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CHAPTER 13

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Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistributing Complicities in the Ethical Discourses

In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Lafew begins the discussion of Helena's medical miracle with a slighting comment on those who "say miracles are past," and on "our philosophical persons" who "make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear" (2.3.1–6).[1] He goes on to associate the "seeming knowledge" with that of "the learned and authentic Fellows" who diagnosed the king as incurable. If "unknown fear" is taken as the third member of the series that includes "things supernatural and causeless" and "terrors," its obvious reference is to something that arouses fear because it is unknown. But within the clause introduced by *ensconcing*, the phrase can denote the effect of the self-protective flight "into seeming knowledge": among the fearful things the knowledge represses or occludes is the fear itself; fear of the fear of something better left unknown; fear of a fear the play's speakers do not (wish to) know but which their discursive action continually acknowledges and revives, and which, therefore, they must continually disown. The protective action Lafew describes is called "disowning knowledge" by Stanley Cavell,[2] and it is in some respects analogous to what others call misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) and to Sartrean bad faith. It is this sense of Lafew's utterance that I shall explore.

What is the cause or object of the unknown fear? For example, from what terrors, what unknown fear, do philosophical persons protect them-

selves in responding as they do to the curing of the king? Why shouldn't they all rejoice? The Countess suggests one reason when she expresses her doubt that the king would accept Helena's tender of aid:

> He and his physicians
> Are of a mind; he, that they cannot help him;
> They, that they cannot help. How shall they credit
> A poor unlearned virgin, when the schools,
> Embowel'd of their doctrine, have left off
> The danger to itself? (1.3.232–37)

After they have been thus shown up, do "our most learned doctors" (2.1.115) fear to suffer the consequences of their medical impotence, the emptiness of their seeming knowledge? But that hardly qualifies as an unknown fear; it is, after all, the cure that appears supernatural and causeless, the effect of "great power, great transcendence," a miracle from the "Very hand of heaven" (2.3.31–35). Something besides the hand of heaven must be the source of the fear.

A clue to what it may be emerges as soon as we realize that Lafew's sententious utterance is an example of the seeming knowledge it criticizes. No doubt when viewed in generational perspective the utterance illustrates the wisdom of the elders, a "backward-looking" wisdom obedient "to supernatural sanctions," resisting the disenchantment of "the new world of social mobility and opportunism," and imbued with the "tolerance and mellow grace" of its speaker.[3] But in the perspective of gender, Lafew's rhetoric struts its sapience, exemplifies the worldly wisdom by which patriarchal discourse disowns, represses, or displaces a specifically "modern and familiar" fear: the fear of being unmanned by power the discourse alienates from men and invests in the figure of woman.[4] In *All's Well* the fear is focused on Helena, the phallic virgin who bears her father's power and whose magical gift becomes a *pharmakon* that spreads the fear like a contagion from the king to Bertram. The gift combines with her chastity to make her capable of fulfilling her desire and asserting a socially transgressive claim to a husband and, incidentally, to his property, the transmission of which only she can guarantee by providing him with heirs.

Helena joins Lafew and the other males in the play in defending against the fear of her access to power (through her possession of the *pharmakon*) by displacing the power from "Doctor She" (2.1.79), whom they reduce to a "debile minister" (2.3.34), to her father's drug, and to his Father in heaven, Doctor He, "Him that all things knows" (2.1.148).[5] This interpretation has already been published when 2.3 begins, for Lafew reads it out: "A *showing*

of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor" (2.3.23–24). That is the more trivial, or trifling—if more comfortable—explanation: we who fear are human, and what we fear is God. The other explanation, the traumatic one from which everyone regresses, and which keeps cropping up in the text, is that "we" who make trifles of terrors are men, and what we fear is woman: we fear the power we have alienated to the "sweet practiser" (2.1.184), who is at once our magician and scapegoat—the virgin's power to restore and trans-mit potency, but also to destroy it, and to appropriate the phallus from its proper owner. But that story is incomplete; it has a hole in it, like a dough-nut. We make trifles of things we fear and loathe in ourselves, and we call these trifles woman; and this enables us to make terrors of the trifles so that we can justify—to quote Lacan—assuming "the armor of an alienating identity": I am a man, the author of myself, of no woman born.[6] Reducing woman to a trifle is called misogyny; transforming the trifle to a terror is called gynephobia. And both are displacements: misogyny displaces *mis-autia*, and gynephobia displaces *autophobia*. To cut this short, we fear to be dishonored in the breech. "The gift," as the king of France somewhat grandly and pathetically says of the warlike principles he dishes out to his departing heroes, "the gift doth stretch itself as 'tis receiv'd" (2.1.4).

The Lafew principle, as I have called it elsewhere, is *a strategy of dis-course*, by which I mean that whether or not any speaker intends or is aware of deploying the strategy, the strategy—like the soul—inhabits, animates, and gives form to language, inscribing motivational patterns in it, effects of desire, before it is put in use.[7] They are language-games in Wittgenstein's sense, community practices informed by socially constructed schemas not only of behavior but also of self-representation. Individual speakers and agents, for example, couldn't ensconce themselves in the seeming knowl-edge that they are victims, or manly heroes, or generous and disinterested donors, or true lovers, or saintly ministrants, or dangerous villains, unless ready-made formulas for these patterns, positions, or "roles" preexisted their performance by the speakers and agents. I should note here that I use *per-formance* in both its major senses: doing, executing, carrying through, etc., an action; and displaying, playing, or acting before an audience. Awareness of the shifting relations between these senses will be important to the dis-cussion that follows. And this note prompts two others. First, language use, whether in acts of speech or of writing, is performance—performative—in both the speech-act and the theatrical senses. Second, language use and other forms of *doing* always implicate acts of self-representation.

This second point follows from the three basic rules that govern the dynamics of subjectivity as representation:

- You never represent another without representing yourself, if only as the agent of representation.
- You never represent yourself to others without representing yourself to yourself.
- You never represent yourself to yourself without representing yourself as an other.

If we premise that the three situations specified by these rules are co-constitutive—are analytically distinct and interactive components of a single project—we can then proceed to explore the scene of representation as a continuous activity of displacement from one situation to another, an activity that at the same time oscillates between the two modes of perfor-mance. These dialectical interactions constitute the subject as a project of (self)representation that shuttles between the deictic poles of self and other driven by a never fulfilled and perpetually renewed desire for identifica-tion—for "the armor of an alienating identity."

Representation gets it specific range of meanings by being distinguished from presence and presentation. As Joel Fineman puts it, representation "calls up and evokes as something absent the truthful presentation it con-fesses truly it is not."[8] This absence, or self-division, or alienation, is pro-duced by entry into a signifying medium, for there can be no representation without mediation—without, that is, competence in deploying the cultur-ally available materials and technical processes of performance, and their formal consequences. The primary medium of representation is the body, both as a system of signifying indices of gender, age, kinship, and race, and as an instrument of perception, speech, and labor, along with their me-chanical and electronic extensions. From the premise that the body is the medium of representation it follows that presence, or self-presence, or self-identity, is itself a mode of representation. Presence is the mythic object of desire, the object lost when the subject suffers the distortion of the media through which it passes, the object that transcends representation and drives the subject restlessly from one to another project of identification.

I think this account of subjectivity as (self)representation offers a more powerful—because more dialectical and better articulated—schema than the concept of *self-fashioning* in terms of which to interpret the dramas of identification depicted in literary and theatrical texts. It makes possible a more detailed examination of the ways in which those texts represent, first, the dilemmas of conscience produced when specific ideologies exploit the self-alienation basic to the structure of subjectivity and, second, the discur-sive strategies with which speakers, characters, and narrators deal with these dilemmas. The strategies are often revealed as bad-faith defenses against

the onset of guilt, misautia, and autophobia, and the Lafew principle is a strategy of that sort. "We make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear." This principle governs forms of language use driven by the desire to avoid knowing what one fears to know about oneself. Thus, as I noted above, if it is a strategy of *discourse* in the sense that the armor of seeming knowledge is a bricolage of language-games, it is also a strategy of self-representation. These two strategies are at odds with each other, and in the interpretations that follow I shall try to show how the Shakespearean text depicts tensions and negotiations between the performative desire invested in the project of representing oneself and the wayward performativity of the discourses that both structure and jeopardize the project. I begin with an analysis of the discursive interplay that animates Edgar's soliloquy in *King Lear* 2.3.

