed forth proverbs / That hunger broke stone walls, that dogs must eat, / That meat was made for mouths, that the gods sent not Corn for the rich men only (1.1. 204–208)."[1] Coriolanus views Rome's well-being as corrupted and undermined by the political maneuvers of the tribunes. Indeed, Donald Stauffer suggests that the collective mob's group effort is nothing more than a political maneuver to destroy Rome.[2]

For this reason, Coriolanus becomes isolated, which ironically is also a consequence of his refusal to give up his principles for any reason. For Coriolanus, being "political" means, "You dishonor that integrity which

1. John Palmer, *Political Characters of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1961), 39.
2. Donald A. Stauffer, *Roads to Freedom: Coriolanus* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), 43.

should becom't" (3.1.1602).[3] True patriotism is one's aspiration to protect Rome from any kind of chaos, including domestic social unrest. Moreover, Coriolanus believes the tribunes, who were elected by the common people, are mere cliques that come together to promote their self-interest by using the plebeians to gain support. He is also angry at the tribunes' accusations that he would come to power and ignore all democratic practices. Coriolanus believes Rome's problems are caused by the self-interest of the tribunes and the cowardice of the plebeians. He perceives the tribunes and the plebeians as a rebellious and ignorant mob and will not compromise his personal code of honor even to pacify them and thereby more effectively lead. The tribunes, on the other hand, consider Coriolanus to be a threat to Rome during peacetime because he refuses all traditional and politically obligatory acts of supplication and does not associate with the commoners of Rome. In other words, no rubber chicken banquets or baby kissing for this politician!

Unfortunately, the tragedy of Coriolanus is that he puts honor and principle above economic and political self-interest and his opponents do the opposite. Impractically, he believes that because of his achievements in battle, he should automatically be accorded the honors and titles of a successful military leader. He believes that the wounds he obtained in battle demonstrate his leadership ability, thereby making him an appropriate consul. For example, in the ceremony where Coriolanus is to be installed consul of Rome, he refuses to wear the required gown of humility and appear before the public. For this reason, he is denied consulship. Because Coriolanus is too individualistic, he does not appeal to the people. It is his individualism that ultimately leads to his demise.

Throughout *Coriolanus*, the concept of arete is examined. Arete is the Greek concept of excellence. According to Joan Goellnitz, everything from horses to gods to people (both female and male) could achieve "arête."[4] Arete, according to Homer (who was probably the first to articulate the

3. William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* (London: Penguin Books, 1998). Text references to act, scene, and line to this edition.
4. Joan Goellnitz, *Arete: Excellence, Virtue, Knowledge* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 2.

idea), is defined by acts of great valor in war and great feats in athletics in peace that would acquire kleos (glory). In Greek society, only the aristocratic class could possess arete. Coriolanus, like Homer's Odysseus, demonstrated his arete through his military achievements. Today, arete can be translated to signify an individual attaining his or her highest human potential; it refers directly to nobility and honor in action and in mind. Arete also means excellence within something. For a runner, arete is speed; for a warrior, arete is bravery and acts of valor. Note, however, that arete is not a moral concept. It does not necessarily mean that a skilled warrior is performing a moral act when he kills his enemy, any more than a tiger is morally virtuous when it kills its prey. In both cases, there is high achievement but not necessarily moral goodness.

Coriolanus possessed arete on the battlefield, but lacked arete when it came to dealing with the masses. Coriolanus' mistake comes from having military arete but lacking political arete primarily; he passes moral judgment on those whose respect he must gain to be successful.

Through *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare evaluates the relationship between the rich and the poor. Coriolanus is placed as the main figure in order to illustrate the importance of this class conflict. For example, the play begins in the middle of a civil conflict between the plebeians and the patricians. The opening scene refers to a "mutinous mob" that is threatening to revolt because of a severe grain shortage. One citizen states:

> They ne'er cared for us yet. Suffer us to famish, and their storehouses crammed with grain; make edicts for usury and support usurers; repeal daily an wholesome act established against the rich; and provide more piercing statutes daily to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will, there's all the love they bear us. (1.1.77–84)

Coriolanus, however, considers the mob to be untrustworthy and immature. He does not want their support and does not feel he should be forced to ask for it. The plebeians complain there is a need for social reform. While the plebeians values are different from those of Coriolanus, their ultimate goal is the same: the plebeians and Coriolanus want to protect Rome from chaos in

order to live in peace. Nevertheless, the differences between these two parties makes it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve success. The most important issue for the plebeians is stability through a fair distribution of wealth. In contrast, Coriolanus' most important value is to be a good military leader.

Finally, because of Coriolanus' aristocratic pride, he feels that the common people should be excluded from state business. In contrast to this, the plebeians feel that the state *is* the people and, therefore, they should have as much involvement as the aristocrats. From Coriolanus' point of view, the participation of the plebeians can never lead to progress because the common people are unqualified. He further is convinced that Rome's political success should be strictly an aristocratic effort. He fights against those whom he views as enemies and destroyers of Rome. Coriolanus is presented as the soul of Rome. As a military leader, he is noble and admirable. In his own mind, he is the servant of a state in which all the citizens should be servants. However, he feels that the majority of the citizens want the rewards of his military efforts but that they do not want to help him in his military conquests. Additionally, Coriolanus demonstrates that there is a gap that cannot be bridged between his individual values and public values. Coriolanus is proud, arrogant, and associated with the patrician class. However, Shakespeare suggests that Coriolanus should not be condemned because of these characteristics, because while his characteristics do no work well in peace, they do work well in the time of war.

In the final scene of *Coriolanus,* Aufidius goes into a rage regarding Coriolanus. Aufidius was once Coriolanus' arch enemy and fought against Coriolanus when he fought with the Volscians. However, Coriolanus joins the Volscians and fights alongside Aufidius, not against him. Aufidius and his supporters are so enraged by Coriolanus' boasting that Aufidius kills him. Aufidius is cheered on by all but one. That one lord says that Coriolanus is too noble to have been killed, while Aufidius insists that he was far too dangerous to be left alive. Still, there is sorrow that he is dead; even Aufidius admits that he is struck with sadness. Therefore, they decide

to honor Coriolanus' memory and give him a hero's funeral. It is evident from this final scene that the emotional complexities of politics can both make and destroy a man. Coriolanus is guilty of pride but, at the same time, he is noble and possesses integrity. Shakespeare created a character wherein his audience could see the revolting, as well as the admirable. In the end, Coriolanus is able to achieve exactly what he desired initially: nobility. Aufidius states that Coriolanus "shall have a noble memory" (5.6.153). Coriolanus who lived according to his principles was hailed as a hero.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chambers, E. K. *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems.* New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Crew, Jonathan. Introduction. In William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

Goellnitz, Joan. *Arete: Excellence, Virtue, Knowledge.* New York, New York University Press, 1993.

Kermode, Frank. *Writing about Shakespeare. London Review of Literature* 21, no. 24, December 9, 1999.

Palmer, John. *Political Characters of Shakespeare*. London, Macmillan & Co., 1961.

Phillips, James, E. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Coriolanus: A Collection of Critical Essays.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare: A Life in Drama*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Shakespeare, William. *Coriolanus.* New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

———. *The Tragedy of Coriolanus.* Edited by John Dover Wilson. London: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET VERSUS STOPPARD'S ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Kelly Mahon

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the themes of illusion versus reality and communication breakdown serve to demonstrate similarities between Shakespeare's character, Hamlet, and Stoppard's characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. These themes refer to the characters' struggles to distinguish between a concrete reality and a fictional world. Furthermore, the theme of communication breakdown refers to characters' inabilities to express thoughts and feelings via language as the respective dramas progress. The similarities between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in terms of the above-mentioned themes represent a universal problem.

The nature of reality plagues Rosencrantz and Guildenstern throughout Stoppard's drama. As Hynes asserts, these characters "spend their lives constructing their own meanings."[5] However, the difficulty in finding meaning arises as they begin to realize their fate as characters. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have difficulty understanding that they are living their roles. Numerous instances demonstrate this lack of understanding. At the end of Act 2, Rosencrantz states, "We've come this far. And besides, anything could happen yet."[6] At this point, he has begun to realize he is a character, but does not understand that his demise is inevitable. Therefore, only his scripted fate will occur, regardless of any future choices he makes. Guildenstern's final words demonstrate that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern never reach this understanding: "Our names shouted in a certain dawn . . . a message . . . a summons . . . There must have been a moment, at the

5. Joseph Hynes, "Tom Stoppard's Lighted March," in *Drama for Students*, vol. 2, ed. David Galens and lynn Spampinato (Detroit, MI: Gale, 1981), 229.
6. Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 95.

beginning, where we could have said no. But somehow we missed it" (125). They realize they are characters, but believe they made a choice to become them. In other words, they believe they made a choice to live the illusion as reality, never realizing their entire reality is an illusion.

The theme of illusion versus reality is especially prevalent in the discussions regarding death. Delaney notes, "Of all the concerns expressed in *Rosencrantz*, nothing calls attention to the gulf between reality and the realm of imaginative reality so sharply as the fact of death."[7] Rosencrantz and Guildenstern die in Act 3 still believing that their deaths are final; however, their deaths are only the final illusion of that performance. Their existence is perpetuated with each showing of *Hamlet*, in which the illusion of their reality is relived. Therefore, the nature of characters that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fail to grasp is that each time their drama is preformed, studied, or remembered, they are reborn.

Also, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's lives are an illusion because they are predetermined. They encounter the arrangement of their lives in instances such as the coin-tossing scene in Act 1. In this scene, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern toss ninety-one coins, all landing 'heads up,' in favor of Rosencrantz. Brassell points out, "This is because Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exist in a world in which the normal rules of probability simply are not operating."[8] In other words, since the author wrote that Rosencrantz wins the coin-tosses, he will forever win all coin-tossing matches with Guildenstern. More obvious examples of predetermination occur throughout the drama during the scenes taken directly from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

In Hamlet's case, the theme of illusion versus reality is manifested in the form of madness. Early in the drama, Hamlet directly states that he will "put an antic disposition on" (1.5.172).[9] Therefore, Hamlet's initial madness is clearly an illusion; however, as the drama progresses, the distinction

7. Paul Delaney, *Tom Stoppard: The Moral Vision of the Major Plays* (New York: St. Martin Press), 28.
8. Tim Brassel, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1985), 40.
9. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Text references to act, scene, and line to this edition.

between the mad illusion and sane reality blurs. Bloom notes that Hamlet's mental state is difficult to ascertain because "he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity."[10] The question of Hamlet's sanity is complicated by his moral code. Hamlet states, "There is nothing either good / or bad but thinking makes it so," implying his moral code is dictated by whether or not he can justify his actions to himself (2.2.239–240). According to this statement, actions such as murder are only good or bad according to how each individual views the situation.[11] As a result, when Hamlet kills Polonius in Act 3, scene 4 and expresses no sorrow or regret for his actions, he can be viewed as either sane or insane, living his illusion or reality. Hamlet may have allowed the illusion of madness he created to become his sane reality, or he may simply have morals that allow him to commit violent crimes without remorse. In the latter instance, Hamlet is able to internally justify his actions, and, therefore, they become his reality.

Both Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to question what is real and what is an illusion. At the end of their respective dramas, all three characters feel as though they have separated illusion from reality; on the contrary, these questions are not concretely answered. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern never come to understand that their entire reality is an illusion. In the end, Hamlet believes he is living his sane reality, though it is unclear as to whether the illusion is gone or takes over his reality. In both dramas, the theme persists beyond the performances because the audience is left to distinguish the reality from illusion. The irony is that the performances further the illusion, and the reality then becomes the most believable of the illusions. Guildenstern, in Act 1, makes this observation when he defines reality as "the name we give to the common experience."[12] All three characters live according to Guildenstern's notion, believing their common

10. Harold Bloom, *William Shakespeare's Hamlet* (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 1996), 31.
11. George Roy Elliott, Scourge and Minister: A Study of Hamlet as Tragedy of Revengefulness and Justice (New York: AMS Press, 1965), 58.
12. Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 21.

experiences are valid and therefore reality, and in so doing, they completely eliminate illusion from their lives.

Communication breakdown also applies to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Spoken language becomes an inadequate means of expression for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because their words are scripted and contain no meaning for the characters. Londre observes, "They are weakly motivated, express few opinions, have no memories or hopes, experience no strong emotion, and fail to interrelate meaningfully with other characters."[13] It is because of this that they are able to count how many questions are asked of and answered by Hamlet in Act 2. Rosencrantz observes, "It was question and answer, all right. Twenty-seven questions he got out in ten minutes, and answered three . . . Six rhetorical and two repetition, leaving nineteen, of which we answered fifteen."[14] They are able to tally questions and answers because they are not truly paying attention to their conversation with Hamlet. The words are not their own, not original thoughts, thus they are meaningless.

Communication also breaks down between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. As the drama advances, the two characters eventually become completely incapable of understanding the other's comments. For instance, in Act 3, Guildenstern states, "Death is the ultimate negative. Not-being. You can't not-be on a boat." Rosencrantz replies, "I've frequently not been on boats." Guildenstern responds, "No, no, no—what you've been is not on boats."[15] Rosencrantz's misinterpretation of Guildenstern in this scene demonstrates that by the third act, the two characters are completely incapable of comprehending one another. Gruber also points out that in the above dialogue, "Both twisted syntax and twisted logic are appallingly true: wherever they are—on boats, on the road, within a court—it is the fate of Ros and Guil never to be."[16] Thus, while Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's lines are incomprehensible to each other, for the audience, they contain a recognizable truth.

---

13. Felicia Londre, *Tom Stoppard* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1981), 41.
14. Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 57.
15. Ibid., 108.
16. Ibid., 325.

Hamlet, similarly, finds communication difficult due to misinterpretations by other characters. Polonius often misconstrues Hamlet's witty remarks. One such instance occurs when Polonius asks, "Do you know me, my lord?" and Hamlet replies, "Excellent well, y'are a fishmonger" (2.2.171–172). While Polonius disregards Hamlet's response as mad babble, he fails to see the truth in the pun. Hamlet implies that Polonius, like a fishmonger, takes advantage of those who are beneath his status (such as Ophelia) for his own gain. In a statement regarding the significance of Hamlet's puns and riddles, Welsh asserts they "create a special kind of dramatic irony, since the reader or listener to the story is able to glimpse both meanings while the antagonist is only able to sense that he is being put on."[17] Therefore, the communication breakdown onstage has a dual purpose: to further the inaction on the stage while increasing the audience's understanding of the characters and their situations.

The obscure, incomprehensible, nature of some of Hamlet's remarks leads the audience to question his sanity. If he is sane, then the question becomes whether or not his 'remarks in madness' are symbolic, or indeed, if he is even aware of the dual nature of some of his comments. One such comment is made in Act 3, scene 2 during Hamlet's conversations with Ophelia; he asks to lie in her lap and she refuses. Hamlet's question has a literal meaning of laying his head in her lap, and a sexual meaning of having intercourse with Ophelia. Hopkins believes Hamlet is aware of the dual meanings: "It is notable that Hamlet himself seems ultimately to become aware of the duplication of meanings that proliferates around his every attempt to establish distinction."[18] Conversely, if Hamlet is insane, then the question becomes are his remarks meaningless words to him. This is unlikely given the aptness of the comments. Either way, Hamlet becomes increasingly difficult to directly communicate with throughout the rest of the play.

