

"Art thou my Boy?": Skepticism, Childhood and
Ceremonies of Initiation.'

--Sarah Beckwith

Mamillius appears only briefly in *The Winter's Tale* yet he haunts the entire play. Stanley Cavell has made us familiar with the idea that Leontes is the portrait of a skeptic, and the play involves us in delicate and complex recoveries from skepticism, or ways of living with it that will not be soul-destroying. In this sense the play is post-skeptical. But through the investigation of the figure of Mamillius, it is also pre-skeptical. The child becomes the figure of the difficulties of initiation and explores how both controversies over paedo-baptism, and the extraordinary phenomenon of the children's theater companies are also a component part of the questions of initiation into Christian society, and thus of its contours and constitution.

"Blood and Sword and Fire":

Machiavelli, Erasmus, and *Henry V's* Ethical Battleground

--Byron Bailey

"War is like a vast ocean of all the evils combined, harmful to everything in the universe."

-- Erasmus, "The Complaint of Peace"

Much has been written about the ambiguity of *Henry V*. Many have noted the tension between the character the Chorus calls "the mirror of all Christian kings" and the tough-minded conqueror as revealed in Henry's words and actions. Shakespeare's tactic seems to be one of near-constant undermining of Henry's ostensible righteousness. Henry's calculating deployments of situational ethics and convenient piety in the play mark him as a Machiavellian figure, and echoes of the strategies endorsed in *The Prince* can be found throughout Elizabethan thought and art. Less well explored are the pacifist (or irenic) currents as formalized in the writings of Erasmus. In direct tension with Florentine *realpolitik*, Erasmus consistently argues that the proper model for statecraft for the Christian prince is the unflagging pursuit of peace. This essay will explore *Henry V* as a textual battleground between these competing ideologies.

Assays of Bias": *Hamlet*, Montaigne, and Epicurean ethics

--Patrick Gray

Comparisons of Montaigne's *Essays* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* tend to focus on Montaigne's skepticism, as expressed, especially, in his longest essay, "An Apology for Raymond Sebond." Less well-explored, however, is the possible influence of Montaigne's Epicureanism, apparent in later essays such as "Of husbanding your will," and in his embrace of the Epicurean principle, "*lathe biōsas*" ("live unnoticed"). In order to preserve his equanimity, Montaigne deliberately avoids responsibility, withdrawing into private *otium* ("leisure"). Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, as well as *The Tempest*, is in contrast skeptical of this approach to life's concerns, finding it ineffective as a means to happiness, or even peace of mind. Shakespeare in *Hamlet* presents not only a critique of Epicurean ethics, however, but also a critique or "assay" of Montaigne himself, as a character embodying its practice. *Hamlet* is designed to test Montaigne's literary persona, "Montaigne," a creation somewhat different from the historical Montaigne, against the

pressure of adverse circumstance, much as Montaigne himself does in his *Essays* with Cato the Younger, as well as other philosophers of antiquity such as Brutus, Cicero, and Seneca, juxtaposing their claims about virtue against possible incongruities in their biographical record. Framing the “Montaigne” of the final essays, Montaigne the Epicurean, within an alternative, legendary history, the source-narrative of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare ultimately finds him inadequate as an ethical model.

Bloody, Bawdy Villains:

City Comedy and the Ethics of War in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*

--Susan Harlan

This paper examines the treatment of militarism in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (c. 1602) with an eye to the conventions and subject matter of city comedy. Certainly, militarism is part of the landscape of city comedies such as Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (c.1607-08) and Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (c.1600). *Troilus and Cressida* is famously generically indeterminate; although the title page of the Quarto deems it a “history,” the 1623 First Folio squeezes the play in with the tragedies; Boas understood it as a problem play, and it is now generally read as a satiric comedy. The play’s generic hybridity reflects its myriad and multi-temporal sources, for it brings together the conflicting value systems of myriad source texts (Homer, Chaucer, Lydgate, and Caxton). Shakespeare never wrote a strict city comedy; most critics have maintained that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* comes closest to the genre. But as figures such as Jean Howard, Brian Gibbons, and David Scott Kastan have noted, city comedy demonstrates a preoccupation with bawds and prostitutes, disease, trickery and subterfuge, and scenes of eating and drinking; it also attends to new modes of commerce and systems of exchange, as well as to political discord. These ideas are all central to *Troilus and Cressida*. I will maintain that city comedy offers a system of ethics that can be extracted from the city and mapped onto other spaces and subject matter. As such, city comedy is not only a genre for exploring contemporary political and economic concerns but also for critiquing war.