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The cue to the relation between Gloucester's two sons is the one given by Edmund when he sees Edgar approach: "villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam." The point about this is that Edgar presumably doesn't hear the phrase; he arrives at the idea of playing Tom o' Bedlam independently. The three questions Edgar puts to Edmund during the latter's edited summary of Gloucester's list of predictions reveal the legitimate son to be skeptical, even a little amused, as if he thought astrological lore was nonsense: "How now, brother Edmund! What serious contemplation are you in?"; "Do you busy yourself with that?"; "How long have you been a sectary astronomical?" Since Edmund is mimicking Gloucester, Edgar's questions are de facto responses to Gloucester's attitude, and their dry, cool tone tells us he wouldn't quarrel with his brother's judgment that theirs is "a father credulous." These responses indicate that he is no less sophisticated or disenchanted than Edmund, and so does his first, correct reflex to Edmund's trickery: "Some villain hath done me wrong"—an insight he never bothers to check out. As Edmund's comments and stratagems make clear, neither Edgar nor Gloucester seems eager to clear up the problem in face-to-face encounter. What keeps them apart and binds them together is wickedly pinpointed by Edmund in one of the phrases summarizing Gloucester's predictions: "needless diffidences."

It's important to keep this in mind when you hear Edgar as Poor Tom babbling away on the heath and elsewhere.[9] For if the Edgar who later plays on his blind father's credulity is the same as the one who responds skeptically to Edmund's predictions, you might well expect him to behave with a touch of condescension toward the father he tries to cure of despair. At

any rate, instead of going to his father to verify Edmund's story, Edgar runs off in disguise. In the soliloquy that modern editors isolate as a single scene (2.3) he tells us—which means, as I try to show in *Imaginary Audition*, that he tells himself—he has decided to masquerade as Poor Tom, the Bedlam beggar:

> I heard myself proclaim'd;
> And by the happy hollow of a tree
> Escap'd the hunt. No port is free; no place,
> That guard, and most unusual vigilance,
> Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape,
> I will preserve myself; and am bethought
> To take the basest and most poorest shape
> That ever penury, in contempt of man,
> Brought near to beast; my face I'll grime with filth,
> Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs in knots,
> And with presented nakedness outface
> The winds and persecutions of the sky.
> The country gives me proof and precedent
> Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
> Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
> Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
> And with this horrible object, from low farms,
> Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,
> Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
> Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!
> That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

We should note not only the arbitrariness and deliberateness of this decision but also its substance. Playing Poor Tom equals avoiding his father, hiding from him, but also taking revenge on him. Like Edmund, he selects a melancholy that is "villanous" in being vile, ignoble, abject; and he also establishes the identity of the villain who has done him wrong: as a morality play, *Poor Tom pursued by the foul fiend* is a caricature of his relations with his father. In the soliloquy, he chooses not only to escape and preserve himself but also to assume "the basest and most poorest shape / That ever penury, in contempt of man, / Brought near to beast." To select penury as the cause of baseness is to focus on the plight of the disinherited. The quasi-personification, "penury," is a displaced and condensed allusion to Gloucester: "the poor condition attending the penury imposed by my father, in contempt of me." Similarly, he displaces his father's persecutions and lack of charity to "the winds and persecutions of the sky," and to the farms and villages whose "charity" he will "enforce." The possibility of rapprochement

with his father seems to compel Edgar's mind less than the possibility of savoring Gloucester's unjust treatment in a disguise that targets its effects and dramatizes them for all to see. His description of beggars striking pins and other sharp objects in their "numb'd and mortified arms" tells us that he plans to play the victim as melodramatically as he can, and if—as some critics have thought—there is a vague shadow of *imitatio Christi* in this role, we should remember that the role is Edgar's idea as well as Shakespeare's.

Mere flight and self-preservation are not, therefore, Edgar's primary concerns. He notes them briefly as conditions, and then turns to fuller consideration of a scenario that features aggressive rather than fugitive impulses. His beggar's progress will be a parable of judgment, a way of punishing the father who punishes him. If Gloucester has proclaimed him traitor, he will proclaim what Gloucester has done to him; and perhaps in wounding himself he will eventually wound the father who must at some time discover how he has misprized his son. Yet Edgar's aggression is blunted or muffled by the very displacement that enables him to express it: "with presented nakedness outface" not Gloucester's persecutions but those of the elements; "with this horrible object . . . enforce" not the rich, highborn Gloucester's charity but that of "low farms" and "poor pelting villages." And though his scenario is an invention, a work of wit, no less than Edmund's, he is much less eager to take full credit for it. The decision to escape is actively asserted ("Whiles I may 'scape, / I will preserve myself"), and this accentuates by contrast the passive and periphrastic beginning of the next clause announcing Edgar's plan: "and *am bethought* / To take the basest and most poorest shape." "Am bethought": as if the thought *happened* into his mind, externally prompted by the "proof and precedent" which "the country gives . . . / Of Bedlam beggars." The alliterating doublet adds formulaic emphasis to Edgar's decision, and thus a touch of self-justification: "the proof and precedent comes from 'the country,' not from within myself; it isn't my own paternally imposed plight that inspires me but that of beggars entirely unrelated to me." So Edgar is exactly like his father in the quality of his diffidence: he refuses to name his father; his words carefully avoid acknowledging Gloucester, even as their indirections register Edgar's sense of his injustice.[10]

The irony inherent in Edgar's "proof and precedent" is that the Bedlam beggar is a confidence man, the Abraham man who "will talk franticly of purpose" and will pretend to undergo self-inflicted pain (with his arms numbed and mortified) "only to make you believe he is out of his wits" (Dekker, quoted in Muir [ed.], *King Lear*, 81), hoping by these means to

get food or money. As an objective comment on Edgar, this image brings out the predatory impulse behind the pretense of victimization; it reminds us that the claim to be more sinned against than sinning is often a rogue's device, and emphasizes the extent to which Edgar contributes his share to the darker purposes and inventions that reduce him to Poor Tom. But unlike Edmund, Edgar is far from embracing the character of rogue or knave; as a confidence man his deceptions are practiced primarily on himself. The message he sends himself is that his father had reduced him to nothing, stripped him of his rights, his name, his existence, and left him no alternative but to disguise himself and beg his living from the countryside. Yet the counterstatement pressing through the soliloquy is that he refuses to take the risk of letting his father see and know him as innocent, and that he prefers to hide from Gloucester (be nothing as Edgar) in order to play the victim's role that will enable him to shoot judgments at his father from his place of concealment. This counterstatement can be heard in the terse final phrase that it so oddly scrambles.

"Edgar I nothing am": he could as easily have been made to say something less strained, such as "I, Edgar, am nothing" or "As Edgar I am nothing." But "Edgar—I—nothing": full comprehensibility is withheld until the verb at the end, so that the first three words temporarily stand forth as isolated or separate terms waiting to be connected. In the final position, *am* produces a strong closure; to me, at any rate, it has the force of "Edgar I nothing *choose to be*," and this converts passive self-deprivation to active self-suppression. Thus, as a speech act, the soliloquy effectively embraces a condition equal to bastardy. He and Gloucester unwittingly conspire to make him *nullius filius*, the son of nobody, and so he frees himself to take an eye for an eye. "If it be nothing," Gloucester had said, "I shall not need spectacles." Since Gloucester had blinded himself to Edgar, Edgar by remaining invisible to Gloucester will confirm his father's blindness. His muffled aggression is conspicuous in the displacements and distortions of language by which poor Tom will continue to represent Gloucester's wickedness. Poor Tom is also poor Turlygod, a name that continues to puzzle commentators. Collier's speculation, hazarded in 1817, still seems to me the most helpful conjecture: "Perhaps 'Turlygod' is a corruption of *Thoroughlygood*."[11] Poor Thoroughlygood, or Trulygood, falsely suspected by his wicked father, is reduced to Poor Tom; or poor Truly-god, the Bethlehem outcast, will display his stigmata through the countryside, reenacting the catastrophe of the old comedy until the expected happy moment "when false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee, / In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee"

(3.17.115–16). But the parody is adjusted to Edgar's darker purpose: until he is resurrected, the sacrificed son, although a willing victim, will sit in judgment on his father.