---

17. Alexander Welsh, *Hamlet in His Modern Guises.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 9.
18. Lisa Hopkins, "Parison and the Impossible Comparison," in *New Essays on Hamlet*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett and John Manning (New York: AMS Press, 1994), 162.

Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are unable to express themselves or comprehend others in their respective dramas. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's remarks are generally void of meaning, and if the comments are significant, the ideas are poorly expressed. Eventually, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are incapable of understanding one another and only the audience is able to glance the meanings of their remarks. Hamlet becomes equally incapable of communicating. However, his credibility is questionable; his replies depend on each audience member's judgment regarding his sanity. Thus, the audience is allowed to determine the meaning of the character's lines, but the other individuals onstage remain ignorant. The misinterpretation of lines by other characters is symbolic of the audience's quest to determine the meaning. Hamlet, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern's difficulty communicating stems from their uncertain environments; they do not understand that they are experiencing both illusion and reality.

While the portrayal of illusion versus reality and communication breakdown vary greatly from Shakespeare to Stoppard, the presence of these themes as exemplified by Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern serve to demonstrate the similarities between these seemingly different characters. The distinction between true reality and created illusion becomes a question both Hamlet and the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern duo ultimately never concretely answer. All three characters find language an inadequate means of communication due to its limitations in expression and inherent misinterpretations. The themes of illusion versus reality and communication breakdown stem from each other and circuitously speak to the universal problem of understanding.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Elliott, George Roy. Sc*ourge and Minister: A Study of* Hamlet *as Tragedy of Revengefulness and Justice*. New York: AMS Press, 1965.

Gruber, William. "Wheels Within Wheels, Etcetera in Comparative Drama." *Drama Criticism*. Edited by Lawrence J. Trudeau. Vol. 6. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1996.

Hopkins, Lisa. “Parison and the Impossible Comparison.” In *New Essays on* Hamlet. Edited by Mark Thornton Burnett and John Manning. New York: AMS Press, 1994.

Hynes, Joseph. “Tom Stoppard’s Lighted March.” In *Drama for Students*. Edited by David Galens and Lynn Spampinato. Vol. 2. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1998.

Londre, Felicia. *Tom Stoppard*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1981.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Stoppard, Tom. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. New York: Grove Press, 1991.

Welsh, Alexander. *Hamlet in His Modern Guises*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

MARRIAGE A LA MODE

The Conflict of Love and Marriage

Joi Hill

My focus is on John Dryden's representation of love and marriage. Precisely, in *Marriage a la Mode*, Dryden presents marriage without love. Dryden exemplifies this in three ways. First, certain characters are bored with their marriages. During the time of *Marriage a la Mode*, fathers chose whom their children married to keep the money circulating among the wealthy. Since people could not choose the person that they wanted to marry, they rarely grew to love their partners. This leads to Dryden's representation of the "boredom marriage." Second, Dryden represents marriages as lacking love because their basis is the "foolish marriage vow."[1] Dryden shows marriage without love with characters wanting other sexual partners. Since their mates are not pleasing to them sexually anymore, they feel that there is no harm in finding a different partner.

John Dryden lived from 1631–1700; he was an English poet, dramatist, and critic whose life revolved around the English Royal Society. In 1662, Dryden was chosen to be a part of the Royal Society. He married Lady Elizabeth Howard in 1663. Since Dryden was private, it is unknown whether his personal experiences had a direct influence on his play; however, *Marriage a la Mode* displays both successful marriages and unsuccessful ones.

Boredom is one key factor that Dryden uses as a reason why love does not exist within some marriages in *Marriage a la Mode*. The problem begins when the couples are forced into unwanted marriages and they do not know each other. This is especially true of Palamede and Melantha. Money is the basis for these arranged marriages. However, what holds the marriages together in the beginning is sexual passion. After the passion, there is

1. John Dryden, *Marriage a la Mode* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 11.

nothing left to hold the marriage together. To make matters worse, they only experience the sexual side of their partner. Dryden's characters do not realize that a successful marriage is dependent upon people knowing their partners sexually and intellectually. Dryden's characters reveal their strongest emotions in the bedroom and not elsewhere.

Dryden also presents marriages without love, and some characters treat marriage as if it is an incurable disease that will not go away. Dryden represents the agony of marriage through Palamede who characterizes marriage as "being such an unreasonable thing to impose upon me . . . 'tis hurrying a man to execution without giving him a chance to say his prayers."[2] Clearly, love is not an issue within most marriages in this book. However, the one couple that demonstrates true love, Palmyra and Leonidas, faces the threat of execution because of the unconditional love that they share. This point highlights the conflict between love and marriage in this play.

Dryden also examines how couples betray their vows for casual sex. The characters did not marry for love and since they are not being pleased sexually at home, they feel they have a right to seek pleasure elsewhere. At the first sight of Doralice, Palamede declares her as his mistress. Through situational irony, Dryden connects the characters: Palamede declares his sexual attraction to Doralice (Rhodophil's spouse) and Rhodophil declares his sexual attraction to Melantha (Palamede's mistress).

Respect is something that the couples in *Marriage a la Mode* are definitely lacking. In time, the couples discover the involvement with each other's mate; however, the thought of being caught was never a deterrent. It also did not decrease the desire to be with another sexual partner. Dryden portrays the people as being simple minded because their need for sexual passion overshadows the need for love, and they do realize that one night of passion could lead to a lifetime of regret.

2. Dryden, Marriage a la Mode, 107.

Therefore, there is no guilt over betrayal in this play; instead, the couples realize that if someone else could appreciate their mate, then they must have something special. As analyst Mark Hogarth states, "Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode* implies that love and marriage are opposites."[3]

3. Mark Hogarth, "*Marriage a la Mode* Critic's Review," *New York Times*, March 20, 1990.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dryden, John. *Marriage a la Mode*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1981.
Hogarth, Mark. "*Marriage a la Mode* Critic's Review." *New York Times*, March 20, 1990.

ONE NIGHT STAND WITH *JOSEPH ANDREWS*

Adriana Andrasz

One of the main points of Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* is to describe the sexually oppressed society in which the author was living. Fielding exposes the sexually immoral society that hides behind riches and social status. *Joseph Andrews* tries to educate the public that right and moral sexual behavior can lead to happiness for both the rich and the poor. The work is laced with stories about desires and virtue, and it is sexuality that is key in Fielding's novel about life.

Joseph Andrews resonates with Fielding's own life experiences in the English society. At the age of twenty-one, in 1728, Henry Fielding began his literary career. His writing attitude was always the same: "whatever is wicked, hateful, absurd, or ridiculous, must be exposed and punished before this Nation is brought to that Height of Purity and good Manners to which I wish to see it exalted."[1] Fielding felt a responsibility to bring judgment and intelligence to bear on human behavior. "He saw himself as a guardian of intellectual and moral standards in a world which seemed increasingly to ignore or distort them."[2]

In 1741, Fielding published *Shamela* as a response to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. Fielding criticized Richardson for imposing false standards on an impressionable society. Shortly after this, in 1742, he followed *Shamela* with his first novel, *Joseph Andrews.* Both of these seemed to be a comical counterpart of *Pamela*, but *Joseph Andrews* conveyed a stronger message to the society about the injustices of social labeling and also reflected Fielding's views on sexuality. Fielding's ideas about sex were very liberal: he felt the societal attitude was unnatural,

1. Henry Fielding, *The Champion* 16 (Dec. 22, 1739).
2. Ioan Williams, *The Criticism of Henry Fielding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), xii.

prudish, and harmful because it did not reflect reality. He showed this in *Joseph Andrews* by making his characters adapt ridiculous extremes of sexual behavior. Although their adventures are comical, they unveil a double-faced society, one whose morals have been corrupted by restrictions on their sexuality. Impossible to achieve restrictions set impossible to achieve standards, and such rules make the characters even more immoral because they have to pretend to be what they are not, just to be accepted by society. Fielding saw this sexual corruption going on around him throughout his life.

In *Joseph Andrews,* Mr. Wilson's memoir is drawn from Fielding's own "rather embittered knowledge of London life."[3] Wilson serves "as the novel's central norm of sensible humanity."[4] Fielding introduces Wilson as a balance to bring equilibrium between the moral and the immoral characters in *Joseph Andrews*. Wilson lives his early life in utter indecency and sexual immorality. It is not that he desires to live this type of existence, he tries to change and become a moral person; society, however, throws him one set of circumstances to trade in for another set of circumstances. "Wilson becomes caught up in the machinery of Fortune. Prosperity changes to Adversity, and he sinks to a nadir of despair."[5] When he falls in love, he becomes the person he is happy to be. His relationship with Mrs. Wilson is a very loving one. They decide to retire early and live a good life with their children, away from the immoral life of the big city. Wilson, in his struggle to become a good man, faces many obstacles, and this is when he questions the rules of society. He is not a perfect man, by any means, and does many things he is ashamed of, but his character is less eccentric and closer to reality than the characters of other good men in *Joseph Andrews.* Wilson, as a young man, did not have a moral father figure to guide him, which made his life very difficult. He had to find out for himself the right way to live. Fielding

3. Whit Burnett, *Henry Fielding's* Joseph Andrews (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1968), 55.
4. Homer Goldberg, *The Art of* Joseph Andrews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 105.
5. Martin C. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), 124.

emphasizes the importance of guidance and the effects of a lack of guidance or a poor one. A set of rules to live by is only effective if the one preaching those rules lives by them himself.

Joseph is a comical character because he illustrates a man who, at that point in time, would not exist. Instead, Joseph's characteristics represent everything that was desired and expected of women at that time. Fielding uses Joseph to create a comparison between sexual attitudes of men and women.[6] As the story unfolds, an interesting pattern develops in the behaviors of the two sexes. Men seem to be in total control of their sexuality. Joseph chooses to save himself and his virginity. Mrs. Booby, Mrs. Slipslop, and even Betty try to seduce him, but he walks away form the temptation. Although Joseph is thrown out on the streets, his chastity is never seriously threatened. Fannie, however, who also has decided to save herself for her true love, is not given that same choice. She is attacked by a man whom she trusts, and her virginity is almost violently taken away form her. If not for the bravery of Parson Adams, she would have been raped by her attacker. Here, Fannie's fate is decided by two men: Adams who is trying to save her virginity and the highwayman who is trying to take it away. Fannie, like most women in *Joseph Andrews*, plays a very passive role.

Fielding shows that women are governed by strict rules on their sexuality that is applied by religion, society, and men.[7] Although she is a powerful woman, Mrs. Booby cannot make Joseph sleep with her. She uses threats, guilt, and pleas but in the end, she is powerless. Her maid, Mrs. Slipslop, is also unable to fill the sexual debt she claims to have. Likewise, Mrs. Tow-wouse, a woman who seems to have her husband under her heel, does not have any control over him sexually. She cannot stir her husband to lust for her, and she certainly does not have any control over Mr. Tow-wouse's forbidden fantasies about Betty, the chambermaid. Mrs. Tow-wouse may nag him to death, but she cannot make Mr. Tow-wouse want her. When

6. Andrew H. Wright, *Henry Fielding, Mask and Feast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 55.
7. John Butt, *Fielding* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955), 128.

Tow-wouse catches her husband in bed with another woman, she calls Mr. Tow-wouse ungrateful and lists all the things she has given him. This may be her attempt to substitute the things that she has not been able to provide him with: beauty, love, and sex.

It is only Betty, the chambermaid, who has full control over her sexuality. She chooses her suitors and is never put in a position where she is out of control. The book states that she is approached by many men but falls for only a few. However, her desires are real and not restricted by anything or anyone. And, unlike many other characters in *Joseph Andrews*, Betty is able to control her desires based on the situation. When she is rejected by Joseph, Betty does not feel the rage and powerlessness Mrs. Booby and Mrs. Slipslop feel. She is hurt, but Betty decides to take her feelings somewhere else. The decision to sleep with Mr. Toot-wattle not only satisfies her physically, but it puts control back into her life.

The sharp contrast between characters in *Joseph Andrews* is evident in almost every relationship in the book. Adams and Trulliber represent the good and bad sides of the clergy; Slipslop and The Coachman, who represent the working class, are also contrasted in their treatment of others. Likewise, Pamela and Fanny show us that there is a difference between saving one's virtue and living a virtuous life. Joseph Andrews, however, is superior to almost everyone else in the book. Fielding decides, though, to give his main character a flaw to prove that following one's heart, not the rules on society, is sometimes the only moral thing to do. Joseph's flaw is really evident when contrasted with the brains and beauty of another character: Betty, the chambermaid. The short romance of Betty and Joseph shows a new perspective on what is the moral way to act when dealing with matters of the heart.

There are many ways that beauty can be defined in this story. Beauty can represent the physical beauty of Joseph Andrews, the moral beauty of Adams, or the emotional beauty of Fanny. However, as beautiful as these characters may seem, they lack an important component that Betty possesses. This beauty she possesses can be defined as the "real" beauty of

personality, a trait that makes her seem like a "real" person, not just a personification of perfection guided by rules. And, unlike Adams who possesses intellectual beauty, Betty has another trait that seems to be even more important in the world she lives in: wit. It is this knowledge of herself and others and the trust Betty puts in the decisions she makes that sets her apart and makes the reader sympathize with her more than with the other characters.

Joseph seems a little too naive not to notice the countless "fruitless hints" that Betty is throwing at him to get his attention.[8] This lack of insight may suggest that he is a little immature when it comes to games women play. After he is driven out of London, it is disappointing that he could not figure out what was going on around him, and also may suggest an "ugly" side of Joseph: the lack of brains. "If anybody is ridiculous in this comic sense, it is Joseph himself."[9] When Joseph finally does figure out Betty's true intentions, the manner in which he handles the situation is neither beautiful nor moral. One of the reasons why Betty is driven into the arms of another is not because Joseph turns her down, but because he makes her feel terrible about herself. If Joseph was really a good person, one who was in touch with his feelings and the feelings of others, he would have realized that being just a little nicer to Betty and letting her off easier would have been more virtuous than saving his virtue. It is refreshing that Betty does not decide to seriously consider that maybe, like Joseph said, she did "cast off all regard to modesty" and that maybe she is, in fact, "indecent."[10] Instead, Betty decides to comfort herself in the very thing Joseph found so disturbing about her: her sexuality. When she is caught sleeping with her employer, Betty finds herself in Joseph's shoes when he declined to sleep with his employer. Just like Joseph, Betty loses her job but keeps her right to choose. Betty seems to be Fielding's view of sexual freedom and the personification of sexual beauty and worldly morality.

---

8. Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), 68
9. Simon Varey, *Joseph Andrews: A Satire of Modern Times* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 75.
10. Ibid.