“What means this my lord?”: Ophelia, Love, and Ethics

--Kathryn Finin

This paper examines the nature of the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia, situating their ethical obligations to each other within a complex web of what Avishi Margalit calls “thick relations,” which entangles them in deeply conflicted loyalties. I explore the play’s relentless interrogation of what we ask of and how we respond to those with whom we are most closely related. Shakespeare’s plays are rife with the competing, even conflicting, demands among those with whom we are thickly related. *Hamlet*, however, heightens the difficulty of negotiating such layered responsibilities through combining the obligations of family and revenge with that of the other and romantic love. I examine the complexities among which Shakespeare has situated Ophelia, situating her responses within the critical context that so often reads her behavior as a betrayal of Hamlet. Given Ophelia’s engagement with the key ethical questions of responsiveness and responsibility in act 2, I argue that we need to “disrupt the cultural sedimentation,” to use Vikki Bell’s phrase, of how we view Ophelia and see her role in the play as a

subversive kind of ventroliquizing. In the end, Ophelia's continual response to the call of the other marks her as a rare moral agent in this play.

Shakespeare and the Ethics of Laughter

--Indira Ghose

This paper addresses the ethics of laughter in Shakespeare's plays. Precepts on humour by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian are juxtaposed with Protestant writings. While early modern thinkers impose a more rigid catalogue of strictures on laughter, they retain the key notion of decorum. What is striking, however, is that decorum in laughter serves above all to define the ethos of the laugher. There is little interest in discussing the effect of laughter on those actually mocked.

In Renaissance drama, Ben Jonson elaborates a theory of laughter as a social corrective that draws on Aristotle and Donatus. Watching characters humiliated on stage teaches the audience to avoid similar follies. Shakespeare seems to take a different tack. The punitive laughter evoked by his comic plots is generally less harsh than in plays by his contemporaries. Even his scapegoat figures are less rigorously excluded from the play world. In a closer look at the gulling plot in *Twelfth Night*, I suggest that it is not a more humane impulse that moves Shakespeare, but precisely the same norms of decorum that the earlier thinkers expounded. By promoting a more sophisticated sense of humour, his plays contribute towards shaping the behaviour of the audience in accordance with the code of civility that emerged in the Renaissance. However, unlike the ancients, Shakespeare's plays present the perspective of the object of derision, too. Furthermore, a sense of scepticism about the innate superiority of any member of society undermines the mocking impulse that still shapes early modern humour.

“I have heard, but not believed”: The Problem of Private Interpretation in *The Winter's Tale*

--Ray Bossert

In his Arden edition of *The Winter's Tale*, John Pitcher observes that the roles of the kings are opposite those of Shakespeare's source. Whereas Shakespeare casts Sicilia's Leontes as the paranoid tyrant and Bohemia's Polixenes as the victim, Bohemia rages jealous and Sicilia stands the accused friend in Greene's *Pandosto*. Pitcher also observes the nations' religious affiliations at the time of Shakespeare's composition: Sicily was Catholic, Bohemia Protestant. While critics have addressed the play's potential anti-Catholic satire (especially during Antigonus's spectral dream sequence), Stephen Greenblatt observes that the ambassadors to Delphos deliver an encomium on the oracle that evokes Catholic ritual. Does Shakespeare avoid making his play seem like a critique of Protestantism by shifting the error away from Bohemia? And does resetting the jealousy to Sicilia raise the ethical stakes for Leontes? How might it make his denial of a god's infallible intermediary an ethical critique of private interpretation?

Conscience and the God-Surrogate in Montaigne and Shakespeare.

--Will Hamlin

After opening with a brief discussion of Montaigne's essay "Of Conscience," I turn to Shakespeare and examine various dramatic scenarios wherein conscience may be construed as susceptible to external stimuli which prompt involuntary self-exposure. I propose that we use the term "god-surrogates" to designate those forms of stimuli which (at least within the Shakespearean imaginary) carry the potential to elicit spontaneous and truthful reactions from the conscience-imbued psyches of specific individuals. I argue that even in establishing clear continuities between Montaigne and Shakespeare with regard to this general topic, juxtaposing their respective treatments of conscience allows us to delineate more sharply the species of skepticism which animate their authorial outlooks.

Viola's *Telemachia*

--Robert B. Pierce

Though Shakespeare frequently adapts for his plays the Odyssean story of extravagant adventures--voyaging on a quest for home, restoration, and renewal--he is no Fénelon moralizing the tale of Homer's *Telemachia*. However, we can still read *Twelfth Night* as Viola's *paideia*, her development or manifestation of a set of virtues. Both the similarities and differences between her adventure and Telemachus's shape Shakespeare's meaning. Among the qualities of her story that affect what we see in her are her isolation with no wise teacher guiding her, her disguise as a boy servant, her suffering and disorientation, her storytelling and riddling, her encounter with music, her quest for a lover and a twin brother, and the extraordinary denouement of the play, including its protracted recognition scene. In all that happens to her, to use Pindar's paradoxical formulation, she becomes what she is, and her story captures important truths about moral education.