There is, then, more to Edgar's scenario than the self-protective detachment and passivity, the sometimes verbose tendency to stand aside and moralize, that some critics have discerned;[12] more, also, than the impulse, founded on shame and guilt, to avoid Gloucester's recognition that Stanley Cavell ascribes to Edgar chiefly after he meets his blinded father.[13] The passivity of the victim's role is carefully chosen to permit mental aggression within tolerable limits, and Edgar's inaction is itself a form of action that makes others capable of harming Gloucester.[14] By perversely continuing to play Poor Tom on the heath, and so to refuse to reveal himself to his father, he makes Edmund's success possible. In act 3, the interweaving of the three heath scenes (2, 4, 6) with the three castle scenes (3, 5, 7) works to emphasize the discursive complicity by which the "good" characters make the "bad" characters capable of mutilating Gloucester. The unilinear thrust of the castle plot, accelerated in the short and verbally spare third and fifth scenes, benefits from the increasingly mad polyphony or cacophony on the heath. The activities in the castle make the heath scenes seem not merely idle but destructive. And this destructiveness owes not merely to the truancy that abandons the field to the wicked, but to an active though unintended complicity that assumes increasing force at the level of motive and fantasy. But as I tried to show in Chapter 4, Edgar's Poor Tom language is unstable. It oscillates between the self-pity and anger of the victim/revenger's discourse and the shame and guilt of the sinner's discourse.

Whether Edgar is alone or with others, his language throughout act 3 represents him as continuously focused on the performance of his morality play—staging himself before himself and others, giving himself to be seen, speaking like an actor who monitors the effect of his rhetoric on an audience that includes himself. He appears to be so attentive to what he is doing with his language—to its inter- and intralocutory effects—that he seems not fully in control of, perhaps not cognizant of, what his language is doing by itself, what it is doing to him, what it betrays about his lethal desire, what—most importantly—it does to Gloucester not only in fantasy but also in fact. And it is to this strange conjunction of rhetorico-theatrical awareness and discursive uncontrol that I want to direct attention as we leave Edgar. The two sides of the conjunction illustrate two interpretive principles: the metatheatrical principle of histrionic self-misrepresentation and the discursive principle of redistributed complicities. I shall try to show that the relation between them is one of mutual entailment, and that its

effect is to disarticulate the two senses of *performance* or *performativity* I distinguished in the introductory section of the essay.

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As to the metatheatrical principle, it presupposes the emergent structure and practices of the new "concept of theater" that flourished in public playhouses after 1576. Public theaters create not only their dramas and their audiences, as Stephen Orgel notes; they also create images of theatricality that reflect and comment on the forms, practices, and institutionalized positions (players, characters, audience, etc.) specific to the new medium.[15] The texts written for this medium reflect and comment on its newness by strategies of citation or parody that establish its genealogical relation to, its difference from, its predecessors. The ancient idea of the world as a stage, life as theater, is caught up in the material and textual practices of a new order of representation, an order that reflexively exploits the ambiguities and oscillations of *serio ludere*. Through the set of *mise-en-abîme* strategies whereby dramatic fictions represent both the structure of theatrical practices "outside" themselves and the structure of social practices "outside" theater, public theater becomes not only "an established and visible *part* of society"—Orgel's claim—but also an established and visible *model*. Theater stages theatricality, represents representation, dramatizes its own skeptical relation to its truth claims, by inscribing the structure of theatrical relations within the dramatic fictions it stages. Thus a kind of map of its structure, its history, and its internal and external relations is inscribed in theater's metadiscourse, or in a discourse of metatheater that quickly becomes part of its repertoire of conventions, becomes available for the taking whether or not any particular playwright or company chooses to take it.

Judd Hubert begins his study of metatheater in Shakespeare with a statement defining the mode of inquiry he will pursue: a "performative" but textually based approach

emphasizing linguistic signs that, in addition to communicating developments in plot and characterization, explicitly or implicitly designate the art of stagecraft and entertainment. These signs serve a metaphorical purpose insofar as they transfer or transport elements involving content to performative schemes ascribable to the medium. It does not really matter, for the present purpose, if some of these signs happen to assume additional metaphorical or metonymic functions within the context of the fable.[16]

This passage clarifies by contrariety my own interest in the way signs that designate performative schemes are transferred from theatrical "form" to

dramatic "content" so as to assume functions within the context of the fable. My sense of "metatheater" is closer to Lionel Abel's. Abel introduced the term to define a specifically modern genre invented by Shakespeare and Calderón, the genre of plays "about life seen as already theatricalized," plays in which the fictional speakers "themselves knew they were dramatic" and were "aware of their own theatricality." The metaplay "is the necessary form for dramatizing characters who, having full self-consciousness, cannot but participate in their own dramatization."[17] In part an apologia for the modernist drama of Brecht, Beckett, and Genet (among others), Abel's *Metatheatre* valorizes this drama as the genre best suited to express the skeptical problematic Stanley Cavell would subsequently badger with much more philosophical panache and persistence.[18] But this diverts what I take to be the peculiar force of Abel's thesis as an insight into Shakespearean dramaturgy, namely, that to represent characters as "aware of their own theatricality" is to represent them as continuously dominated by the conditions, demands, desires, and pleasures of self-representation in interlocutory performance. The spectacle in which actors represent characters to an audience infiltrates and haunts the language and actions of the characters, and it is the textual signs and traces of this displacement that constitute what I call the discourse of metatheater.

It isn't only that dramatic speech is always before—and for—another, and is always in that respect public (always "onstage"), but also that to speak in public is to represent oneself to one's auditors; and this, as I have been suggesting, implicates the kind of rhetorical awareness that requires one simultaneously to represent oneself to oneself. Keir Elam's useful account of the variety of devices that give Shakespeare's language its "self-advertising" quality is easily transferable to the self-advertising of dramatic speakers.[19] Something of the histrionic self-representation of the actor as charismatic performer rubs off on the character, and something of the playwright's delight in the sound, the verve, and the tropical bravura of his own language transmits itself through the actor to the character. Even amid the declamatory thunder of tragic climaxes, speakers seem to be listening to themselves and to the way others listen to them. In that respect, every dialogical speech act contains within it an element of soliloquy. And every soliloquy is dialogical because it represents the "I" that speaks as performing before the "I" that listens. To imagine the effect of the interaction between these two functions of metatheatrical discourse is to practice what I call imaginary audition.

Imaginary audition picks out the reflexivity of speech acts, their status as part of a speaker's rhetorico-theatrical self-representation. But in pick-

ing this out, it reveals both its own limitations as an interpretive standpoint and the limits the histrionic motive informing metatheatrical discourse imposes on the speaker's relation to other discursive forces active in the text of his or her language. When readers perversely shift their attention from the script as a promptbook, the sign of a performed play, to the script as a text, they uncover darker purposes and deeper plots of which speakers seem not to be—or not to want to be—aware. And this may arouse the suspicion that the very theatricality of the self-representation that dominates speakers' relations to their utterance works to protect them from an unknown fear inscribed in their language. They remain enclosed within their projects of self-representation, attentive—as imaginary audition is—to what they do with their language, what they mean by it, what they hear in it. Accordingly, they don't monitor certain textual and illocutionary forces alive in that language—what it says and does regardless of what *they* say, do, mean, and hear.

At this point the two senses of the term *performativity* part ways. The theatrical performativity of self-representation encloses speakers within whatever alienating identities they desire or imagine themselves to be. Therefore, the linguistic performativity—the illocutionary force—of their speech acts escapes them, or, to put it more pointedly, is escaped *by* them. It is thus that one may conceive of textuality as the unconscious of the subjects constructed by dramatic speech—not, however, the textuality of language pure and simple, nor the unconscious of an individual speaker. The textuality is that of the discourses or language-games that circulate through the fictive community of speakers, constitute the community of their speech, and disclose the pressure of collective patterns of desire and motivation on their language. Under this description, the unconscious is coordinate only with the network of discourses that animate the text. And this leads me to my second principle, the discursive principle of redistributed complicities.