Now, one may argue that Betty is just as immoral and lustful as Lady Booby or Slipslop; however, Betty never tries to pass herself off as someone superior to Joseph, nor does she try to conceal her feelings before or after Joseph rejects her. Betty's relationship with Joseph is very honest, unlike the hypocritical ties between Joseph and Slipslop and Lady Booby. Here, Fielding is making an interesting point: being a good person and living a virtuous life does not mean that one has to abandon all personality traits and turn them in for a list of rules. This episode tells us that sometimes doing something that is prescribed as right may not always be the best thing for everyone. Following rules and not one's own heart may hurt others, but most of all, it hurts the individual who hides behind images of what society tells him to be. And, above all, the individual never gets to know or share who he really is.

The themes of honesty, openness, loyalty and decency in sexual attitudes and everyday life seem to be valued greatly by Fielding and form the backbone of *Joseph Andrews*. Fielding's ideas on sex are revolutionary and bold. Fielding believes that our sexuality is at the core of all of our other behaviors, and that those who are immoral in their sexuality will continue to be immoral in other aspects of their lives. By sexuality or sex, Fielding does not just mean the physical nature of sex. *Joseph Andrews* is not concerned with the actual physical nature of sexuality, but its moral nature. This point is evident when Fanny and Joseph finally are left alone on their wedding night and the author decides to do the same, leaving "this happy couple to enjoy the private rewards of their constancy."[11] Fielding seems to suggest that sex is when we are the most honest with ourselves and others. Our desires, fears, and insecurities are brought out for others to share and judge. But, it is only in a relationship that is open and honest can we really see and appreciate others and ourselves.

The beauty of *Joseph Andrews* is that the lesson it teaches is timeless and can be applied to any situation. Today, society is bombarded with images that are sexually charged, yet, curiously, people are expected to

11. Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, 269.

maintain a Puritanical state of mind, much like Fielding's society almost three hundred years ago. Young girls and boys are pressured by MTV stereotypes, religious commandments, and parental expectations, long before they have the skills or moral foundation to deal with or even recognize their own needs and wants. This confusion and the need to satisfy both themselves and the rest of the world can lead them down a road of lies and deception which continues into adulthood. The masquerade does not only continue in their sexual habits, but it is also reflected in their relationships with neighbors, coworkers, and in their relationships with their children. Kids learn from parents, and if hypocrisy is on the lesson plan, it is hypocrisy that will manifest itself in the minds and hearts of our society, generation after generation. The world we live is a bundle of insecurities, lies, and unfulfilled expectations. But what can be done? Fielding teaches us that there is no real perfection, but being honest and moral toward others and ourselves can lead us on a path that will help us to be better as individuals, which, in turn, will help us build a better society. *Joseph Andrews'* voice is a simple one but it can literally change the world by changing our minds.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Banerji, H. K. *Henry Fielding, His Life and Works*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962.

Battestin, Martin C. *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1959.

Burnett, Whit. *Henry Fielding's* Joseph Andrews. New York: Barns & Noble Inc., 1968.

Butt, John. *Fielding.* New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955.

Digeon, Aurelien. *The Novels of Fielding*. New York: Russel & Russel, 1962.

Fielding, Henry. *The Champion.* No. 16. Saturday, December 22, 1739.

———. *Joseph Andrews.* New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987.

Goldberg, Homer. *The Art of Joseph Andrews*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

Varey, Simon. *Joseph Andrews: A Satire of Modern Times.* Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990.

Williams, Ioan. *The Criticism of Henry Fielding*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.

Wright, Andrew H. *Henry Fielding, Mask and Feast*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE HAPPY AND WHAT DOES NOT

Samuel Johnson's Rasselas

Cecilia Melendez

The longer one lives and experiences life, the more opportunities one has to learn that there is often a gap between what people assume will make them happy and what actually will. Indeed, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* by Samuel Johnson argues that the pursuit of happiness can prove to be very disappointing when people search for the wrong things. Johnson gives three reasons for this. First, Johnson presents his main character in Rasselas as living a pleasurable and comfortable life but is, nevertheless, painfully bored by it. As a result, his desires take him on an adventure to find "the choice of life" which he believes will provide happiness. Second, Johnson describes how people pursue wisdom and knowledge under the misconception that these things will provide happiness. Third, Johnson indicates that soul searching can aid one in the pursuit of happiness.

Since many of the views argued in Rasselas are connected to Johnson's own experiences, a quick look at this life may prove useful. Samuel Johnson lived from 1709–1784. He was an author and a poet whose writings were greatly admired. A few of Johnson's most popular works include *The Dictionary, The Rambler, The Vanity of Human Wishes,* and of course, *The History of Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia*. Although Johnson was considered to be a literary genius, he considered himself a wretched being. According to Fussell, Samuel Johnson "underwent something very like a religious conversion, effected by a single reading of William Law's popular devotional book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728)."[1] From this time on, Boswell says religion was the object of Johnson's thoughts.

1. Paul Fussell, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971), 10.

Fussell goes on to say, "there was no ecstasy in Johnson's new religious awareness: what it brought him instead was a torment and wretchedness as he agonized over his idleness and irregularity."[2] Johnson's struggles were also spiritual. Consequently, he never felt as though he would ever meet God's standards for a proper life.

Johnson's religious background is reflected in his novel Rasselas. For example, Johnson's description of Rasselas and Nekayah's life in the Happy Valley is a reference to Adam and Eve's in the Garden of Eden. Johnson points out that in the Happy Valley "All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded."[3] Also, the dissatisfaction with Rasselas and Nekayah's perfect life echoes Adam and Eve's. Most importantly, in Johnson's conclusion to Rasselas, Nekayah states that "the choice of life is become less important; I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity" (*Rasselas* 122). This statement gives a clear indication of Johnson's views regarding the after life. He indicates that true happiness is found in the hope of eternal life.

According to Clifford, Johnson's friends considered Rasselas, as "too gloomy and somber."[4] However, we must take into consideration the emotional conditions in which he wrote this novel. Anxious to earn money to pay for his mother's funeral, Johnson wrote Rasselas in a week and this novel seems to reflect his feelings and struggles at that time.

Throughout much of his life, Johnson suffered from physical ailments as well as depression. He was tall and quite unattractive. At an early age, he was affected by scrofula, a tubercular infection of the lymph glands, causing partial blindness and scars on his face. An operation performed at a later time left further scaring on his neck and face. He was aggressive; he took great pride in his intelligence and reasoning, but occasionally, he feared he was losing his mind.

---

2. Paul Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing, 10.
3. Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2. Hereafter cited in text, *Rasselas.*
4. James Lowry Clifford, *Dictionary Johnson* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 212.

In Rasselas, Johnson describes the vain pursuit of happiness. First, the main characters are living a pleasurable and comfortable life and they are still unhappy. Ironically, they are weary of their life in the Happy Valley and begin their search for other ways of life that will provide happiness. Rasselas describes Happy Valley and he admits that he is "gratified with whatever the senses can enjoy," yet he is discontent (*Rasselas* 4). The unimaginable comforts and pleasures that Happy Valley offers do not bring the expected satisfaction they were intended to. Johnson's main character, Rasselas, complains, "I can discover within me no power of perception which is not glutted with its proper pleasure, yet I do not feel myself delighted" (6).

Although there is beauty all around, Rasselas wants to see more. Music is provided for harmony; however, there is still a void. Much of the time spent in the Happy Valley is filled with entertainment for all the senses to delight in. However, this cannot penetrate the soul of one who is searching for much more than fulfillment of the senses.

Rasselas does, however, find amusement with Iamlac, a poet, who is also confined to the Happy Valley. Imalac amuses the Prince with poetry and stories of the outside world which Rasselas has never entered. Intrigued, Rasselas becomes determined to leave the Happy Valley to provide hope for his weary soul.

Johnson describes how people pursue wisdom and knowledge with the misconception that this will provide happiness. For example, Rasselas is smitten by his encounter with the wise man and excitedly tells Imalac:

> I have found . . . a man who can teach all that is necessary to be known, who, from unshaken throne of rational fortitude, looks down on the scenes of life changing beneath him. He speaks, and attention watches his lips. He reasons, and conviction closes his periods. This man shall be my future guide: I will learn his doctrines, and imitate his life. (*Rasselas* 47)

Rasselas is fascinated by the wise man, but later, when the wise man's daughter dies and he is stricken with grief and despair, critic Richard Braverman points out, "the stoic philosopher with whom he is impressed violates the principles of his philosophy when he mourns uncontrollably the

death of his daughter."[5] Rasselas' innocence and lack of experience render him ignorant about the true and unavoidable effects of tragedies that occur in real life. Soon thereafter, Rasselas realizes that the intellectual knowledge of the wise is not enough to sustain him in times of calamity.

Rasselas' innocent and naïve search takes him on a journey of unexpected disappointments. Rasselas has no insight into his own needs and observes, "that I know not what I want is the cause of my complaint" (*Rasselas* 8). Responding with practical knowledge, Imalac tells him "your complaints have no real cause . . . if you want nothing, how are you unhappy?" (7). Alhough Rasselas has all he needs, he is consumed with boredom and ingratitude. Rasselas is so concerned what he does not possess that he does not enjoy what he has. Johnson depicts Imalac with more wisdom than the stoic philosopher. Imalac continually gives the young Prince advice, none of which Rasselas takes too seriously.

Third, Johnson describes the amazing power of soul searching in helping one in the pursuit of happiness. Rasselas' restlessness becomes apparent; the Happy Valley ceases to bring him pleasure. Soon his soul searching begins. He realizes that there is more to life than just indulging in the pleasures, beauty, and safety of the Happy Valley. He reflects on the animal world and compares their physical needs (hunger, thirst, and rest) to his own. In contrast, he observes the animals are satisfied when their physical needs are met, yet Rasselas' gloomy disposition has no satisfaction in feeding his appetite because his soul was searching for something more. As Johnson points out, Rasselas grieves that "he has some desires distinct from sense which must be satisfied before he can be happy" (6). Rasselas' spirit demonstrates his weariness and longing for enlightenment. Rasselas' soul searching may reflect Samuel Johnson's own. According to Hibbert, Johnson "became increasingly unhappy. He did not know what he wanted to do with his life."[6]

---

5. Richard Braverman, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to1800,* ed. Marie Lazzari (Detroit, MI: Gale Group, 2000), 77.
6. Christopher Hibbert, *The Personal History of Samuel Johnson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 19.

Although Johnson was known to have been melancholy, he must have felt some sense of contentment since he was doing what he enjoyed, which was writing. It is only natural to feel happy when we are fulfilling our desires. His melancholy was to a large degree, then, one of temperament. The definition of happiness is by no means the same for everyone. We all have different expectations and desires that need to be met in order to feel content. Happiness is not a state of continual elation as much as it is a feeling of satisfaction in doing what brings pleasure to our spirit.

I tend to agree with J. P. Hardy when he remarks, "the most permanent threat to human happiness arises from the mind's own quixotic tendencies."[7] Our imagination plays an essential role in our ability to feel contentment. Happiness is a state of mind, not necessarily dependent upon circumstances. When ill circumstances befall us, what hope is there but to know that certain things are out of our control and we must accept the good with the bad? Consider the words of Solomon, "For as he [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

Interestingly, Rasselas and Nekayah at last come to the end of their journey and return to Abyssinia. Upon examining many occupations and ways of life, Rasselas and Nekayah realize that their life in the Happy Valley was not so bad after all; then, Rasselas dreams of ruling over a small kingdom and Nekayah dreams of founding a women's college. Imalac and the Astronomer, meanwhile, are happier and more accepting of their fate. As Johnson points out, they "were contented to be driven along a stream of life without directing their course to any particular port" (*Rasselas* 123). Unlike Rasselas and Nekayah, they are content with merely continuing on in life with no particular course. McIntosh points out "that Imalac and the Astronomer do not form schemes of happiness, and that their program, humdrum or not, may be exempt . . . from frustrations" of unattainable dreams.[8]

---

7. J. P. Hardy, "Introduction," in Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xv.
8. Carey McIntosh, *The Choice of Life: Samuel Johnson and the World of Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 198.

I do, in short, believe Johnson viewed happiness as attainable but not as a fairytale. In fact, Johnson's main character in Rasselas may be a reflection of his own. Johnson's pursuit of happiness resulted in literary accomplishments, but also led him to pursue various occupations which were unsuitable for him. In comparison, Rasselas' pursuit of happiness led him through different aspects and occupations of life that led him back to where he started. Similarly, each demonstrated that they were actively pursuing happiness. Finally, the gap between what makes people happy and what does not is clearly seen in Rasselas. The pursuit of unattainable goals like a perfect life is deceptive. While pleasures can be attained and hopes fulfilled, a prolonged search for happiness in the wrong things will leave us needlessly and bitterly disillusioned.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Clifford, James Lowry. *Dictionary Johnson*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979.

Braverman, Richard. *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*. Edited by Marie Lazzari. Detroit, MI: Gale Group, 2000.

Fussell, Paul. *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

Hardy, J. P. Introduction. In Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Hibbert, Christopher. *The Personal History of Samuel Johnson*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Johnson, Samuel. *The History of Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia*.New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

King James Bible. New York: Oxford University Press, 1945.

McIntosh, Carey. *The Choice of Life: Samuel Johnson and the World of Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.

MARRIAGE IN *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

Jacqueline Barrett

During the early nineteenth century most of Europe experienced a dramatic transformation. Accompanying the greater emphasis on reason during the Enlightenment was a zealous exploration of human nature. Several Europeans, such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire, inspired by these novel ideas, questioned tradition and began to suggest restructuring society in accordance with these principles. They advocated reform of the previously conservative and unchanging institutions of government, religion, and society to mirror individual values such as equality. Although Austen failed to embrace the revolutionary ideas espoused by her radical contemporaries, she nonetheless saw value in reevaluating the antiquated premises upon which English society was based. Through her portrayal of marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*, the author takes an evolutionary perspective which synthesizes individual and community values. Austen breaks from the conservative tradition of maintaining a hierarchy founded on wealth and social status in order to advocate a new structure based on individual merit.

Austen takes a critical stance toward the community-based values of conservative society as seen by the unhappiness of those who strictly adhere to them in marriage. In general, the community values at the time focused on maintaining a sense of permanence and stability. These conservative ideas were especially important in terms of social structure. Members of wealthy, established families married other members of wealthy, established families. And the same was also seen in both the middle and professional classes. This way, the respective classes as a whole were able to preserve their values and a sense of security. Duty also clearly played a role in this system based on community values. Not only did individuals have a duty to those

above them in the social hierarchy, but also a duty to members of their class. The community-based idea of duty is especially strong in the marriage between Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins. Austen documents their unemotional proposal by stating, "In as short a time as Mr. Collins's long speeches would allow, everything was settled between them to the satisfaction of both; as they entered the house, he earnestly entreated her to name the day that was to make him the happiest of men . . ."[1] Instead of thoroughly describing the affair, Austen only dedicates a few sentences to the actual proposal. Since the characters lacked any true attachment to each other, any feelings that were expressed during this scene would have been contrived. Both characters merely act the way they think engaged people are supposed to act, since they are getting married for very calculated reasons.