Moral Agency in Montaigne and *Hamlet*

--Lars Engle

Michael Bristol has recently argued that if we think of Shakespeare's plays as raising issues about moral agency, our discourse about them may seem less alienated and self-privileging to intelligent non-specialist readers and theater-goers. The intuitions of such readers, Bristol says, tend to involve issues about character and morality, and to turn on ways plays are ethically instructive. This paper discusses *Hamlet* as a moral agent, comparing moral agency in *Hamlet* to Montaigne's distinctive array of moral attitudes and behaviors. It invokes Peter Holbrook's celebration of *Hamlet*'s Act Five achievement of inner freedom in *Shakespeare's Individualism* (2010) and Julia Lupton's description of *Hamlet*'s Act Five qualified endorsement of deliberative democratic communities in *Thinking with Shakespeare* (2011), and argues that these ways of describing *Hamlet* as a different kind of moral agent at the end of the play from what he is at the beginning respond to a change in the audience or reader's relation to *Hamlet* in the course of the play. I will end with some speculations about the peculiarly relational nature of literary ethics, and will suggest that, like Montaigne's peculiarly open-ended and inconclusive but deeply ethical explorations, *Hamlet* models generous ethical relations rather than producing ethical judgments or principles.

Darwinian and Canonical Shakespeare:
The Oath in *Coriolanus*, *Love's Labour's Lost*,
And *Titus Andronicus*

--Joe Keener

This article calls for a more inclusive consideration of Shakespeare's canonical status by examining the Darwinian elements of his work. More specifically, the argument couches its judgments in terms of oaths, ethics, morality, cognitive capacities and the implications of these concerns for sexual and kinship selection, cooperation, and inclusive fitness. Part of the determination of Shakespeare's literary status will rest on just how well the playwright dramatizes these phenomenon and capacities. The argument eschews typical Shakespearean theatrical stalwarts for plays every bit as vibrant, representational of the human, and biocultural as any of Shakespeare's works.

Shakespeare's Prayers

--John Cox

The distinctive speech act called prayer was both familiar in early modern culture and—because of the Protestant Reformation—controversial. The legacy of Catholic liturgical prayer is evident in oaths used by most Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, including Shakespeare. Though oaths “empty out” religious language, in Stephen Greenblatt's phrase, not all of Shakespeare's prayers are empty. Prayers in *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, and *Cymbeline* indicate Shakespeare's close familiarity with contemporary assumptions about prayer, and involve a distinctive kind of self-revelation that derives from the intersection of prayer and Christian ethics.

Inhuman Persuasion in *The Tempest*

--Daniel Gibbons

This paper examines Prospero's ‘conversion’ by means of inhuman rhetoric in the moral climax at the beginning of Act five of *The Tempest*. Shakespeare uses the play's representations of power, persuasion, and will in order to engage some of the early modern period's most pressing ethical questions: Is it possible to overcome the recalcitrant passions with reasonable, virtuous, and persuasive rhetoric? In many of his later plays, persuasion either tends toward evil (e.g., *Macbeth*), falls prey to the passions (e.g., *King Lear*). Can a prince be persuaded to the good? Is it ever possible to neutralize the seductions of cupidity and the perversions of malevolence without coercive force?

Perhaps paradoxically, in this play, the non-human councilor Ariel is most responsible for persuading Prospero to act humanely. His means of doing so are surprising, and have not yet been accounted for adequately by scholars. By placing the play's climax into the context of Augustine of Hippo's privative theory of sin and malevolence, as articulated in *De civitate dei*, I offer what I hope is a persuasive accounting for the strange effectiveness of Ariel's inhuman rhetoric – an accounting with broad implications for our understanding of Shakespeare's constant fascination with nothingness.

“Taint Not Thy Mind”: The Concept of Right Reason in Hamlet
--Barbara Parker

With its repudiation of the Calvinist insistence on scriptural authority alone, and its concomitant argument that man was given reason by God himself for the express purpose of supplementing revelation, Richard Hooker's Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity was one of the chief catalysts for England's move away from radical Protestantism. Representing a legalistic statement of the Anglican via media against the extremes of Calvinism and Catholicism, Hooker's Laws marks the recovery of a medial tradition, which eschewed the rigors of orthodox Calvinism, stressed the role of reason in interpreting the Christian Faith, and restored the belief in man's ability to controvert his fate. Shakespeare wrote Hamlet around 1600—when Calvinism saturated English Protestantism. Resonating with Hookerian discourse, the play affirms the humanist concept of right reason and the attendant medial Protestantism that concept implies. On its most fundamental level, therefore, Hamlet constitutes a sweeping indictment of Calvin's doctrines of total depravity, predestination, and Original Sin.

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