According to this principle, the interaction between self-professed virtuous and wicked characters takes a specific form: the wicked can succeed only because they are empowered by the good, who, at some obscure motivational level, delegate to others the agency for doing things they themselves would never do or wish to be done, things that would horrify or grieve them, but things their language shows them deeply and darkly to desire. The speakers of this language tap into discursive resources of self-deception to keep themselves from knowing what they don't want to know about the plots and purposes set in motion by the medium that shapes and channels and expresses their desire. This medium is the play of discourses textually inscribed in their acts of speech. Speakers represent or hide them-

selves, their purposes, desires, and fears, to or from themselves and each other. While they do this, while they cultivate or cling to one or another discursive identity—victim, donor, sinner, saint, villain, revenger, hero—agency passes to the discourses. The pressure, the insistence, of discourse in the field of the text converts their desires and unknown fears into the forces that drive the plot. Cordelia, as we shall see, ensconces herself first in a Cinderellan version of the victim's discourse and later in the discourse of the saintly redeemer; she disowns knowledge of her complicity with great success, and apparently minimal effort, while Edgar spends much of his time onstage trying, like Lear, to wrestle down the ghostly apparition of the sinner's discourse.[20]

In the perspective of redistributed complicities, the "good" characters are those who try to hide their darker purposes primarily from themselves, and the wicked are those who try, or pretend to try, to hide them from others. This polarity is transgressed by the discursive interactions that bind together the opposed moral figures—Edgar with Edmund, and Cordelia with her sisters. An odd pathos attends the self-representation of Edmund and the wicked sisters, for they seem unaware of the extent to which they are empowered by and carry out the mandates secreted in the language-games that drive the utterances of Gloucester, Edgar, and Cordelia. Questions of power directly or indirectly implicate questions of gender, and in the language of speakers who ensconce themselves in the discourse of honor and represent themselves as warriors or heroes—in their language the source of fear is coded female. Behind the desire for the armor of the alienating identity of manly warrior is the fear of being unmanned, effeminized, emasculated.[21]

The conflict between theatrical and linguistic performativity resolves, in this scheme, into a conflict between the motives of self-representation that drive metatheatrical discourse and those that drive the network of ethical discourses I have just profiled. By way of introducing my account of the latter I want to emphasize that far from being esoteric, the ethical discourses are, considered as patterns of motivation only (that is, apart from the textual and contextual environments in which they appear and interact), simple and familiar almost to the point of embarrassment. They are the stuff, if not of life, then of pop psychology, one of the practitioners of which wrote a book some years ago entitled *The Games People Play*. Shakespearean discourses are little more than the language-games speakers play (though *play* perhaps has misleading connotations of purpose and intentional control). Their complexity, as we shall see, derives from the games that texts and their interpreters play.

At the core of the network of ethical discourses is a small knot of volatile interactions among the discourses of the victim, the revenger, the sinner, the villain, the donor, the hero, and the saint or savior. Lear's "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" gives us the formula for the victim's discourse, but it is edged with a threat—"I am a *man*," I will have my revenges—and the victim/revenger relationship often tilts in the other direction: not from victimization to revenge but from desire of aggression to pursuit of the victimization that will justify it.[22] This version of the language-game encourages the cultivation of strategies for getting insulted and injured—for sharpening what Milton's Satan calls the "sense of injur'd merit" (*P.L.* 1.98). It thus impinges on the discourse of honor, since honor seekers are almost always insult hunters. Victimization and revenge are so tightly interlaced in the Shakespearean network that I treat them as two parts of a single discourse, the discourse of the victim/revenger, one of the most interesting—and perhaps unexpected—examples of which occurs in *King Lear*.

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Following Goneril's puffy response to Lear's demand that his daughters stage a contest in public expressions of their love, Cordelia's first words are "What shall *Cordelia* speake? Loue, and be silent." This is the Folio reading. The First Quarto gives "What shall *Cordelia* doe, loue and be silent" (Q 57).[23] Apart from the obvious fact that the difference in pointing translates into a different range of tonal possibilities—the whole of the Quarto line, for example, can be delivered as either a question or an assertion, the latter being more decisive and aggressive—the substitution of *speake* for *doe* is profoundly suggestive, if only because it isolates the cardinal principle of speech-act theory that speaking is doing. Thus, to ask what Cordelia's speech does may not be the same as to ask what it says or means—or at least what she means to say. The use of the third person indicates that the speaker self-consciously observes herself, that she possesses a strong theatrical sense of her image and role.[24] How should she meet the challenge of Goneril's overblown rhetoric? She will do the opposite of Goneril, hide her love, and say nothing—a resolution that gets critically modified when instead of saying nothing she says "nothing."

After Regan's performance, Cordelia interjects her second utterance:

> Then poor *Cordelia*,
> And yet not so, since I am sure my loue's
> More ponderous then my tongue. (F 82–84)

The speaker of the first line already senses the value of the victim's role, and she goes on to defend her true filial love against the false and unjust estimate of it that she anticipates. In some better world than this, her virtue might be appreciated and rewarded, but here it will have to be its own reward, her only riches. In glancing critically at Regan's heavy tongue, Cordelia displays a concern for style, especially for her own style, her own self-presentation, in this difficult moment. She practices the rhetoric of antirhetoric, as Paolo Valesio calls it, to compete not only with her sisters but also with her father.[25] And in exposing the extravagance of her sisters' answers she will also expose her father to ridicule. In that respect, her love is more ponderous than her words can express in this situation. But it is also more ponderous because she chooses not to express it: it will be of graver import, will have more substance, weight, and effect, by remaining unexpressed. Rather, what will give it its weighty effect is that she expresses its inexpressibility. In saying "nothing" she chooses to stonewall in order conspicuously to hide her love and protect it from being sullied. In soliciting and embracing victimization, she places herself in the position of one who stands in need of vindication.

Cordelia's final two utterances in the first scene reveal that the desire for vindication is not entirely free of vindictiveness, that the desire for justification may contain within it traces of a desire for retribution and even, perhaps, revenge:

> The Iewels of our Father, with wash'd eies
> *Cordelia* leaues you, I know you what you are,
> And like a Sister am most loth to call
> Your faults as they are named. Loue well our Father:
> To your professed bosomes I commit him,
> But yet alas, stood I within his Grace,
> I would prefer him to a better place,
> So farewell to you both. (F 293–300)

> Time shall vnfold what plighted cunning hides,
> Who couers faults, at last with shame derides:
> Well may you prosper. (F 306–8)

"To your professed bosomes I commit him": this classic example of the speech act called *performative* beautifully illustrates the tension between what the speaker's words "doe" and what she apparently means to "speake." The *vouloir-dire* of her speech—what she means to say, and certainly what she represents herself as meaning to say—is that although she knows her sisters won't tend and care for their father as she would, were she in the position

to do so, she hopes they will love and tend him as well as they can. After their snippy rejoinders she exits with a dark prediction aimed at discouraging the studied negligence she fears by appealing to their self-interest.

This seems to be what the speech means to say. What it *does*, however, is to confer on Cordelia's sisters the power to mete out the punishments Lear deserves for having cast her away and deprived himself of "a better place." She in effect commits him to prison. Repressed anger vibrates in the aphoristic bite of the final couplet predicting the inevitable results to follow from her sisters' evil disposition, and the gnomic form of the statement generalizes it, not only increasing its sense of predictive certainty but also broadening its application so that it reaches beyond the sisters to Lear: whoever covers his own faults, refuses to acknowledge his complicity, must be exposed and shamed—not only to and by others but also to and by himself; when he finally acknowledges his own guilt he will deride and hate himself, and be ashamed. Cordelia thus displaces the instrumentality of punishment to her sisters. In doing so, she covers a small fault. But she will disprove the truth—or at least escape the force—of her own prediction. For she will ultimately be vindicated by the effects of their punishment without herself having had any hand in it. Few traces of this "darker purpose" and complicity trouble her language when she returns in the fourth act. She appears to join others in perceiving herself as a merciful redeemer who was more sinned against than sinning but who has forgiven her tormentors and now returns to restore them from their crimes and woes. She joins Lear in harping on the violent wrongs her two sisters did when they threw him out of doors into the terrible storm. With its Lear-like rhetoric her accusatory speech at F 2781–90 forgets, or at some level denies, "To your professed bosomes I commit him." But to recall that phrase is to shackle their mistreatment of Lear to his mistreatment of her. Even as she blames her wicked sisters, she does so in language that betrays a touch of sororal understanding: "Had you not bin their Father, these white flakes / Did challenge pitty of them" (F 2781–82); she concedes that a father, and such a father, could fail to challenge pity. And even as she feelingly dissociates herself from the outrages they perpetrated, her language glances at his ill use of her: "Mine Enemies dogge, *though he had bit me*, / Should haue stood that night against my fire" (F 2784–85; my italics).