Charlotte and Mr. Collins are of the same newly established and educated class and therefore not offending anyone else with their marriage. Both Charlotte and Mr. Collins fail to take their individual feelings into consideration when they conform to the social values and act out of duty. Charlotte marries not because she is in love, but in order to live a comfortable life without burdening her parents. Mr. Collins marries only because he thinks it is what a clergyman should do and in order to appease his patron, Lady Catherine De Bourgh. Although they are of the same class, Charlotte is clearly superior in both manners and intelligence. Both individuals would have found greater happiness if they had been focused more on the compatibility of their partner, rather than conforming to the community values. The fact that this marriage is both unfulfilling and unaffectionate is telling of Austen's opinion. She feels less emphasis should be placed on preserving the social hierarchy, and more attention given to individual preferences, even if this contradicts the social message.Austen continues to build upon this idea by portraying another unhappy marriage based solely on community values. The circumstances of the proposal between Lydia and Mr. Wickham are noted in a letter sent to Elizabeth by her aunt. She writes, ". . . his situation must have been benefitted by marriage. By the found, in reply to this question, that Wickham still

1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* **[Need Source],**121–122. Hereafter cited in text as *PP*.

cherished the hope of more effectually making his fortune by marriage, in some other country . . . Wickham, of course, wanted more than he could get; but at length was reduced to be reasonable" (*PP* 313). Although this marriage was unlike the one between the Collinses, it was also based on community values. The two were forced to marry in order to preserve Lydia's reputation during a time when a woman's virtue was everything. By extension, the reputations of the rest of the Bennet family remain intact. This union actually closely resembled a financial transaction in that Wickham had to be bribed to marry Lydia. Since the community values were placed before individual needs, it is no surprise that the marriage was unsuccessful. Again, Austen portrays another marriage based solely on community values without real affection. Austen does not oppose marriages that maintain the social hierarchy and community as long as they are built on more than this. Individual preferences and merit should be a guiding force, even if community values are broken as a result.

The author contrasts these unfulfilling but uncontroversial marriages with successful marriages which tend to undermine the social hierarchy. Although the social structure is ignored, the couple gain something more valuable: compatibility. Austen describes the value of a union between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy by speculating, "It was a union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved; and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance" (*PP* 302). The union between Elizabeth and Darcy breaks directly with community values which call for the preservation of the social hierarchy. By marrying Elizabeth, Darcy upsets his relatives and practically loses some of his respectability by gaining unfavorable connections. Elizabeth also breaks with the convention established by the community as well, although in a different way. Mr. Darcy's aloofness had made him unattractive to most of the neighborhood, so she finds a marriage partner who is disapproved of even if he is rich.

Since both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy need to overcome so many obstacles as a result of their class difference, they ensure that their

relationship is built on enduring and compatible qualities. Elizabeth is able to successfully move into a higher class because her intelligence and personality are a match for the highly educated Darcy. The same is true of Jane and Bingley as a couple although they do not need to overcome as great of an obstacle since they are closer in terms of class. Overall, it seems as though Austen calls for a restructuring of society in which the most deserving can seamlessly advance. This is not to say that Austen would approve of just anyone making large social jumps. As critic Nicholas Marsh notes, "It is a cruel truth of *Pride and Prejudice*, that Mary Bennet could never occupy the social position Elizabeth attains, however hard she tries."[2] This hypothetical match illustrates the principle of equality in which neither rank nor marriage determine marriage. An improbable marriage such as this could never occur, demonstrating that a break in community values should only occur for good reason.

Austen demonstrates the limits to individual ideals by focusing on an actual marriage based on equality. When discussing the unsuccessful relationship between Elizabeth's parents, the author explains, "Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good-humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind had very early in their marriage put and end to all real affection for her" (*PP* 231). Austen provides background information on the marriage between the Bennet parents who were one of the only couples in this book to break the conventions established by their society. Mr. Bennet, a member of the landed gentry, married someone beneath him both in terms of money and social status. However, since this marriage was initially founded on fleeting "youth and beauty" rather than permanent interior qualities, this marriage was also doomed to fail. This marriage serves as a concrete illustration for Austen's moderate stance on social mobility. The Bennets essentially stand for a couple who marry based on the belief of equality. They are much like the hypothetical couple of Mr. Darcy and Mary Bennet. While breaking the social hierarchy maintained by community values alone does not ruin a marriage, taking this idea a step

2. Nicholas Marsh, **[Need Source],**106.

farther to the notion of equality does. In her world, marriages in which the couple has neither intellectual nor social compatibility simply do not work. Social mobility and restructuring of the social order only work when talent and intelligence fill the gap made by differing social statuses. In this sense, Austen demonstrates her evolutionary stance on altering the regimented structure of society.

Through Austen's exploration of the institution of marriage, she is able to discuss the dynamics between the individual and the community. She rejects the conservative idea of permanence in the social structure for the sole sake of maintaining tradition and community values. Austen ridicules marriages based only on community values by satirizing the union of couples within the same social class. These marriages allow community values to reign to the point that they resemble detached financial transactions. In these instances, the individual is completely ignored. Instead, the author allows talent and intelligence to dictate social mobility, shifting attention toward individual values. It is important to remember that Austen takes a very moderate stance, however. What she suggests is a far cry from the purely individual idea of equality. She still maintains a social hierarchy, even if it is somewhat restructured. This idea of allowing merit to determine one's future is probably one of the reasons the book resonates so well with contemporary audiences. Even though she limits her thoughts to the narrow frame of marriage, her ideas can be applied to other areas of life. Essentially, Austen hints at the American dream with an early nineteenth-century English spin on it. Just as the most worthy women in the book are rewarded with successful marriages, the most worthy in society are able to achieve prosperity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*.
Marsh, Nicholas.

HAPPINESS—DEPENDENT OR INDEPENDENT OF SOCIETY?

Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice

Crystal Dynia

Jane Austen argues in *Pride and Prejudice* that true happiness can be achieved but not as society defines it. Austen argues furthermore that instead an individual can only find happiness independent of society. Austen shows this through the moral and psychological consequences of relationships, such as between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth and between Mr. Bingley and Jane. Through the relationships between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, between Mr. Wickham and Lydia Bennet, and between Mr. Collins and Charlotte, Austen also shows how an individual who is dependent upon society's criteria for happiness fails to find happiness

The relationship between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth is a great example of two individuals finding happiness independent of their society. After Mr. Darcy's character is revealed to the other characters in the novel as a man engulfed by pride, society looks down on him, despite how wealthy he is.[1] Also, the Bennet family stands on a different level of the social ladder than does the Darcy or Bingley family. The girls of the Darcy and Bingley families want to keep the wealth between the two families, and they don't think that Elizabeth is fit for Mr. Darcy. However, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth have their own feelings for one another. Despite everyone's disapproval of the two being together (*PP* 233), Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth share their mutual feelings of love and affection with one another and are very happy together. They show their happiness and love for one another by getting engaged (*PP* 238–242). They are both very smart and strong minded

1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, **[Need Source]** 8. Hereafter cited in text as *PP*.

individuals with opinions of their own. Although Elizabeth originally lets society influence her opinion of Mr. Darcy, she refutes these opinions after discovering that Darcy is good natured and that he means well (*PP* 130–135). Ultimately, neither Elizabeth nor Darcy listens to what members of society are saying; instead, they follow their instincts and feelings.

Another example of finding happiness independent of society is the relationship between Mr. Bingley and Jane. The girls of the Bingley and Darcy families try to prevent the union of Mr. Bingley and Jane, just as they do with Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. The girls try to persuade Mr. Bingley that Jane isn't good enough for him and that she doesn't care for him in the same way that he cares for her. They try to make Jane look as if she is only after Bingley's money. However, this is not the case. Jane is really attached to Bingley and enjoys being with him (*PP* 10). Bingley feels the same way about Jane. After Mr. Darcy confirms to Mr. Bingley that Jane really cares for him, Bingley is overjoyed and begins to court Jane again, and they soon become engaged. They remain happy throughout the time they are together because they follow their feelings for one another, and they do not let anyone else have any influence on their feelings. However, if they had let society influence their decision of whether or not to be together, they would never have gotten married, and they would both probably be very miserable without one another.

In her novel, Austen also shows that individuals who are dependent upon society are unable to find true happiness. Upon marrying Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Bennet thinks that he will be very happy with his wife and that life will be rather good. Mrs. Bennet is beautiful, and because of what society has taught him to value, Mrs. Bennet doesn't need to be anything else. However, Mr. Bennet quickly becomes unhappy in his marriage because his wife has no depth or character. She is basically an idiot who believes that the only purpose in life is to marry off her daughters and gossip with the neighbors about other people's business (*PP* 4). Because of this, the Bennets have an empty and pointless marriage. Mr. Bennet is a very unhappy individual when it comes to his marriage, a marriage, nonetheless, which is approved by society.

Another example that demonstrates how being dependent on society can cause unhappiness is through the relationship between Mr. Wickham and Lydia Bennet. Every character within the novel, with the exceptions of Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth, and Mr. Bingley, believes that Mr. Wickham is a great guy. He is very respectable, handsome, and seemingly affluent. In the eyes of society, he is a great catch, and any girl who would marry him would be very lucky and happy. However, that is not the case. Mr. Wickham is a liar and not as wealthy as people believe. Lydia, like her mother, is very beautiful and interests herself only in gossip and nothing intellectual. She does not know how to think for herself. After Mr. Wickham and Lydia are married, they both grow indifferent to one another and are stuck in an unhappy marriage. Lydia gets something completely different than what she had expected.

The last example Austen gives as proof that being dependent upon society does not lead to happiness is through the relationship between Mr. Collins and Charlotte. The only reason the two marry is because of the influence that the society has on their decisions. Collins is told that he should marry to gain an estate, so that he may have security. After he crudely proposes to Elizabeth, and she rejects his offer, he almost immediately proposes to Charlotte (*PP* 83). They are not in love, and they do not have much, if anything, in common. After their marriage, Mr. Collins is happy for a ridiculous reason. He is happy because, according to him, getting married is the right thing for a clergyman to do and he has a wife who can admire him, as he explains in his proposal to Elizabeth (*PP* 72). Charlotte isn't particularly happy in her marriage. Instead, she is satisfied to simply have a husband. As far as she is concerned, she has done her duty by getting married. To Charlotte, having love in a marriage is just luck; love is not an important factor of marriage. These two do not display happiness in the way that Jane and Mr. Bingley or Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy do. Instead, they are simply married just to be married.

Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen gives examples of how an individual can find happiness when that individual becomes independent of what society says and stays true to oneself. When following society and the

guidelines or criteria that are imposed upon its norms, there is no guarantee that a person will find true happiness. However, if an individual has ideas different from those of society and makes decisions based on those ideas or feelings, then it is more likely that the individual will find happiness. When people follow their heart's desires, as did Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth and Mr. Bingley and Jane, there is less room for unhappiness. In the two marriages that seem successful to the reader (Darcy and Elizabeth and Bingley and Jane), each marital union is first and foremost based on the love and values shared between two people. Societal values or norms, while a contradictory force, becomes secondary to individual choice, which is itself a value that is preserved. In the other three marriages that were mentioned, none of the couples married for love or for a logical reason. Instead, these other marriages are the results of the individuals of these marriages listening to society telling them to marry for good looks or financial stability. As a result, these individuals are left unhappy for the remainder of their lives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice* [**need source]**

LOVE AND SOCIETY

IN *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

Marika Malkerson

Elizabeth is a strong willed, intelligent young woman in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth's community of friends and family are obsessed with the idea of marriage. It is her mother's greatest wish to get all five of her daughters married to eligible gentlemen. But Elizabeth cares about more than marriage, she is looking for love. Elizabeth wants to feel affection and respected for the man she marries. Surrounding Elizabeth is a society that pressures woman to marry, not for love but for money and good social standing. In 1813 when *Pride and Prejudice* was published, women did not have many rights, just what their husbands allowed them. They could not even own or inherit property.[1] Sometimes marrying was the only option for women to gain independence. In English society, women were property to their fathers and then given to their husbands.[2] Women were thought to be inferior to men.

Even though there were social constraints surrounding Elizabeth, she stayed true to her own beliefs of what a marriage should be. Elizabeth is challenged by her own desire to find love and a good husband not only by society but family and friends as well, including the marriage of her best friend, Charlotte, and her youngest sister, Lydia. Even though society, her friends, and her family pressure her, Elizabeth's stays true to her own idea of what a marriage means to her, a combination of a respectable match and true love.

---

1. Lynn Abrams, "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain," in *History Trails: Victorian Britain* (bbc.co.uk) http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml (last accessed September 2006).
2. Ibid.

Elizabeth's best friend is Charlotte Lucas, a plain woman who is twenty-seven years old. Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth's mother, says this of Charlotte about her being admired by men, "However, he did not admire her at all: indeed, nobody can, you know."[3] Charlotte is described as being plain. Because of this, she suffered long years of not being married in a society that did not look kindly on single women. Charlotte could not own property, could not run her own household, and was a burden on her family financially because she could not work.[4] But when an unexpected proposal from Mr. Collins comes, a past suitor to Elizabeth, Charlotte accepts. This comes as a great surprise to Elizabeth. Elizabeth almost despises Mr. Collins thinking Charlotte and him together a "so unsuitable a match" (*PP* 85). Elizabeth thinks this is because there is no love between the two. But Charlotte explains to Elizabeth, "I am not a romantic you know. Never was" (*PP* 85). Charlotte and Elizabeth have different ideas of what a marriage should be. Elizabeth believes there should be love between a man and wife, while Charlotte sees marriage as a way to gain her own independence by making a respectable union.

Elizabeth's youngest sister is Lydia, a rambunctious fifteen years old who is completely boy crazy. The young girl cannot help but fall all over herself whenever there is a "Redcoat" officer, distinct by the red coats they wore. Lydia, being her mother's favorite, was debuted very early. Most girls were not presented as being of marriageable age until they were older. Lydia is obsessed with the idea of being in love and getting married, so when the chance presents itself she immediately jumps in to a relationship. Elizabeth is very embarrassed by her sister's judgment. Lydia ends up marrying Mr. Wickham, a man known to be a gambler and is in debt. She runs off with him, thinking herself in love, nearly ruining her family's good name.

Lydia is saved by Elizabeth's future husband, Mr. Darcy. She comes home from the affair expecting the Bennets to congratulate her on a

3. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 9. Hereafter cited in text as *PP*.
4. Lynn Abrams, "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain," http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml.

marriage that was so ill conceived. “Ah, Jane I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman” (*PP* 205). Lydia tells her eldest sister, Jane, as the family takes their seats at the table. Lydia throws these words at her sister, telling her that she is the first to marry. She treats marriage as if it is a game that she has now won. Lydia does not care of the circumstances of her marriage, just as long as she is the first. She is a complete romantic, fancying herself in love with Wickham. Elizabeth is shocked by her uncaring attitude toward the family and her total disregard for her reputation in society. “I am sure I had no more idea of being married till I came back again! Though I thought it would be very good fun if I was” (*PP* 205). Lydia is convinced that being married is fun and that she has beaten her sisters in a game. Elizabeth’s sees her sister as being childish and silly. She believes there has to be a happy medium between love and a good match. She sees that Lydia is in love, but not responsible in her choice for a husband.