As I argue in "*King Lear*: The Lear Family Romance" (Chapter 3 above), the reunion scene is poignant in part because of Cordelia's moving concern, the love she shows her father in her careful tendance of him. It is also poignant because in discounting what he did to her ("No cause, no cause") she also in effect discounts her complicity in what was done to him. This

may be the only way the reunion could happen—its condition; its cost. The sense of the cause and the cost together leaves its mark on the oddly formal, aphoristic, remote words of her last speech in the play. It is especially clear in the wild ambiguity that escapes from the speaker's taut rhetoric at F 2496, "For thee oppressed King I am cast downe," in which the obviously intended message, "I'm sorrier for you than for myself," doesn't quite occlude an alternative that is, syntactically, equally plausible: "I have been cast down for your sake, defeated and imprisoned because I came to relieve your oppression."

When Cordelia third-persons herself in her first two utterances in I.I, she stages for her own benefit the orthopsychic purity of "that within which passes" the show being performed under the direction of the paternal regisseur. As she prepares to give herself to be seen, she tells herself that she can utter the truth of her love—its inexpressible depth and genuineness—only by displaying the evidence of things not seen. Thus she first "silently" decides to utter the silence that will publicize her unwillingness to go public—she first gives herself to be seen by herself; she then goes on to perform the "nothing" that expresses the inexpressibility of her inner truth. In this reading, Cordelia knows and feels what she has "within that passes show," the truth of the love she won't be able to express to others because they press her to play a false Cordelia that conforms to the exigencies of their theater. But at the same time, the text of her language reveals aspects of inner truth she isn't able to express to herself because she is committed—deeply and genuinely committed—to playing a Cordelia that conforms to the exigencies of an antitheatrical ideal of integrity in which no alterity severs the union of the player with the role or the mind with the face.

Does Cordelia "bare her soul" and utter her truth in her first two asides? The transgressiveness and ambiguity of that stage convention put the issue in doubt. The speaking aloud that is the only way to share private or secret thoughts with the theater audience compromises the very distinction between private and public it is meant to dramatize. But perhaps the convention isn't clumsy after all. For in Shakespearean dramaturgy the aside, like the soliloquy, is part of the metatheatrical practice of dialogical self-representation I discussed above. Cordelia speaks to herself as to an audience, addresses herself as if she were an actor who rehearses and monitors her performance preparatory to staging it before others ("What shall *Cordelia* speak? Loue, and be silent") and who anticipates the effect of their interpretation ("Then poor *Cordelia*"). Whether one takes the asides to express sentiments meant for her ears alone or to solicit the attention of

a Judge more sympathetic and fair than the one who is about to oppress her, they have the force of preemptive self-justification.

My reading of Cordelia's language discloses the interplay of several familiar language-games that exceed the evident range of the speaker's *vouloir-dire*. Although the speaker seems for the most part to nest deeply and securely within a benign representation of her motives and actions, her language is more troubled than she is. Discourses of victimization, justification, and retribution complicate her investment in a discourse of filial love that is seasoned by occasional infusions of the discourses of the truthsayer and the saint. The desire of victimization and justification already troubles the asides in which she anticipates the impossibility of publishing her virtues. Thus, while the performativity of self-representation ensconces Cordelia in the orthopsychic identity she desires and imagines for herself, the performativity of her speech acts continuously structures the dramatic action to ensure both her complicity with her sisters and her ability to remain unaware of it.

✤

"More sinned against than sinning": the victim/revenger's formula indicates a subversive and potentially destabilizing element in the discourse, for it glances at sinning on the victim's part. "More sinning than sinned against" expresses the confessional logic of the sinner's discourse. Aiming the revenger's discourse inward, it motivates its users (its agents or subjects) to desire to be punished, to expose themselves to the judgment they feel they deserve.[26] Having discussed the operation of this discourse in Edgar's language, I turn now to a very different example in order to give some indication of the variety of forms it takes. The example is Prince Harry's first soliloquy in the *Henriad*, and by way of introduction I repeat a thesis I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, which is that as we move through the tetralogy Richard II's voicing of the sinner's discourse reverberates with increasing force. It infiltrates the language of Henry IV, who tries without much success to suppress it with querulous appeals to the victim/revenger's discourse and an occasional rueful longing to appropriate the saint's discourse he knows he could not perform with any conviction. Henry constructs his son as Richard's surrogate, "mark'd" by "the rod of heaven, / To punish my mistreadings" (1 *Henry IV* 3.2.10–11), and also as a "young wanton, and effeminate boy," a Ricardian Prodigal Son going amok in the big city (*Richard II* 5.3.1–12). The soliloquy shows how enthusiastically Harry participates in this construction.

Near the end of the first tavern scene, Harry reluctantly agrees to the ingenious plot proposed by Poins after Falstaff leaves. The plot is ingenious because Poins shifts the emphasis from theft to a practical joke on the thief, and he thus offers the cautious prince both moral protection and a chance to baffle his misleader. So it is to be expected that the prince, who seemed just a few minutes earlier to be in his element as Happy Hal the Corinthian wit-cracker, would appreciate Poins's thoughtful concern for his fears and scruples. Yet when Poins exits, the speaker left alone on stage shows no sign of gratitude:

> I know you all, and will awhile uphold
> The unyok'd humor of your idleness.
> Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
> Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
> To smother up his beauty from the world,
> That, when he please again to be himself,
> Being wanted he may be more wonder'd at
> By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
> Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.
> (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.190–98)

This moment of self-revelation is our first glimpse of Harry as Henry burning off the mist of Hal, and it is marked by his first shift from prose banter to the ritual formality of blank verse. The shift produces the odd effect that, just when he could be expected to speak what he feels, not what he ought to say, he sounds like he is making a speech, rehearsing a preformulated scenario, before an audience. Dr. Johnson thought the soliloquy artful because it "keeps the prince from appearing vile in the opinion of the audience," and the comment becomes more interesting if we redirect it toward the only opinion and audience of which the soliloquist can be aware.[27]

The speech has been a critical battleground for obvious reasons, which don't need to be rehearsed at this late date. It has long been thought that Shakespeare wrote it to reassure the audience that the speaker was very different from his genuinely rakish counterpart in *The Famous Victories*. This is reassuring only if you overlook the simple point that the difference resides in Harry's pretending to be the counterpart, a pretense the motives and moral implications of which the Harry-haters make much. The prince's defenders join battle on this point. A committed meliorist like Dover Wilson argues that such a speech in Shakespeare's time was a convention whose "function was to convey information to the audience about the general drift of the play, much as a prologue did," and that it is therefore absurd to "charge him with meanness . . . for not communicating to Falstaff what

Shakespeare makes him, for technical reasons, tell the theater."[28] A much more cautious meliorist like William Empson, during the course of his long essay on Falstaff devoted chiefly to dogging Dover Wilson, doesn't deny "that the placing of this soliloquy is meant to establish Hal as the future hero as firmly as possible." But he fails to see "that it does anything (whether regarded as a 'convention' or not) to evade the obvious moral reflection, obvious not only to the more moralizing part of the audience but to all of it, that this kind of man made a very unreliable friend." Empson nevertheless ends up on Wilson's team: "The basic point of Henry's first soliloquy, saying that he will be more admired later because he is despised now, is not a cynical calculation to betray his friends but a modestly phrased reassurance that he is learning how to be a national king," and in any event the story of his "useful development"—which Empson views as a justification of Falstaff's tutelage—"does not need us to suppose that Henry was very good to start with."[29] This position is a little wobbly, and I suspect it is because Empson, no less than Dr. Johnson and Wilson, assesses the speech primarily in terms of its effect on the audience. Presumably he means that Harry's "modestly phrased reassurance" is directed at "us," the audience to whom the unsettling "moral reflection" is "obvious." But everything becomes more interesting if attention is redirected from the audience in the theater to the auditor in the speaker.

The speech as a whole reveals intense ambition. But it also reveals an equally intense desire for personal (not only royal) legitimacy—a desire to maintain self-esteem while winning the esteem of others. For the terms in which he conceives of his scenario confront that desire with a problem. To cite one example, his promise to imitate the sun is poised between a condescending emphasis on the one-sidedness of the conflict and a censorious emphasis on the culpable violence of those who are cast as "the base contagious clouds," "the foul and ugly mists / Of vapors." Since these antagonists are trying to strangle the sun-prince, they will deserve what they get after he has finished using them as a screen.[30] The terms of the nature image he chooses enable him illogically to suggest that the clouds are doing to the sun-prince what he is actually planning to make them do. But the image subverts itself because mists and vapors are raised—upheld—by the sun before being burned off (cf. 4.1.111–12; *Henry V* 4.3.100–103), as they will be when the carnival moves from Eastcheap to Westminster:

> If all the year were playing holidays,
> To sport would be as tedious as to work;
> But when they seldom come, they wish'd-for come,
> And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents . . . (1.2.199–202)

This utterance invites deceleration because it seeks the reassurance of proverbial wisdom in the tone of the earnest explainer who carefully rehearses its adversative logic as if to make sure he gets it right.[31] One can safely guess at his intention: he means to tell himself that when he leaves his carnival among the base contagious rioters, "when this loose behavior I throw off," the reformation he plans to stage will so glitter "o'er my fault" as to surprise and delight the world at large like an unexpected holiday. And of course since he wishes that holiday for himself and is currently playing holidays all the year, he may mean to argue that he finds this preliminary Falstaffian carnival tedious but necessary to the achievement of that goal. But *does* he find it tedious, or is he only telling himself that in order to justify upholding (and enjoying) it for a while? And does he also mean to tell himself that the ugly Falstaffian mists he raises and hides behind will be sacrificed as scapegoats in preparation for the real carnival—the one briefly savored at Shrewsbury, ritually inaugurated at the end of *2 Henry IV*, and extended through *Henry V*? Does he already anticipate violently dispelling those mists as just punishment for their violent threat to, their attempted thievery of, "the day's beauty" (1.2.25)? For surely the touch of anger flaring forth at lines 192–94 of the soliloquy responds to the Actaeonic provocation of Falstaff's earlier association of the future king with "our noble and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal."

Obscure motives and unruly impulses lurking under the probable intentional surface of Harry's language make its bottom hard to discern, cloud it with uncertainties that resist penetration now and may possibly resist it later. But the pulse of a restrained violence intensified by deferral and building toward a moment of release can be felt beating under the intentional surface. It quickens during the remainder of the speech, which already tangs with the foretaste of carnival:

> So when this loose behavior I throw off,
> And pay the debt I never promised,
> By how much better than my word I am,
> By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
> And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
> My reformation glitt'ring o'er my fault,
> Shall show more goodly, and attract more eyes
> Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
> I'll so offend, to make offence a skill,
> Redeeming time when men think least I will. (1.2.203–12)

I think it is by now apparent that the positive question, "What does he mean to say? What is he trying to tell himself?" needs to be supplemented

by its negative, "What is he trying not to mean? What is his language saying that he doesn't want to hear?" For example, does he want to hear himself saying what I hear him saying when he plans to "falsify men's hopes"? For no matter what we suppose the utterer to intend, the utterance is open to Greenblatt's paraphrase: "to exceed . . . and . . . also to disappoint . . . expectations, to deceive men, to turn their hopes into fictions, to betray them."[32] I imagine that Harry would prefer to have his speech read back to him by Alan Dessen, who endorses him as "a notable and crucial exception" in a world where everyone else "readily finds reasons not to pay their debts or keep their vows." Harry "pays all his debts, even those he never promised," and Dessen thinks this is fine.[33] Such a reading would protect Harry from Leonard Tennenhouse's judgment on him: he is Shakespeare's "most memorable figure of misrule," and his career proves that "legitimate order can only come into being through disruption."[34] (Tennenhouse doesn't venture an opinion as to whether Harry's language may be troubled by the same insight, and the possibility that it may—that Dessen's idealization might not make Harry entirely comfortable after all—is what I find most compelling in Shakespeare's portrait.)

It has often reasonably been assumed that Harry is falsifying hopes or causing disappointment by playing the rake. But that isn't what he says. He says he will falsify hopes by reforming, which implies that when his loose behavior deceives men he counts on their hoping he will come to no good end, will remain corrupt, so that he may suffer for or they may profit from his evil ways. Falstaff is not the only intended victim of the imposture. The vagueness of the phrase "men's hopes," even as it defends against the specific identification of victims, gestures beyond the tavern. One of the provocations behind the soliloquy is Falstaff's report that "an old lord of the Council rated me the other day in the street about you" (81–83). The plural form of Harry's phrase no doubt muffles a reference to his father, but it also embraces the Establishment in general: *old*, *lord*, and *Council* index the three aspects—generational, social, and political—of authority targeted by "the paradigm of prodigal rebellion," which, as Richard Helgerson (whose words these are) has shown, expressed central cultural tensions in sixteenth-century England.[35]

The deception or betrayal that Greenblatt mentions has a more insidious dimension: Falstaff's hopes and Henry's will be falsified in contrary ways, but in both cases such falsification *presupposes the planting of false hopes.* Harry assumes or hopes that he can deceive them into hoping for the worst so that he can show them up for the ill-wishers they are. The aggressive and self-justifying cynicism of the epithets "base contagious" and "foul and

ugly" is transferred to the word *hopes* and suggests the same disclaimer of responsibility for the false impression he plans to encourage. From this standpoint, what he owes them is not only the reformation that will pay off the debt incurred by profligacy but also the disappointment that will reward or punish them for their false hopes.

I have put the harshest construction on the soliloquy, have ascribed sentiments to it that one might expect to hear from Iago, Edmund, and Richard III, and, perhaps because the soliloquy lacks their peculiar verve, their self-amused or self-loathing delight in speaking evil, I have made it seem even more unpleasant. But I do this to bring out the problem that confronts a speaker who, as I imagine him, has good intentions, is confident that he can overcome the handicap he gives himself and win the world's esteem, but would also like to assure himself that he is worthy of his own esteem. Otherwise it would not be a problem. An interesting approach to the moral dilemma his scenario poses for him has been opened up by Joseph Porter in his experimental application of speech-act theory to the *Henriad*. Porter argues that it makes a difference whether we take the soliloquy (a) as a statement of intent ("My intention is to throw off this loose behavior, falsify men's hopes, etc.") or (b) as a promise ("I promise to throw off this loose behavior, falsify men's hopes, etc."). With (a), Porter claims, "Hal is autonomous—he has a plan which he deigns to state; and this fits with the picture of him as a sort of hypocritical schemer. With (b), however, Hal is placing himself under an obligation to act in a certain way—he is being morally responsible."[36] This is a valuable distinction, but the notion that falsifying hopes is being morally responsible strikes me as a little weird. I think his problem can better be formulated by modifying Porter's (b) as follows: Harry is placing himself under an obligation to *play-act* in a certain way, and promising to perform in such a manner as to persuade the world that when he pays the debt he will have become morally responsible. This implies that he assumes (or would like to assume) he is already morally responsible, even now, as he contemplates falsifying hopes.

Porter believes that—given the very different implications of (a) and (b)—"it is important [for us] to decide of what sort Hal's illocutionary act is."[37] I believe it is more important for *Harry* to decide what sort it is, and to decide that it is (b), even though it may be hard for him to avoid at least suspecting it is (a), since the two kinds of speech act are entangled with each other in the utterance. The problem his soliloquy confronts him with seems to me to be identical with that which attends his claim to France in *Henry V*: "May I with right and conscience make this claim," or play out this scenario? He is no fox; right and conscience are important to him.

Therefore, since he obviously enjoys the language that expresses his power, autonomy, and theatrical ability, it may also be important for him to disarm his conscience by acknowledging the pleasure in terms that will enable him to deal with it. Thus he attenuates his awareness of hypocritical intention (a) by transforming it into the promise to reform (b). And the threat of (a) is further forestalled by the complex figure that concludes the soliloquy and begins at line 207, "And like bright metal . . ."

The puns and images in these lines reconceive the promise in aesthetic and heroic terms as a precious display, a theatrical triumph, and an honorable encounter. When I visualize the bright metal with which he plans to pay off the debt I think first of a coin, a royal medallion struck off to commemorate the anticipated victory. After that, I think of a sword, and then my eye is attracted to the alliterating filament threaded through the sullen ground: *falsify-fault-foil-offence*. The last two words strike off another image: that of dueling.[38] The undertone of violence persists, but it changes to a less devious, more forthright image, and one that characterizes the soliloquy as a whole, the image of aggression controlled and blunted: not an ambush or robbery or unequal assault by the almighty sun, but a dream of honor that goes Hotspur one better. Harry will redeem his "banish'd honors" in a battle of wits, a test of skill undertaken with foils rather than rapiers. And his honor will be increased by giving all odds to the enemy. Putting on loose behavior will mobilize a royal troop of ill-wishers against him and make the underdog's single-handed victory more admirable. The rationale of the Crispin's Day speech already glimmers on the horizon: "The fewer men, the greater share of honor"; "if it be a sin to covet honor, / I am the most offending soul alive"; "We few, we happy few" (*Henry V* 4.3.22, 28–29, 60).