Elizabeth’s own relationship to Mr. Darcy is very different from that of her best friend and youngest sister. At first she despises Mr. Darcy, calling him arrogant and prideful. Mr. Darcy also finds Elizabeth not very appealing at first, insulting her at a dance, “She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*” (*PP* 9). His mind slowly changes though, and he starts to find his eyes drifting to Elizabeth whenever she is near. Darcy explains that to be a lady a woman must have “a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing dancing and the modern languages, to deserve the word” (*PP* 27). Elizabeth does not fit this criteria. She contradicts him, “I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united” (*PP* 27). Elizabeth is not the normal woman. She will not simper and agree with everything Darcy says to her just because of his position in society as a wealthy man,—actually the opposite. As they slowly become more acquainted with each other, Darcy finds Elizabeth more and more interesting. Darcy knows she is not his ideal match; she does not come from a great family and has no wealth. But he still is enticed by her. He even comments on her status when he proposes to her, “could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself

on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?" (*PP* 27) She is angered by his disregard for her feelings and abuse to her family. But as she comes to know Darcy for being a man who cares about her and saves her family from ruin, she understands that he truly loves her. She finds her own feelings for him,"that we are to be the happiest couple in the world" (*PP* 244).

For Elizabeth, her love came slowly. Even though she knows that marrying Darcy would be a good match because of his wealth, she does not love him. But when she slowly realizes how wonderful he is and what a gentlemen he is, she changes her mind. When she visits his home, Pemberely, she falls in love with the house. It is completely to her liking. She finds that they have the same tastes. Not only does she notice this, but she also notices that the servants love Darcy. They only have good comments. Elizabeth now can see how she and Darcy have much in common and how it would be a good match. Not only does she learn she loves him, but he is wealthy, has the same tastes, and that he appreciates Elizabeth for herself. Darcy loves her not because she has money, for she has none, not for her family connection, because there is none to be had, but for her own self worth.

Pride and Prejudice is a book focused on marriage. Elizabeth is confronted time and again with the marriages of those around her, first her best friend Charlotte and then her youngest sister, Lydia. Their marriages, and ultimately hers, are very different but all are affected by society in different ways. Charlotte makes a very respectable marriage that is liked by society but lacking in love; Lydia's is all about the adventure and the fun of being married, even if it goes against society, while Elizabeth's own ultimate marriage is a little different. She finds that she does not have to have one or the other. Elizabeth finds that both love, a deep caring for Mr. Darcy, and a respectable marriage can go hand in hand.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, Lynn. "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britian." In *History Trails: Victorian Britain* (bbc.co.uk) http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml. Last accessed September 2006.

Austin, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice.* New York: W. W. Norton, 2001.

THE HAMLET

Exploring its Myths

Roxanne A. Domingo

Many characters in *The Hamlet* are reminiscent of various gods and goddesses in Greek mythology. Some references are overt, referring directly to the god or goddess by name, whereas others subtly assume certain aspects of a particular deity. William Faulkner was fascinated by figures of Greek mythology, and this is evident in *The Hamlet*. John Lewis Longley Jr. writes, "His work has consistently demonstrated the *presentness* of the past, as an influence, and as a measurable factor in shaping the present"[1] His references to Mount Olympus are found throughout the book. For example, to explain Labove's volatile attraction to Eula, Faulkner writes, "eat like . . . the unchaste and . . . even anonymously pregnant immortals . . . of Paradise on a sunwise slope of Olympus"[2] Faulkner equated the former glories of the mythological past of Mount Olympus and the carefree lifestyles of the Grecian deities with the American South prior to the Civil War. His characters bear a resemblance to those of the deities in Greek mythology; these gods and goddesses fought, loved, watched, and led lives similar to the humans they ruled.

In *The Hamlet*, Flem Snopes, son of the farmer, Ab Snopes, who previously burned a barn, is very private. Flem secretly plans to make a lot of money and move to the town of Jefferson. Initially, Flem tells Jody Varner, the person who hires him to work in his store, that nothing is gained by working on a farm (*The Hamlet* 25). Therefore, Flem strikes a deal with Jody to allow him to work in his store in exchange for keeping Jody's barn intact. Overtime, Jody eventually grants all of Flem's requests. First, Flem

1. John Lewis Longley, Jr., *The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Caroline Press, 1963), 11.
2. William Faulkner, *The Hamlet* (New York: Vintage Books, 1931), 136. Hereafter cited in text.

becomes a clerk in Jody's store and after gaining enough money, he opens his own blacksmith business. Then, months later, he marries Eula, Jody's younger sister. Flem's actions show a man capable of accomplishing his goals in a slow and methodical way known only to him. His nature is likened to one of the deities in Greek mythology, Hades, the god of wealth and ruler of the underworld. Hades is also capable of methodical plans. He abducts Persephone, also known as Core, the maiden, when she is picking flowers on the plains of Sicily.[3] However, when Demeter, the earth goddess, learns of Persephone's abduction, she pleads with Zeus and an arrangement is made. Flem marries Eula for Jody's wealth and Hades abducts Persephone to be his queen. Flem's objective when he works at the store is not only to avoid work on the farm, but also to earn money. This corresponds with the Greek derivation of the name Hades, which comes from *Pluto*, meaning wealth. And the gods assign Hades as the treasurer of the earth's resources.

Goddesses of Mount Olympus are described as figures with overwhelming beauty. In *The Hamlet*, Eula Varner is described with the physical characteristics of a goddess. Eula is only a thirteen-year old girl, yet she already receives admiration from the men and jealousy from the women in the town of Jefferson. Everyday, men drive twenty miles to watch her as she goes to school. Some men gather around her "like swarm of bees, and she would be serene . . . and apparently even oblivious" as she goes to class (*The Hamlet* 128). Eula has a beautiful figure and she possesses a calm and detached demeanor. Other girls, some who are older than Eula, enjoy being in her company to meet boys; Faulkner says, "[the girls] invited her so that the boys would come" (143). The other girls want to become just like her. Although aware of her appearance, Eula's limited understanding of the admiration given to her is appropriate given her age. Yet, Eula's innocence tends to heighten her attractiveness and the effect that she has on others. In this way, she is similar to the Greek goddesses, Aphrodite, known as the goddess of love and beauty. After Aphrodite is born, she goes to Cyprus and "as soon as her white feet touched the island—earth, grass, and flowers

[3] Alexander Duthie, *The Greek Mythology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), 44.

sprang up."[4] Like Eula, Aphrodite possesses qualities that create competition between men. Her beauty is so great that she responds indifferently to men's attractions for her. There is one, however, whom Aphrodite loves—Adonis. She constantly warns Adonis every time he goes out to hunt, fearing that he is exposing himself to the dangers of hunting that could easily take his life.[5] Aphrodite's concern for Adonis is so strong that her other lover, Ares, the god war, kills him.

V. K. Ratliff, a sewing-machine agent, serves as an informant for every character in *The Hamlet*. He is largely responsible for most of the townspeople's information. Ratliff relays information about Ab Snopes, whom he was always a constant companion with when he was a child. People learn about Ab Snopes' past through Ratliff, who is privy to Snopes' life before they arrived in Jefferson. He examines the lives of the Snopes as the family grows and moves to Jefferson. As a result, he seems to be discouraged by the fact that they, especially Flem Snopes, are taking over some of the businesses of Will Varner. This, in turn, causes Ratliff to hamper Flem. Flem's silence and private nature only bolster Ratliff's claims against him. " 'Flem,' Ratliff says, 'has grazed up the store and he has grazed up the blacksmith shop and now [Lump Snopes] is starting the school. That just leaves Will's house' " (*The Hamlet* 77). Ratliff does not only deliver news that he sees or hears, but he also has a tendency to pass along his opinions as facts. Ratliff's nature matches the messenger god, Hermes. Hermes deceives Hera, the Queen of the Gods, when he disguises himself and makes Hera believe that he is Ares, the god of war and Hera's own infant.[6] Hermes performs several tasks for his brothers and sisters in addition to his main job, which is to bring information and messages given to him. Through the use of his "winged sandals," he dutifully accomplishes his tasks.[7] His role as a messenger through travel earns him worship from

4. Edward E. Barthell, Jr., Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Greece (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), 32.
5. Neil Philip, *Annotated Guides, Myths and Legends* (New York: D.K. Publishing, 1999), 32.
6. H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology (London: Metheun, 1928), 148.
7. Edward E. Barthell, Jr., *Gods and Goddess of Ancient Greece* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), 35.

traveling salesmen in ancient Greece. Similarly, Ratliff's job is to travel and deliver the gossip and news to his neighbors.

The idea of pure love is seen in *The Hamlet* when Ike Snopes is introduced. Ike is an innocent young man suffering from mental retardation. Once, at dawn, he goes out wandering in the fields when he sees a lovely creature: a cow. Ike is so amazed at the creature's beauty that as he approaches her, he cannot take his eyes off her. Compelled by her beauty, Ike perceives the creature in the same way a normal man would see his loved one. Incapable of knowing that loving an animal in such a way is wrong, Ike's innocence makes him believe that loving a cow is right. He continues to love her without expecting anything in return. Aware that the cow is neither wealthy, powerful, or has the ability to return his love, Ike nevertheless gives his love to the cow unconditionally. It is readily apparent that Ike's love is pure in the sense that he has given his love freely and completely and without expectation. He even tries to rescue her from danger, risking his own life. He is "running among . . . the sedge dotted with small island of . . . incombustible green and . . . tiny blue and white daisies" when suddenly smoke appears before him (*The Hamlet* 190). Ike becomes terrified that the smoke is coming from the barn, but as soon as he hears his love and knows that she is in danger, his fear turns into desperation to save her. After the incident, Ike comforts her, "trying to tell her how this violent violation of her maiden's delicacy is no shame, since such is the very iron imperishable wrap of the fabric of love" (*The Hamlet* 192).

The love story of Psyche and Eros resembles Ike's love for the cow. When Aphrodite learns about Psyche's beauty, she becomes so furious that she commands Eros, also known as Cupid, to go and strike her with his arrow and make her fall in love with a hideous man. However, when Eros sees Psyche for the first time, Psyche astonishes him with her beauty. Later on, Eros marries Psyche and takes her away to live in his palace, though she has never seen his face. Eros commands Psyche not look upon his face, on the pain of having their children being born mortal. Though Psyche has everything that she could possibly want, the fact that she does not know what her own husband looks like troubles her. To satisfy her curiosity,

Psyche decides to secretly look upon Eros' face that following night. When Eros wakes up, finding Psyche staring at him in awe of his beauty, he flies away from her and decides not to return. Psyche, full of sorrow, goes out and tries to find her husband. When Psyche reaches Aphrodite's temple, Aphrodite welcomes her with bitterness and commands Psyche to do several tasks before she will allow Psyche to see her husband. Psyche, still very much in love with Eros, willingly accepts the tasks. Psyche succeeds at these tasks, impossible though they may seem. Unfortunately, on her last mission, she accidentally opens the box Persephone gives to her and falls asleep. Having witnessed the strength of Psyche's love for him, Eros goes to her rescue, revives her, and carries her to Mount Olympus.

The pure love of Ike for the cow and Psyche for Eros may seem arguable to some who believe that Ike's love for the cow is not pure because the cow is obviously an animal; this does not equate the true affection any man, normal or abnormal, feels for a human being. Some may add that Ike Snopes cannot be compared to Psyche because Eros shares the same characteristics as Psyche, both physically and emotionally. To refute such an argument, the purity of love takes place in many forms—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Ike Snopes falls deeply in love with the cow unaware of her form; his love is the same as any human giving love unconditionally. His primary care is not for the awkwardness of the situation, but the welfare of the cow. This is demonstrated by his actions when he sees the smoke coming from the direction of the barn. Similarly, Eros learns of Psyche's passion through her devotion, which Eros previously underestimated. Psyche sees Eros as "a beautiful winged youth" and she proves the purity of her love by accomplishing her tasks without fear.[8]

It is undeniable that Faulkner draws much of his characters' substance from notable figures in Greek mythology. Writer Lewis P. Simpson points out, "In [*The Hamlet*], Flem and Eula are up to their ears in conventional existence but bear always the signs of their beginnings in Faulkner's fascination with satyrs and fauns, demons and goddesses."[9] The very nature

8. Alexander Duthie, *The Greek Mythology*, 37.
9. Lewis P. Simpson **[need source],** 143.

of Yoknapatawpha County is reminiscent of Mount Olympus and its inhabitants, the gods and goddesses, who live there. In the aftermath of the Civil War, writes John Macdonald,"Though the Union could impose its will upon the South, it could not rob the Southern people of the memory of its heroes, of battles boldly won, or of its sacrificed sons. There was a spirit abroad that the Confederacy should never be forgotten. Nor has it been."[10]

Yet after examining the characters in *The Hamlet* and the deities in Greek mythology, perhaps the ancient Greeks needed all-powerful beings to explain their human impulses. To explain their thoughts and emotions, the Greeks may have needed a god or a goddess to justify their love, anger or regrets. Faulkner realizes this need and exemplifies complex human nature in the characters that populated Jefferson County.

10. John MacDonald, *Great Battles of the Civil War* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 188.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barthell, Edward E., Jr. *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Greece*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971.

Duthie, Alexander. *The Greek Mythology*. Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.

Faulkner, William. *The Hamlet*. New York: Vintage Books, 1931. Harrington, Evans, and Ann J. Abadie, eds. "Yoknapatawpha & Faulkner's Fable of Civilization." In *The Maker and The Myth: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha.* Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference (4th, 1977) Jackson, MI, University of Mississippi, 1978.

Longley, John Lewis, Jr. *The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1957.

Macdonald, John. *Great Battles of the Civil War*. New York: Macmillan, 1988.

Philip, Neil. *Annotated Guides, Myths and Legends*. New York: DK Publishing Inc., 1999.

Rose, H. J. *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*. London: Methuen, 1928.

Simpson, Lewis P. **[NEED SOURCE]**

CHARACTERS AND DEMONS IN FAULKNER'S *THE HAMLET*

Anthony Trujillo

William Faulkner's novel, *The Hamlet*, is the tragic tale of a world filled with melancholy, self-destruction, and man's ability to endure. Faulkner's characters fall victim to the harsh, cruel earth and the gloomy reality of poor Southern culture. These characters are directly influenced by Faulkner's opinions and feelings about the South at the time.

Faulkner was well known for his strong beliefs in the noble characteristics of man. The *New Age Encyclopedia* describes him as "preoccupied with man's compassion, courage, capacity for endurance, and ability to transcend his physical limitations."[1] This preoccupation is evident in the way Faulkner shows how man can prevail and also how his faults can hinder his ability to succeed. The ability to either balance these qualities or succumb to them shows that in all humans there is that which is either good or that which is evil.

His characters' traits represent Faulkner's love/hate relationship with the South. Malcolm Cowley writes in the introduction,"Faulkner's novels of contemporary Southern life continue the legend into a period that he regards as one of moral confusion and social decay."[2] Faulkner leaves the reader to judge his characters' outlooks and values. When doing so, the reader can see the varying levels of morality within each of the characters.

In *The Hamlet*, Flem Snopes tears at the fabric of the small town's social structure. Throughout the novel, Flem Snopes takes hold of the very town itself. Soon the village is overrun with Flem's kin. There is Mink

1. "Faulkner, William," in *New Age Encyclopedia* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1978), 64.
2. Malcom Cowley, "Introduction," in *The Portable Faulkner* (New York: Viking Press, 1942), 14.

Snopes, the ruthless murderer; Lump Snopes, the greedy clerk; Isaac Snopes, the idiot; and Eck Snopes, the closest character in the family with a sense of morality. Although it seems there is a bond between the Snopes, it soon becomes clear that Flem holds no moral distinction between his own family and the residents of the town. Doreen Fowler writes, "Utterly dissociated from humanity, Flem perpetrates cruel exploitations, unopposed by the townspeople. The triumph of evil in *The Hamlet* can be traced ultimately to this refusal of human beings to realize their relatedness."[3] Flem's status is purely driven by his single-minded lust for power; and as Hyatt Waggoner writes, "He parodies the American dream, caricatures the American success myth. He has ambition, go-ahead, gumption, a head for figures: every thing deemed necessary for success in the Ben Franklin-Dale Carnegie popular philosophy."[4]

In the chapter titled "The Peasants," Flem Snopes returns from Texas with wild horses after abandoning his brother during his trial for murder. Flem Snopes then auctions the wild horses. Faulkner describes the horses "wild as deer, deadly as rattlesnakes, quiet as doves."[5] It is at this auction that the reader sees Flem's relentless pursuit of the little money the town has. Flem is ruthless in his dealings with Mrs. Armstid when he takes her last five dollars that were intended for her children.

The townspeople, themselves, are William Faulkner's effort to show the reader man's ability to endure as the townsfolk deal with the Snopes' increasing power and cruelty. For example, Mrs. Armstid is the wife of Henry Armstid who is swindled by Flem into buying one of the wild horses. Henry Armstid then attempts to wrangle one of the wild beasts from the lot where they are being sold. When Henry realizes that no one will help him, he orders Mrs. Armstid into the batch of scary beasts only for her to risk being killed for the sake of her husband. When Henry beats her, Mrs. Armstid does not even protect herself from the blows dealt from her

3. Doreen Fowler, Faulkner's *Changing Vision from Outrage to Affirmation* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), 68.
4. Hyatt Waggoner [Need Source], 224
5. William Faulkner, *The Hamlet* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 300. Hereafter cited in text.

husband's rope. Both verbally and physically, Henry abuses Mrs. Armstid while the men of the town watch in silence. This is a prime example of the pain and suffering the townspeople endure despite their ability to put an end to the reign of Snopes.

In an interview with Jean Stein, William Faulkner replied to a question about a writer's economic freedom, in which Faulkner said, "People are afraid to find just how much hardship and poverty they can stand."[6] This is true with Mrs. Armstid and Henry Armstid. This very idea of human suffering and the ability to cope with mistreatment is shown through the character of Mrs. Armstid. Henry Armstid is a man who has suffered a great deal. His family is very poor. As the novel progresses, the reader watches as Armstid turns into a madman. When Ratliff, Bookwright, and Henry partner up to look for gold at the old mansion, we see the men as they slowly lose their wits, each coming closer and closer to madness. While digging in the garden for several days, Ratliff turns to look at the two men around him. Upon looking at Henry Armstid, Faulkner writes that:

> Twenty feet beyond, he could now see Armstid waist-deep in the ground as if he had been cut in two at the hips, the dead torso, not even knowing it was dead, laboring on in measured stoop and recover like a metronome as Armstid dug himself back into that earth which had produced him to be its born and fated thrall forever until he died. (*The Hamlet* 399)

In the same interview with Jean Stein, Faulkner was asked about the submissiveness many of his characters have toward their fates. Faulkner replied, "I would say that some of them do and some of them don't."[7] One of Faulkner's characters who "doesn't" is V. K. Ratliff. Ratliff is one of the few characters in *The Hamlet* who has a heart. Faulkner gives Ratliff compassion, a sense of logic, and a work ethic. This allows the character to flow steadily through the book, alternately narrating from his buckboard.

---

6. Jean Stein, "Interviews: William Faulkner," in *A Modern Southern Reader*, ed. Benk Forkner and Patrick Samway (Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishing, 1986), 663.
7. Ibid., 672.

Ratliff first appears as a friend of the Varners who spends the majority of his time selling sewing machines from the back of his buckboard. In his spare time, he tries to keep up with the epidemic Snopes' family migration into town. Ratliff is the moral center of the book. One example of this is Ratliff's feelings toward Isaac Snopes and his love for a cow. When Ike's relative sells admission to the townsmen who enjoy watching the idiot's various copulations with the cow, Ratliff goes to the scene where he sees:

> a half-brick on the ground beside the wall. With it he drove the nails back while they watched him, the brick splitting and shaling, crumbling away onto his hands in fine dust—a dry, arid, pallid dust of the color of shabby sin and shame, not splendid, not magnificent like blood, and fatal. "That's all, he said. "It's over." (*The Hamlet* 217)

Ratliff's action in the barn is in response to his disgust at the idea of the men in town actually finding the sight of Isaac Snopes copulating with livestock amusing. As the men silently regard the misfortunes of another human, the reader cannot help but see the similarity between this spectacle and the scene in book 4, "The Peasants," chapter 1 (later turned into the famous novella, "Spotted Horses"), when the men looked on as Armstid beat his wife.

Faulkner's characters are driven by demons that Faulkner may himself have been driven by. This might be the reason why he is considered by many critics to be one of the best writers of the twentieth century. Faulkner's *The Hamlet* is a story of men driven by demons. They are demons of greed and power, such as the demons Flem deals with in hell in the "Eula" chapter of the novel. And they are demons of the heart, such as Labove's feelings toward Eula. When asked "How do you feel about yourself as a writer?" Faulkner responded by saying, "If I had not existed, someone else would have written me, Hemingway, Dostoevsky, all of us. Proof of that is there are about three candidates for the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. But what is important is *Hamlet* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, not who wrote

them, but that somebody did."[8] The faults of man, an imperfect being, are a major topic in *The Hamlet*. But despite these demons, man still survives.

8. Jean Stein, "Interviews, William Faulkner," 672.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cowley, Malcom, Introduction. *The Portable Faulkner*. New York: Viking Press, 1942.

Faulkner, William. *The Hamlet*. New York: Vintage, 1991.

———. "Mississippi." In *A Modern Southern Reader*. Edited by Ben Forkner and Patrick Samway (Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishing, 1986), 481–499.

———. *The Portable Faulkner*. Edited by Malcolm Cowley. New York: Viking Press, 1942.

Fowler, Doreen. *Faulkner's Changing Vision from Outrage to Affirmation.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983.

Inge, Thomas, ed. *Conversations with William Faulkner*. Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.

Kerr, Elizabeth M. *William Faulkner's Yoknapathawpha: A Kind of Keystone in the Universe.* New York: Fordham University Press, 1985.

"Faulkner, William." In *New Age Encyclopedia*. 1978.

Stein, Jean. "Interviews: William Faulkner." In *A Modern Southern Reader*. Edited by Ben Forkner and Patrick Samway (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishing, 1986), 661–674.

SAMUEL JOHNSON'S *MACBETH*

Moral Community and the Tragedy of Exclusion

Prof. Michael Petersen

One of the greatest discrepancies between the work of Shakespeare and Samuel Johnson's criticism of that work concerns the idea of "nature" and its operation in relation to that which is "moral" and "rational." As Johnson notes, Shakespeare is "the poet of nature," the writer who, more than other writers, creates "just representations of general nature."[9] Yet Johnson, in what he calls Shakespeare's "first defect" (PP 22), must qualify his praise due to Shakespeare's tendency to sometimes indifferently show both the moral and immoral, and to demonstrate that rational thinking is sometimes used to evil ends.

Typically in Shakespeare's various plays, the good is rewarded, the bad punished and some kind of order is restored. However, in some tragedies, such as *Othello* and *King Lear*, the evil is too profound for order to be naturally and morally restored. It is well known, for example, that Johnson found the deaths of Desdemona and Cordelia to be unendurable, their punishments outside comprehensible moral order. In *Macbeth*, another tragedy of profound evil, we find a case study of behavior that for Johnson is unnatural but that is simultaneously immoral and rational.

This paper will attempt to show that, within Johnson's analysis of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, found in his notes to the play, and in other sources, we can see that the function of literature, like any worthwhile endeavor, is to morally instruct. Specifically, we can find evidence of Johnson's complementary attitudes toward the importance of natural and rational moral behavior, and the need for virtuous and moral social interaction in community. Furthermore, the failure of the former must inevitably lead to

9. Samuel Johnson, "Preface to the Plays of William Shakespeare," in *Samuel Johnson on Literature*, ed. Marlies K. Danziger (New York: Ungar, 1979), 15. Hereafter cited in text as PP.

the latter: unnatural, immoral actions, even those that are rational, result in alienation from oneself and in isolation and exclusion from society.

Johnson's views on the disparate topics of morality, nature and rationality in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and Johnson's regard for the importance of the human community's social construct have been given some attention. Bertrand Bronson, in his introductions to both Arthur Sherbo's editions of *Johnson on Shakespeare* (VII and VIII) and in his and Jean M. O'Mera's *Selections from Johnson on Shakespeare*, stresses the importance for Johnson of moral and ethical values in literature, and human nature's capacity for ratiocination and our need for community. Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., in "In Deepest Consequence: *Macbeth*," connects Macbeth's original fall from a state of grace in Western mythology, showing the connection between Macbeth's ostracism and those of Lucifer and Adam and the moral questions that follow about community and humanity. In *Johnson's Shakespeare*, G. F. Parker uses Johnson's comments in his notes on *Macbeth*, specifically the idea "the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents," to show the degree of culpability Macbeth deserves as master of his own fate. The article also discusses the intersection of destiny, free will, and the natural and unnatural responses to the action in *Macbeth*. Finally, in *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare: The Discipline of Criticism*, Edward Tomarken, in applying various modern theories to Johnson's critical responses to Shakespeare's plays, integrates this same quote, "the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents," in his discussion of Aesthetic Empathy in *Macbeth*. In the process, he examines Johnson's responses to *Macbeth* in terms of moral conscience and free will, as well as reason's relationship to morality. However, not much attention has been given to the conjunction of these ideas, how morality, nature and rationality in *Macbeth*, and Johnson's concern for social construct come together in our understanding of Johnson's uneasiness with Shakespeare's tragic heroes, especially Macbeth.

In Johnson's Preface to his edition of Shakespeare, he compliments the universal and timeless quality of the plays. However, he insists "it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent

of time or place" (PP 22). Because "Johnson's deepest convictions are moral rather than aesthetic,"[10] Johnson complains that Shakespeare "seems to write without any moral purpose":

> From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but . . . he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is he always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. (PP 22)

For Shakespeare, the "natural" and "rational" apparently include the evil, the wicked, and the wrong. For Johnson, the "natural" and "rational" are confined to the good, the virtuous, and the right. "The end of writing is to instruct" (PP 19), Johnson tells us, and the mind will learn morally if we allow it; to be given immoral or indifferent lessons, Johnson seems to say, is to confuse us, or at least to waste our time because nothing is worth reading unless it has this ability to edify and instruct. In the case of *Macbeth*, it seems that Johnson comes to understand the instruction to be one given in the negative: "he that thinks rationally must think morally," yet Macbeth is rational, completely aware of the practical and spiritual repercussions of his actions, and he chooses the immoral. For Johnson, it is this volatile coexistence of the rational and immoral that dooms Macbeth to communal isolation, alienation from his own humanity, and spiritual damnation.

In his various writings, Johnson frequently discusses the need for responsible social interaction and the importance of community in human life. For example, Rasselas says "All skill ought to be exerted for universal good; every man has owed much to others, and ought to repay the kindness that he has received."[11] In the *Rambler #79*, Johnson notes, "Whoever commits a fraud is guilty not only of the particular injury to him who he deceives, but of the diminution of that confidence which constitutes not only

10. Bertrand H. Bronson, Introduction, *Selections from Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson and Jean M. O'Meara (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), xxxiii.
11. Donald Green, ed., *Samuel Johnson: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 345.

the ease but the existence of society" (PP). Johnson even puts the service of society over self-involved religious devotion. As Boswell records Johnson in *Life of Johnson*, "It is our first duty to serve society, and, after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls. A youthful passion for abstracted devotion should not be encouraged" (PP).

However, the opposite is true when one objects to immoral behavior. Cooperation and community are not as important as behaving morally. In the *Adventurer #131*, Johnson first chastises those who willfully flout society's social requirements: (4th and 5th paragraphs before end of essay)

> All violation of established practice implies in its own nature a rejection of the common opinion, a defiance of common censure, and an appeal from general laws to private judgment: he, therefore, who differs from others without apparent advantage, ought not to be angry if his arrogance is punished with ridicule; if those whose example he superciliously overlooks, point him out to derision, and hoot him back again into the common road. (PP)

The only exception is when an individual acts according to what he believes in morally right, even if this defies social rules:

> There are occasions on which it is noble to dare to stand alone. To be pious among infidels, to be disinterested in a time of general venality, to lead a life of virtue and reason in the midst of sensualists, is a proof of a mind intent on nobler things than the praise or blame of men, of a soul fixed in the contemplation of the highest good, and superiour to the tyranny of custom and example. (PP)

To be morally independent in the face of immorality is praiseworthy. Macbeth, however, is immorally independent, and through this immorality, he has violated social and religious principles. In light of Johnson's attitudes, it seems reasonable to conclude that nothing could be worse for Johnson than to act as Macbeth does, wherein he has deliberately cut himself off from humanity.

In examining Johnson's notes to the play, it is evident that it is especially important to Johnson that we see Macbeth's immoral actions as

deliberate. Not merely a victim of fate or destiny, he decides through his own free will. For example, there has been much discussion about the relationship of the witches to fate. They refer to themselves as "weyward[12] sisters"[13] (*Plays* 379; 1.3.33)[14], and Lewis Theobald (in 1733) seems to be the first critic to make the possible connection between "weyward" and "weird" (*New* 37).**[Not sure of source]** Johnson himself makes this connection more assertively in his edition. Also, in explaining how Shakespeare used many different popular superstitions regarding witches, he describes these "ingredients" as "gathered from every thing shocking in the natural world; as here, from every thing adjurd in the moral" (*Plays* 381). However, while Johnson notes that the witches are "intent upon death and mischief," we see that they have to power to influence, but not compel. They can cut the mariner's sail into a sieve, but "his bark cannot be lost" (379; 1.3.25). Macbeth, too, will be influenced by the witches and their proxy, Lady Macbeth, but he cannot be compelled: Macbeth will "[disdain] fortune" (319; 1.2.17) and make his own choices.