What Harry seeks, however, is not mere Hotspurian honor, but the justification that will confirm his sense of probity. The structural pattern of his confirmative activity in all three plays is to exchange bad humors or bad conscience for good, and the problem that confronts him as a result of this moral economy is, how can he respect the respect of those he aims his virtues at if the validating audience on whom he depends consists of those he plans to deceive? Won't the very success of his strategy keep alive the fear it is designed to bury? Won't the double-edged glitter of his benign intentions perpetually renew the sullen ground of the fault that foils them? The language of his soliloquy both suggests and responds to a suspicion that the scenario is morally reprehensible—not merely because it is hypocritical but because it implicates him in the bad faith of scapegoating others and disclaiming responsibility for it.

I agree with Ernst Kris that Harry's paramount concern is moral sol-

vency, and that his playing the rake may be interpreted as both a comment on the bankruptcy of usurpation and a defense against it.[39] But the line of argument I have been developing suggests a strategic function closer to home: he invests moral capital in the Prodigal Son role in order to minimize risk, for to pretend to a form of wickedness he knows himself unaffected by does not jeopardize his self-esteem. Indeed, it may temporarily work to divert himself as well as others from the suspicion of a more profound culpability. And if the device proves not to persuade him, he will have to depend all the more on the validation he receives from the world on that glorious day when, after a single encounter or change of status, the issue will be resolved for all time. To dream of a one-time future reformation may well serve to dispel the fear that reformation is something he needs now and always. The melodramatic form of the noble change he purposes has the look of a failsafe device calculated to burn off any mists of self-doubt the scenario trails behind it. Thus, what disturbs the Harry-hating critics of *Henry V* is already present early in *1 Henry IV*, but their formulation of the problem exposes them to the charges leveled by Richard Levin, Gary Taylor, and others. My formulation differs from theirs in identifying the problem with Harry as Harry's problem with Harry, in postulating that Shakespeare represents Harry as a potential Harry-hater, and in locating the essential interest of his portrayal in Harry's struggle for moral (not merely political) legitimacy.

<div align="center">⁜</div>

I began my account of the ethical language-games with Lear's formula for the victim/revenger's discourse because it offers two advantages. The first is that Lear's voicing of the formula brings out its close and troubled relation—its susceptibility—to the sinner's discourse encoded in the inversion of the formula. The second is that the sinner's discourse shares this inversion with another that seems superficially to be its opposite: "more sinning than sinned against" is also the formula for the villain's discourse. The obvious difference and similarity may be expressed as that between "I am a sinner, alas!" and "I am a sinner, ho ho!" But the modes of interfusion may produce complex and varied effects. Performers of the villain's discourse may shore it up by appealing to the rationale of the revenger (that is, that they were sinned against) or by reminding themselves and warning others that "I am a man." Yet as critics since Coleridge have noticed, the specific motives to which those who perform the discourse attribute their villainy often seem unconvincing, and this may have as much to do with

the displacement of motive and attention implied by the word *perform* as with motiveless malignancy pure and simple.

For the villain's discourse there is a well-demarcated site of enunciation: the soliloquy, in which the villain addresses himself as if he were a conventional stage villain taking his audience into his confidence. Shakespeare's most endearing and mischievous practitioners of this form of self-parody seem positively to enjoy the chance to strut downstage and tell themselves how bad they are. Often, however, the villain's language betrays alien discursive pressures beneath his maleficent chortles, the pressures of redistributed complicities. In plays after *Richard III*, the villain's power is compromised by the acquiescence of his victims in their victimization: Gloucester and Edgar collaborate with Edmund, Othello with Iago, Don Pedro and Claudio with Don John, and Prospero with his usurpers. A similar complicity marks the interaction of Cordelia with Lear, Falstaff with Harry, and Richard II with Bolingbroke. The self-justifying stories many of those figures tell themselves and others betray the pressure of the fear of bad faith—the fear that what they are doing to others may be worse than what others are doing to them. In the discursive activity of Richard II, Falstaff, Othello, Gloucester, and Lear the pressure is manifested by their complicity in bringing about their own victimization, suffering, or downfall. Where villains are involved, the imprint of that complicity is variously registered, but what is common to the situations of Don John, Edmund, and Iago is that something more than mere obtuseness in their victims allows the villains to get away with as much as they do, and that the villain's proud claim to be more sinning than sinned against is ironically framed within a network of discourses that reveals how much he is obligated to his victims. It is they whose use for him empowers him, which is to say it disempowers him, since it places his power at least partly in their gift; if they don't give him all, they give him more than he wants, for whatever he is given he can't take, and the ability to take is the soul of manly villainy.

This ambiguous sense of the villain's discourse seems to have emerged between *Richard III* and *Richard II*. The two player kings share a mordancy of language sharpened by the bemused, delicious, blank-eyed perception that they can be the knaves they are and get away with so much. But where Richard III "inhabits a world where everyone deserves everything he can do to them,"[40] Richard II is a little more selective in his choice of victims, and what chiefly differentiates him from Richard III is that he acts as if he deserves everything he can do or get done to *himself*. His mockery of himself, of others, and of the discourses he mimics produces a version of the

sinner's discourse that is braced by anger and black humor because it has, so to speak, ingested Richard III's villain's discourse even as he parades his victimization. In his relation to Bolingbroke, the victim's and villain's discourses shuttle back and forth between the two speakers and bind them together in strange co-dependency. Just such a co-dependency underlies and jeopardizes the performance I shall use as my example of the villain's discourse, Edmund's claim to autonomous villainy in *King Lear*.

G. K. Hunter nicely observes that "Edmund, Cordelia, Kent, all begin with powerful acts of self-definition, strong denials of their contexts," but that "the play seems . . . intent on hunting down the man who thinks he knows what he believes or even who he is."[41] Edmund clearly relishes his role as a witty knave and attacks his first soliloquy in high spirits, with a dash of chivalric bitters: "Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law / My services are bound" (1.2.1–2). More than the oath of a pagan devotee of anarchy, this is a courtly lover's tender of secret and illicit services to his master-mistress, *mi dons*, who spurs him to translate his lust into heroic villainy. The auto-erotic ambiance of this allusion underlines the real force of the apostrophe: "Thou, Edmund, art my god." The soliloquy goes on to strut the speaker's intention to have his way at the expense of his father and brother, and to justify this project on the grounds that he owes society nothing except the chance to pay it back for stripping him of his rights. With charming irreverence he argues that since "the lusty stealth" of adultery produces better children than tired married sex, primogeniture is an inefficient mechanism for the transmission of paternal *virtù*. The criterion should be, not *older before younger*, but *illegitimate before legitimate*. Aiming a kick at the cornerstone of patriarchal society, Edmund castigates it for trying to impede his progress by making a legal mountain out of a few moonshines.

Yet the bracing tonic of the soliloquy doesn't quite kick free of qualifying undertones. There is, first, something odd about the apostrophe to nature that impinges on the speaker's proclaimed freedom from obligation and convention. As a piece of courtly swash it betrays a certain affection for chivalric and aristocratic gestures, an affection clearly—if bizarrely—displayed in the final duel in 5.3, during which both brothers seem eager to embrace the knightly role and compete in exchanges of noble style, while Edmund savors a leisurely Arthurian death scene. From the beginning Edmund seems bothered primarily by the low social standing, the baseness, of bastards. Parading as nature's nobleman, he clearly respects the values of the society whose rules he intends to flout. (Courtly love is a parasite on, not a destroyer of, the tired bed of arranged marriages.) Far from wanting

to tear down the patriarchal order, he would like it to remain alive and well so that, by short-circuiting its legal impediments, he can enjoy its rewards. It isn't his father he initially plans to displace but his brother. His mention of primogeniture seems irrelevant to the project of a bastard, a stage villain, who wants only to have lands by wit if not by birth. But it is relevant if what he wants is to supersede his brother in the order of law and attain aristocratic honors—in short, to become his father's lawful heir.