That Johnson believes Macbeth chooses for himself is made clear in the notes. For example, he interprets these lines, "Come Fate into the list, / And champion me to th' utterance!" (*Plays* 425; 3.1.73-74), as, "Let Fate, that has fore-doom'd the exaltation of the sons of Banquo, enter the lists against me, with the utmost animosity, in defense of its own decrees, which I will endevour to invalidate, whatever be the danger." Parker notes that Johnson's reading "does what it can to lighten that sense of predestination . . . in his general observation on the play."[15] Parker says that Johnson seems to baulk at "the belittling of the responsibility and dignity of human agency that goes with Shakespeare's presentation of Macbeth as, essentially, dancing to the witches' tune." Johnson applauds both Macbeth's strength and Shakespeare's skill when quoting Macbeth's defense against Lady

12. In accordance with the Folio, Johnson prints "weyward." Most modern editors, including Miola, instead use "weird."
13. All quotes are from Johnson's edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare*. New York: AMS, 1968.
14. Because Johnson's edition does not print line numbers, I have inserted line numbers according to Robert S. Miola's edition of *Macbeth*. New York: Norton, 2004.
15. G. F. Parker, *Johnson's Shakespeare* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1989), 193.

Macbeth's attack of his manhood: "I dare do all that may become a man, / Who dares do more, is none" (*Plays* 400; 1.7.46-47). (Johnson says of these lines: "they ought to bestow immortality on the author, though all his other productions had been lost.") Parker further notes that Lady Macbeth's response to this line, however, underscores the true nature of Macbeth's "black and deep desires": "What beast was't then, / That made you break this enterprise to me? / When you durst do it, then you were a man" *(Plays* 400; 1.7.47–49). The "enterprise" is what Macbeth desires, and his objection about the nature of manhood, while accurate, will not be enough to keep him from moving beyond the moral confines of what a "man" should and should not do.

While Macbeth is not a victim of fate, neither is he completely in charge of his fate. Macbeth makes choices, but Johnson's comments suggest that the events seem to control him, too. One of the more compelling lines in Johnson's notes is the following:

> This play is deservedly celebrated for the propriety of its fictions, and solemnity, grandeur, and variety of its action; but it has no nice discriminations of character, the events are too great to admit the influence of particular dispositions, and the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents. (*Plays* 484)

These lines may be in reference to the influence of the witches and Lady Macbeth, but it is important to note that Macbeth is both a victim of influence and actively in charge of his own decisions. When his wife is emotionally coercing him to proceed with the murder, Macbeth could have had the strength to withstand her pressure. Johnson's comment, that "the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents" suggests that Macbeth chooses to proceed because of his desire to be king, despite the consequences.

Macbeth's awareness of these consequences is another aspect of Johnson's interest in the character. Coursen has suggested that the language of the opening scenes "[intermingle] the possibilities of good and of evil" as

if these were "the terms of Macbeth's decision"[16] (379). His ambition, his "black and deep desire," is what allows him to act, even as he is aware of good and evil. Coursen further states, "Ironically, as he comes closer to killing Duncan, his awareness of the heinousness of the crime becomes clearer." I would argue that this awareness intensifies throughout the play, so that as he commits other, less reasonably justifiable crimes, Macbeth remains acutely aware of his actions and their spiritual consequences. After Macbeth learns that he has been named Thane of Cawdor, the "horrid image" (*Plays* 386; 1.3.138) of murdering Duncan occurs to him, and his heart knocks "against the use of nature" (*Plays* 386; 1.3.140). "Present fears / Are less than horrible imaginings" (*Plays* 386; 1.3.140–141), Macbeth realizes, suggesting that the "deed itself will exceed his worst expectations. The tragic protagonist, Johnson implies, realizes that the horror of the criminal deed is beyond imagination and that, as he approaches it, the horror will increase."[17] To say Macbeth is mad by the end of the play, or that he is nothing but a beast, is to obscure this apparent awareness.

Johnson's Macbeth is also convinced of the immorality of his own actions. In the soliloquy spoken as he proceeds to Duncan's room to murder him, he is "overwhelmed by his guilt" (*Plays* 406). Johnson says that this speech gives "a very just and strong picture of a man about to commit a deliberate murder under the strongest conviction of the wickedness of his design." Tomarken adds, "This conviction almost seems to provide the means, as it were, for the murders. The manner in which Macbeth's virtue serves him in his evil purpose is a topic of continual interest to Johnson."[18] Furthermore, Johnson seems to understand, Macbeth also knows that the grand scheme is bound to fail, even though he continues to hope, with increasing doubt, that the witches' prophecy will come true: "For Johnson, it is important to understand that Macbeth's passionate desire for the kingship

16. Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., "In Deepest Consequence: *MacBeth*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 18 (Autumn 1967): 379.
17. Edward Tomarken, *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare: The Discipline of Criticism* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 159.
18. Ibid., 163.

never blinds him to the self-defeating nature of his own desire."[19] Menteith's observation in Act 5 reinforces the disconnect between what Macbeth desires and what he knows to be right:

> Who then shall blame
> His pester'd senses to recoil, and start,
> When all that is within him does condemn
> Itself, for being there?
>
> (471; 5.2.22–25)

Johnson's interpretation of this line demonstrates Johnson's acknowledgment of the division within Macbeth: "That is, when all the faculties of the mind are employed in self-condemnation" (471). Parker puts this another way:

> It is more than just the plan of the play that obliges Shakespeare to 'make Macbeth yield,' for with part of himself Macbeth *does* dare do more than may become a man, even though all the sources of natural feeling within him recoil in horror at such resolution. (196)

Johnson reinforces the idea that Macbeth's actions are unnatural to himself, as they must be, for they are natural, human responses.

Tomarken notes an instructive contrast between the natural response of Lady Macbeth and the unnatural act of Macbeth (163–164). He shows how Johnson's reproduction of William Warburton's note to the lines "Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had don't" (*Plays* 407–408; 2.2.12–13) indicates Johnson's belief that Lady Macbeth's natural and human instincts intervened, preventing her from the unnatural act of murder. I would expand this observation to include this crucial difference between the husband and wife: Macbeth knows that he is behaving immorally and he continues to rationally recognize it throughout the play; for Johnson, this gives him a sort of perverse courage. Lady Macbeth, in contrast, attempts to irrationally ignore her moral responsibility to humanity. Although she does not commit the murder, she is complicit. Her unrealistic comments, such as,

19. Tomarken, Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare, 160.

"A little water clears us of this deed" (*Plays* 410; 2.2.70) and "Infirm of purpose! . . . The sleeping and dead / are as but pictures" (*Plays* 409; 2.2.55–57) indicate an unrealistic view of the crime, something that Macbeth never has. Her inability to confront the reality of their actions results in her insanity and suicide. She is never courageous; she is instead reduced to a pitiable figure. Johnson's attitude in this regard is echoed in his endnote to the play: "The passions are directed to their true end. Lady Macbeth is merely detested; and though the courage of Macbeth preserves some esteem, yet every reader rejoices at his fall" (*Plays* 484). Here we can clearly see how, for Johnson, the rational necessarily leads us to the moral, as well as the contrasting effects of irrational, unnatural, and immoral behavior: the volatile coexistence of the rational and immoral are manifest in the awful yet sane Macbeth, who must necessarily self-destruct; the coexistence of the irrational (the inability to face the reality of the murder) and of the moral are manifest in detestable, pitiable and insane Lady Macbeth.

Finally, we can see how Macbeth's immoral behavior will ultimately alienate him from his true human nature, and how it isolates him from the community of humanity. There is no question, for Johnson or any reader, that Macbeth must be killed by the end of the play. From the moment he kills Duncan, the reader, and perhaps Macbeth himself, can sense this inevitability. His inhuman actions have irrevocably isolated him from common humanity. As Parker notes,

> Macbeth . . . transgresses the bounds of action which can be referred to the general feeling of mankind . . . his resolve, as he himself best knows and feels, is an awful, fearful thing, a thing to be wondered at. Such resolution puts nature on the rack, and cannot be sustained without the extinction of Macbeth's humanity. (*Johnson's Shakespeare* 196–197)

Yet, ironically, it is Macbeth's humanity, his capacity for self-awareness, for morality and reason, that allows us to empathize with him, despite his horrible actions. It is a humanity that Johnson understands, although such connections troubled him: "Macbeth is able to remain human and thereby to merit the esteem of the audience, in spite of his appalling crimes, because, according to Johnson, his conscience is 'fair' while nonetheless serving as a

means of sustaining him in evil."[20] For Johnson, "he that thinks reasonably must think morally," and Macbeth's admixture of rationality and immorality must taint his humanity, ultimately requiring his death and damnation.

In his introduction to the Yale volume, *Johnson on Shakespeare*, Bronson says that for Johnson, "The highest instruction . . . does not stop short with showing what men are; . . . it shows in addition what men ought to be. By the expressed or implied judgments upon human character and conduct in the action of a play, the poet teaches morality."[21] For Johnson, Shakespeare teaches morality in showing us the tragedy of Macbeth: it is, to use Helen Gardner's term, the "tragedy of exclusion"; it is being disconnected from his community and his own self through his immoral actions. And this is something Johnson could neither condone nor endure.

20. Tomarken, Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare, 169.
21. Bronson, Introduction, *Selections from Johnson on Shakespeare*, xxxiii–xxxiv.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bate, W. Jackson. *Samuel Johnson*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977.

———. Introduction. Boulton, ed. 1–41.

Boulton, James T., ed. *Johnson: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971.

Bronson, Bertrand H. Introduction. *Selections from Johnson on Shakespeare*. Eds. Bertrand H. Bronson and Jean M. O'Meara. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986. ix–xxxv.

———. Introduction. In Sherbo, ed. *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Johnson on Shakespeare*. Vol. 7 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), xiii–xliii.

Clingham, Greg, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Coursen, Herbert R. Jr. "In Deepest Consequence: *Macbeth*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 18:4 (Autumn 1967): 375–388. JSTOR. Northern Illinois University. 10 Nov. 2005. www.jstor.com.

Damrosch, Leopold, Jr. *Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Foakes, R. A. "Critical Reception of Shakespeare's Tragedies." In McEachern, ed. *The Cambridge Companion of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 224–240.

Furness, Horace Howard, Jr., ed. *Macbeth*. Revised Third Edition. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1903.

Green, Donald. Introduction. *Samuel Johnson: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), xi–xxv.

———, ed. *Samuel Johnson*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965.

———, ed. *Samuel Johnson: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Johnson, Samuel. "Preface to the Plays of William Shakespeare." In *Samuel Johnson on Literature*. Edited by Marlies K. Danziger (New York: Ungar, 1979) 13–38.

———, ed. *The Plays of William Shakespeare*. New York: AMS, 1968.

McDermott, Anne. "The Defining Language: Johnson's Dictionary and 'Macbeth'." *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 44:146 (Nov. 1993): 521–538. JSTOR. Northern Illinois University. 4 Oct. 2005. www.jstor.com.

McEachern, Claire, ed. *The Cambridge Companion of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Miola, Robert S., ed. *Macbeth*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Parker, G. F. *Johnson's Shakespeare*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989.

Rogers, Pat. "Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Online Database. Northern Illinois University. 4 Oct. 2005. www.oxforddnb.com.

Sherbo, Arthur. “Dr. Johnson on ‘Macbeth’: 1745 and 1765.” *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 2:5 (Jan., 1951): 40–47. JSTOR. Northern Illinois University. 28 Sept. 2005. www.jstor.com.

———. “Johnson’s Shakespeare: The Man in the Edition.” *College Literature* 17:1 (Feb. 1990): 53+. EBSCO. Northern Illinois University. 28 Sept. 2005. www.niu.lib.edu.

———. “Sanguine Expectations: Dr. Johnson’s Shakespeare.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 9:3 (Summer 1958): 426-428. JSTOR. Northern Illinois University. 28 Sept. 2005. www.jstor.com.

———. *Samuel Johnson’s Critical Opinions*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995.

———, ed. *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Johnson on Shakespeare*. Vols. 7 and 8. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968.

Smallwood, Philip. “Shakespeare: Johnson’s Poet of Nature.” In Clingham, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 143–160

Tomarken, Edward. *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare: The Discipline of Criticism*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991.

Woudhuysen, H. R. Introduction. *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*. H. R. Woudhuysen, ed. (London: Penguin, 1989), 1–35.

ON KAFKA'S REPORT TO AN ACADEMY

Great Books Symposium Speech **[Include Date?]**

Prof. Daniel Borzutzky

Honored Members of the Academy!

You have done me the honor of inviting me to give a report on the individual and the community, and to do so, I would like to tell the story of an ape. Not a normal ape, to be sure. He wears trousers, and gives poignant speeches, and though he has managed through intense training and education to eliminate the majority of his ape behaviors, he still likes to have sex with chimpanzees, which terrifies him, so scared he is of those ape instincts he has not been able to repress.

His name is Red Peter, and he comes from Africa, where he lived a free and normal ape-life, until he is shot and captured by a group of brutish European explorers, who put him on a ship and stick him in a cage that is far too small for his body. With no room to move, Red Peter is forced to squat with his knees bent while the bars of the cage cut into his behind. Torture, dear members of the Academy, comes from the Latin word *torquere*, which means to twist. His body is twisted in the cage in such a way that he cannot continue to be himself. This, honored Academicians, is one of the goals of imprisonment in general, and torture in particular. Subjected to such treatment, individuals, be they humans or animals, can no longer continue to live as they had lived before. The tortured being is not only physically altered, but mentally altered. One need only visit the lifeless lions at the Lincoln Park Zoo to see what I am talking about.

Red Peter, however, is no dummy. He clearly analyzes and understands his situation. He has been stripped from his community, where he lived freely, and where there were no limitations on his movements. And now that

he is caged on the ship, he can either decide to remain a complete outsider, and live his life in confinement, or he can become a member of the community of humans who keep him captive. That is, he can make the best out of this bad situation by joining the ranks of his enemies. In his words, he needs a way out, which he distinguishes from freedom, which he does not desire, and which he does not think human beings are capable of attaining. Thus for the first time in his life he has to consciously make a decision with, as he puts it, his brain, and not his belly.

Let me suggest, Honored Members of the Academy, that part of why Red Peter thinks that men are disillusioned by the word freedom is because the limitations of life oblige us to make difficult decisions, decisions which force us to feel as if we are somehow betraying our innermost desires. Some of you in this room may have personally experienced what I am talking about: do I take an unsatisfying job to pay rent or feed my family when I would rather be a full-time student?; do I study something practical when I would rather study something like art or literature? In this sense, people who have money are more free than those who do not. For money grants the power to not always have to make these difficult decisions. This by the way.

So how does Red Peter find his way out? The first important step he takes is to give up the desire to remain who he was as an ape. Somewhere along the way, members of the Academy, you may have been told, perhaps in a classroom, or in a self-help book, or even in a television advertisement, that you must discover your one unique voice and your true individuality. What these sloganeers are suggesting, members of the Academy, is that you have just one true self, and one true voice. We need only examine our own lives to know that this assumption is wrong. By which I mean that the person who you are with your family is different from the person who you are with your friends, who is different from the person who you are at work or in school. And while perhaps you may feel more like yourself in one role than in another, you may also feel that in each different role you feel equally like yourself, even though these roles require you to behave in very different ways. This performing of different personas is natural, and helpful to articulate, because for the most part there are not stated rules that guide our

interactions with our different communities. And there are certainly times when these boundaries become confused, and when we find ourselves behaving at school or at work, the way we behave at home, or with our friends. If any of you have ever been, for example, in a classroom where a teacher or student has divulged too much information about their personal life, then you have observed these rules and boundaries being violated. These moments are awkward to witness, but often quite interesting.

Allow me to suggest, honored academicians, the following paradox: To be a member of a community it is necessary to sacrifice your individuality, but it is only through membership in a community that your individuality can be noticed. As an ape, the concept of individuality was neither important nor applicable to Red Peter, but once he ceases to be an ape, and enters the community of humans, he becomes an individual precisely because he is so unique and extraordinary. Moreover, his continued involvement in the community of humans comes at a huge sacrifice: he must repress his urges to satisfy his ape desires, the chimpanzee excluded. That is to say that what allows Red Peter to survive in his new community is precisely his ability to take on a new identity at the expense of losing his old one.

Members of the Academy, the most well adjusted amongst us are those who most clearly understand how to alter their personas in order to adapt to the different situations that they may purposefully or accidentally find themselves in. The most well adjusted amongst us are those who have the least attachment to the concepts of individuality and originality. Fully aware of this, Red Peter swiftly decides that if he wants to be a member of the community of humans, then he must no longer act like an ape.

He begins to imitate humans. That is, he begins to ape humans. He says, "It was easy to imitate these people. I learned to spit in the very first days. We used to spit in each other's faces; the only difference was that I licked my face clean afterwards and they did not." I have two comments to make. First, and perhaps less important, is that the humans on the ship are more animalistic than Red Peter. They sit around spitting and grunting, and they get drunk, which literally alters their brains to make them behave in a less

civilized manner. Second, it is worth emphasizing that imitation is Red Peter's entryway into this new community. Again, there is real-life rationality in this. For no matter what community we want to become a part of—be it a new country, a classroom, a job, a sports team, or even a street gang—our own success will be linked to how well we imitate the successful members of that community (however that community defines success). The members of the human community surrounding Red Peter spend all their free time drinking. Red Peter, however, is repulsed by alcohol. But since he understands that alcohol is something the men value, he realizes that if he wants to be accepted by them then he is going to have to learn to drink. He trains himself for this, and on a particularly jubilant night, Red Peter "took hold of a schnapps bottle . . . set it to his lips without hesitation, and truly drank it empty . . . not in despair, but as an artistic performer." Intoxicated, Red Peter breaks into speech, which sets in motion his rapid evolution out of ape-life and into the community of humans.

What I want to emphasize here is the word performance, which Red Peter modifies with the adjective artistic, a word that comes from the same root as artifice, or artificial. In getting drunk and speaking, Red Peter is performing the role that his audience wants him to perform. This role does not come naturally to him—it is artificial, or, artistic—and he is of course aware of this. Moreover, he is aware of just how important it is to understand what he needs to do in order to please his audience. I want to suggest, members of the Academy, that as participants in a community, we make these audience-pleasing adjustments all the time. That is, if we want to stay in our jobs, and maintain good relations with our friends and families, then we must understand, either consciously or subconsciously, what our communities wants from us, and we must understand how to adapt and alter our own personas in order to fulfill their needs. This, to be sure, may require that we sacrifice certain ideals we may value. In many of these roles, for example, it might be advisable to not be completely honest all the time. This in itself is not troublesome. It is simply part of the performance that life requires.

There is another lesson we can glean from Red Peter's remarkable adaptation, which has to do with having the courage to not be afraid when you find yourself in unfamiliar communities, be they new classes, new jobs, or new cultural or social environments. First of all, allow me to suggest that we derive strength through our involvement in these unfamiliar situations. By which I mean that it is often useful to attempt to become a participant in a community to which you might not naturally belong. And in this sense, Red Peter's behavior serves as a model: 1) he calmly analyzes his situation and is fully aware of his limitations; 2) he sets clear goals, and does not have high expectations; 3) he understands the needs of his audience; 4) he learns to adapt by imitation; and 5) he puts on a performance.

Performance, in our encounters with a community we hope to enter, has two important purposes: the first is to convince pre-existing members of this community that we are indeed able to participate; the second, and more important purpose, is to convince *ourselves* that we are able to participate. Members of the Academy, I do not think I am being insincere when I say that upon initially entering a new community, or upon approaching a new field or area of study, you may feel like a fraud, as if you somehow don't deserve to belong. In my own experience, this feeling of fraudulence consistently reappears even once you have established yourself in a certain field. This is not a bad thing. On the contrary. It is positive. For it is our own feelings of inadequacy that drive us to come up with innovative approaches to our various roles. And it is only by re-approaching our various roles that we are able to re-convince ourselves that we deserve to be performers in our own community. When I was a student, I found this to be true. And now, as a teacher, I continue to find truth in this. By which I mean that as a teacher, I find it useful, every once in awhile, to feel as if I do not know what I am doing. For this forces me to be inventive, to come up with new ideas, to study new texts, and to question assumptions I had previously taken for granted. That is, it is precisely my own feelings of professional inadequacy that inspire my professional growth. In this sense, failure is intimately connected to success.

GODS AND MONSTERS AND MINK SNOPES

Prof. Bruce Gans

One of the most common misconceptions students and faculty who do not read the Great Books have is that because these works were written in the past—often in the *very* distant past, they therefore cannot be relevant to understanding life today. Only by studying current events, such people believe, can they attain this. The truth is, however, that Great Books are *far* more relevant than the countless instant analysis of current and ephemeral events that compose practically every English course textbook. The Great Books present for our consideration the most fundamental and eternal problems of human existence and accompany them with the deepest insights into human nature.

A friend of mine who is a Professor of Social Work once remarked to me, "You will never become a psychoanalyst by reading Ann Landers every day; you have to study the scientific principles upon which all individual cases can best be treated." Similarly, the Great Books provide the tools to meditate on human life's first principles. Doing this heightens your understanding of your own soul, deepens your knowledge of the souls of others, and broadens immeasurably your grasp upon the nature of the human condition. Proof of this is found in a small section of one Great Book which displays monstrous human behavior; *The Hamlet* is the greatest novel of one of the world's greatest authors, William Faulkner.

The range of the eternal predicaments of the human condition in *The Hamlet* is wide and presented with so high a caliber of courage and originality and poetry that it is rivaled by only the very greatest books. *The Hamlet* is set around 1890 in a backwoods corner of Mississippi, sparsely populated by largely illiterate, horrifically poor dirt farmers.

The first lesson Faulkner has for us concerning monstrousness pertains to this condition. The distribution of monstrousness and decency is as various as it is among people we know. A life lived in poverty in *The Hamlet* is neither recommended for its intrinsic satisfactions or its value as a builder of character, and it brings out a heroic stoicism in a few and misanthropy in others.

But Faulkner permeates the entire book with the emphatically implicit evidence that *poverty is not the transcendent fact and inalterable force that shapes a person's moral life and character and fate.* A person is judged by the book's other characters, and by William Faulkner, as being praise or blameworthy, not by the degree of one's economic impoverishment, but by the degree of one's capacity for honor and dishonor, by the degree of one's respect for human dignity or its disregard, by one's self respect or its absence; in sum, by one's character. This is an immensely profound insight into the human condition. It is indispensable in any attempt to understand accurately human conduct—monstrous and otherwise.

Faulkner is telling us that the root cause of a monstrous act is not some abstract force, not some sequence of social or economic or military events whose effects are so irresistible that they morally absolve a person from his own behavior and its direct and immediate consequences upon other human beings. Rather, the root cause of the monstrous is located directly within the person who commits the monstrous act and what is and what isn't found in his own heart.

This is part of the truth Faulkner was trying to communicate in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech by asserting his belief that "man will not merely survive; he will prevail." He was saying that each human being is the possessor of a character, a moral character, through which he can transcend the sum produced by the social and economic and political factors in his life. And, because of this, every human being has the freedom, not to be rich or famous or comely (which are, in the end, inessential things) but to live a triumphant life through the redemptive employment of decency and by

making the regular effort to base actions upon first figuring out what is ethically right.

By writing about a variety of monstrous people in *The Hamlet*, Faulkner shows indisputably that a major element of a monstrous person is that he has neither the character to feel, nor the intellect to realize that any other person outside of himself possesses, or has a right to possess, a life that is as precious to its owner and those who love him.

There are several monsters in *The Hamlet*, but the one most pertinent is a lousy and dirt poor farmer, Mink Snopes. Mink owns a calf who wanders off his small property—with Mink's knowledge—to feed on the maintained and more prosperous farm owned by a man of unyielding integrity, Jack Huston. Huston returns the delinquent young bull to Mink and asks him to keep it off his land. Mink tells Huston, however, he owes him nothing because Huston was negligent in not constructing a fence to keep Mink's bull out. Mink then continues this policy because it is cheaper to have Huston feed him. Huston appears to let the matter drop and Mink's young bull spends the fall and winter quartered on Huston's farm.

The next summer, however, when Mink decides to retrieve his now grown and fattened bull, Huston refuses to return it without a fee to cover his expenses, and Mink only desists when Huston points his gun at him. Here, Faulkner makes a second point about the true nature of a monstrous person. Only superior forces of violence and the willingness to use them will deter a monstrous person because such a man has no conscience. More precisely, a monstrous person is unable to see any reason to feel guilty for anything he does to anyone else. He has a sense of right and wrong, Faulkner shows us, but it is not based on any objective criteria of what is fair. It is not based on a man inferring how he ought to treat another person based on how he, himself, would expect to be treated.

Faulkner makes plain that the monstrous person possesses a sense of right and wrong that equates "right" what he wants and "wrong" what frustrates him or thwarts him. The monstrous person experiences his own grotesque and malicious moral code as its opposite—the embodiment and

the expression of his own moral infallibility, and he experiences it with fanatical self-righteousness. Mink, the monstrous man, is certain it is literally impossible for him to do anything wrong to anyone. The astounding corollary to this is that Mink, in effect, considers himself the only person in the world who can be the victim of an intolerable injury.

Mink genuinely believes Jack Huston inflicted upon him an injustice that cries out to heaven by not permitting Mink to cheat Huston out of the expenses of raising one of Mink's livestock. He believes it because the monstrous man's concept of justice is a thing he constructs to justify anything he wants. He fabricates this using the materials of his own wishes and needs and delusions and lies that he welds together to prevent any whiff of reality from seeping in, in the form of contradictory facts and rationality.

Great Books authors like Plato, Locke and Kant devoted their lives to discovering principles of justice that would come as close as possible to being perfectly objective and fair to all people at all times and places. The monstrous man, however, can be known by the infallible sign of being emotionally immune to, and usually pig ignorant of, the irresistible rightness of their methods and goals. Mink Snopes takes Jack Huston to court to get his bull returned for nothing. To Mink's outrage, the court rules against him. Earlier, Mink had backed down from a fair fight with Huston after the latter had offered to set his own pistol down, equidistant from them both, to let the one who could first reach it shoot the other. Instead, Mink waits for Jack Huston in concealment in the dead of night and murders him with a shotgun.

The murder is very disturbing because of its appalling pointlessness and because it is so ridiculous and painful a depriving of an incredibly more decent person of his own life.

Having directed our vision into the recesses of the monstrous psyche, Faulkner then illuminates for us a wider and enormously disturbing ethical vista. For we now learn that, for Mink, the experience of murdering a man is no more than an aggravating chore and his only regret is that he cannot, for practical considerations, leave a signed note that reads, "This is what happens to the man who impounds the cattle of Mink Snopes." And here is a

further central insight Faulkner has into the monstrous. For in the act of murder, Mink crosses the outermost borders of his moral narcissism into the larger world whose moral fabric he has not only violated but raped.

The invisible moral forces of the universe respond by setting into motion complications that Mink was too self-centered and stupid to anticipate, two key characteristics of the monstrous person. The reader sees the complications mobilized into being with an inevitability of a metaphysical law. But, to Mink, the complications seem to proliferate for no reason, out of thin air, into a suffocating swarm.

It begins when Mink returns home, where his wife unexpectedly senses he has murdered Huston and runs off to town with their children, hastening in part because Mink slaps her around, bruising her face. When she gets there, out of connubial loyalty she tells everyone—before they knew enough to ask—that Mink didn't kill Huston. She begins hard selling her alibi for Mink before anyone knew Huston had been shot. By professing Mink's innocence to a crime no one has accused him of, it becomes clear to everyone that Mink murdered Jack Huston, as surely as if they were waiting behind the log while he pulled the trigger.

Back at his shack, Mink begins to hear Huston's dog in the woods, sitting next to where Mink had hidden the corpse, howling in a grief that can be heard for miles and miles like a homing device. When Mink returns to move the corpse and kill the dog, the dog attacks him, shrugging off Mink's gunshots and ax blows. When Mink gets home, he finds his cousin there who informs him that the sheriff has found Mink's murder weapon. This cousin, after he learns Mink did not rob Huston of the fifty dollars Huston always carries with him, then insists on clinging to Mink until Mink agrees to take him to the corpse so he can get a cut of the fifty dollars. Mink, ultimately, is forced to assault his cousin to get away.

In short, Mink's personal monstrousness is magnified by the larger monstrousness of the people who surround him: none of whom have in the field of their consciousness one particle of remorse or shame or even mere animal dread at the thought of the act of murder. No, there is nothing in their

minds to be troubled by other than profiting from the murder of an innocent man and helping the murderer to get away with it.

After Mink is arrested, he sits unrepentant in jail, getting highly distressed only when he learns that the African American prisoners were fed before him. Part of the mental equipment of the monstrous man, Faulkner thereby suggests, is bigotry, which is to say, a hatred of whole groups of people he does not know on the basis of race. Mink is unconcerned in jail, however, because he expects the larger powers in his town, in the person of his cousin, Flem Snopes, will leap to his defense and deviously fix his trial and get him off. When this does not happen, Mink is just as enraged at the injustice being sentenced to the penitentiary for murdering a man, as he was when he was ordered to pay Huston for feeding Mink's bull. The way Mink the monstrous man sees it, the world has again let him down, and he is again its martyred victim.

And so, Faulkner here sharply disagrees with the French maxim that to understand all is to forgive all. There are people so monstrous that to understand all is to condemn with a greater understanding of justice.

In closing, I would like to offer a bit of solace from this Great Books author which is also one last proof that reading the Great Books can communicate truths that will better prepare you to understand and perhaps even anticipate the course of contemporary events. I t is a rule of thumb we are now seeing played out on a daily basis in the newspapers and which Faulkner places on the lips of Mink Snopes. It is the existence of the eternal and living moral principle that when you premeditatively kill one innocent person, you will learn to your discomfort what Mink found out to his own, when he reflected, "I thought that when you killed a man, that finished it. But it don't. It just starts then."