This desire is reinforced and its meaning insidiously turned by a second oddity in Edmund's speech, one that surfaces in the following lines:

> Why brand they us
> With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
> Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
> More composition and fierce quality
> Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
> Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops,
> Got 'tween asleep and awake? (1.2.9–15)

Like Edmund's "I shall study deserving," "lusty stealth of nature" solicits inversion: "the stealthy lust of nature" is not only a more straightforward reference to Gloucester's lustful nature and adulterous act, it is also less complimentary; it denotes a sneaky rather than a vigorous act. Anyone attuned by Edmund's rhetoric to expect expressions of contempt for Gloucester may pause long enough to wonder why he chooses a term of admiration at this point. Perhaps it is because the speaker intends "the lusty stealth of nature" to signify an attribute of bastards rather than of their fathers. "*The lusty stealth*," however, refuses to specify the agent and produces uncertainty: whose lusty stealth, *theirs* or *ours*? *They* are the fathers whose vigorous and lustful theft of natural pleasure accounts for *our* superior quality, yet who at the same time deny us our legal share in their nature and make us their scapegoats; *we* are the bastards whose stealth is natural because our fathers force us by their denial to steal what others get by order of law, but is also lusty because we have inherited their vigor through the act by which we were conceived. Edmund thus reformulates the relation described by Gloucester in his joking dismissal of the whoreson and his mother (1.1.9–25): he is not the son of a whore but the bastard of a nobleman, his father's image in shape and mind and fierce quality.

Thus the soliloquy challenges the speaker's claim to lawless autonomy from the beginning (the challenge is implied in the self-destroying irony of the phrase "to thy Law / My services are bound"), and the attempt to say "Thou, Edmund, art my god" gradually gives way to the interdicted utter-

ance behind "Thou, Nature, art my goddess," that is, "Thou Gloucester, art my father": "my mind as generous, and my shape as true" as Edgar's, and even more deserving of Gloucester's love, since—unlike Edgar—I share our father's inclination toward lusty stealth. Playing the bravo, dissociating himself from the effeminacy of the order of law, prizing his "fierce quality": this performance argues an uneasiness about sex roles that recalls Gloucester's in 1.1 and makes it appear that Edmund is competing with Gloucester, repeating his rhetorical machismo in a more confident vein and, indeed, validating his behavior. In sum, the soliloquy that begins with a counter-patriarchal appeal to Goddess Nature ultimately reveals itself as an act of *reauthorizing* the father.

The soliloquy with which Edmund responds to Gloucester's "late eclipses" lament is a second attempt to affirm his open-eyed independence, directed this time toward the superstitions or evasions by which the tribe of fops explain misfortune. Since he has just gulled his father and knows the true source of Gloucester's unhappiness, his tone in this soliloquy is more exclamatory, a mixture of self-congratulation and contempt for others. His ability to see through the illusions of conventional men encourages him to celebrate his own freedom from obligation, and to assume full responsibility for his own villainy:

> This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behavior, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforc'd obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under *Ursa major*; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. (1.2.124–40)

Edmund's "Thou, Nature" soliloquy was a kind of self-introduction, his first chance to represent and explain himself as he would wish to be seen and understood by the villain's Model Audience. The defiant rhetorical questions, the orotund phrasing, and the lofty contempt for convention compose into the self-romanticizing, self-mythologizing figure of the rebel whose confidence as a debater is flagged by his sure control of the verse medium. But no five-foot walls of verse can hold back the rush of disdain provoked by Gloucester's attempt to ensconce himself in the seem-

ing knowledge of astrology. Edmund is still speechifying, still representing himself, but as a debunker, not a debater, and his prose has the effect of desacralizing, demythologizing, whoremaster man's celestial treasury of excuses. His use of the first-person plural is ironic mimicry intended to set himself off from the rest of "the world" while making his father the epitome of it. He can sneer at the foppery and effeminacy of a world that claims to be more sinned against than sinning.

Yet once again the logic embedded in Edmund's language contradicts his intention. Given the scene that this soliloquy concludes, it seems reasonable to accuse Gloucester of blaming the sun and moon for his sick fortune, but Edmund's reference to "the surfeits of our behavior" is a gratuitous interpolation that speaks to nothing in the preceding scene. He must still be thinking of Gloucester's adultery, and this implies that he, Edmund, the immediate cause of Gloucester's sick fortune, now blames that fortune on Gloucester himself: Father is being rewarded for his whoring and bastardizing. In other words, what Edmund does, and who he is, are his father's responsibility. His speech, therefore, doesn't manage to deliver the message that "Father should blame his sick fortune on me, since I am the master of his life and mind." Instead, the argument of the soliloquy proclaims Edmund a villain on necessity; a knave, thief, and treacher by paternal predominance; and a liar by an enforced obedience of paternal influence. He lays his disposition at the charge of his father, and in so doing echoes his father's words: "his breeding . . . hath been at my charge" resonates in the phrase "lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star." Accusing Gloucester of evading responsibility by blaming his evil on celestial and divine causes, Edmund evades responsibility by blaming his evil on paternal causes.

In this deeper mimicry he (once again) reauthorizes the father, and in his failure to control his language he lets it tell us that he feels more sinned against than sinning. This may strike us as even more sinister, or pathetic, if we hear faint echoes of Christian myth in the soliloquy—an infernal parody of the virgin birth with divine father, maidenly mother, and sacrificial bastard sent into the world to redeem it by his suffering. Luckily for Edmund, Edgar happens in at that moment, so the catastrophe of the old Christian comedy can be safely transferred to the willing surrogate, soon to be reincarnated as the self-lacerating Bethlehem pariah. Almost as if he sees his self-victimization "faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it," Edmund hastens to reconfirm himself in the villain's discourse and imagine himself in the part of the confidence man who only *plays* the outcast: "my cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam." While

Edgar is on the way to embracing this ambivalent version of the victim's discourse, Edmund sings the diabolical music and steps forward at the end of the scene to celebrate his wickedness and ensconce himself in the doggerel identity of the conventional Vice. In 2.1 Edmund will hear his father call Edgar a "strange and fast'ned villain," and although he may relish the fact that the epithet marks his own witty triumph, the phrase suggests that he, too, is fastened or bonded to his father. The words with which Gloucester crowns Edmund's achievement unpack this darker sense and renew the touch of impotence: "of my land, / Loyal and natural *boy, I'll* work the means / To make *thee* capable" (2.1.83–85).

<div align="center">⟡</div>

Among discourses of self-justification the most aggressive and expansive is that of the donor, which, as Lear's "I gave you all" clearly indicates, is a discourse of moral power and a privilege structurally bestowed on fathers, rulers, and gods, and also—with problematic consequences of a different sort—on mothers, husbands, and heroic saviors. Explicated by Marcel Mauss in his classic account of the gift as a socially mystified instrument of economic exchange used as a political weapon, the power of the gift is a bone of contention not only between different groups brought together by the traffic in women and other objects but also between the factions internal to the group and reproduced in its structure, the factions of gender and generation. It is in this context, for example, that *The Merchant of Venice* ironically explores the various strategies of what I have described as *negative usury*—generosity, mercy, self-interest—that characterize the politics of donation, strategies in which the resources of Christian ethics are used to enable the very practices the play's Christians stigmatize in the Jew. Their mercy is revenge—not a gentle rain, but a ton of bricks, or, in Gratiano's words, "A halter gratis" (4.1.375). The mercifixion that makes the Jewish pariah a Christian places the mercifiers in the scriptural position occupied by Jews. Thus, the bitterness that vibrates in Shylock's "I am content" (4.1.390) is not without its satisfaction, its mordant gratification and compensation. For he has made his point: "if you wrong us shall we not revenge?—if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that" (3.1.60–62). In the judgment scene it is the Christians whose behavior utters this message; and this is Shylock's revenge.[42]

Another feature of the donor's discourse is its intimate connection with the hero's discourse of honor. The strain produced by the conflation of the hero's discourse with the discourses of the gift and gender are compactly illustrated in *Coriolanus* 1.9, the scene in which Caius Marcius receives his

new name while responding to the attempts of his fellow generals and patricians to do him honor. In his first speech, as Lartius is about to add to Cominius's praise, Marcius demurs: "Pray now, no more. My mother, / Who has a charter to extol her blood, / When she does praise me, grieves me." Lartius lacks such a charter, and besides, Marcius adds, he has only done what any loyal citizen would do: "I have done / As you have done, that's what I can" (13–16). He goes on to deploy this modesty topos with enough arrogance to increase both his unique stature and his colleagues' obligation to recognize it. Cominius continues to praise him, but with more caution:

> You shall not be
> The grave of your deserving. Rome must know
> The value of her own.
>
> . . .
>
> Therefore, I beseech you—
> In sign of what you are, not to reward
> What you have done—before our army hear me. (1.9.19–27)

Marcius replies that he has "some wounds upon me, and they smart to hear themselves remembered." "Should they not," Cominius responds, "Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude / And tent themselves with death" (28–31).[43]

Marcius's repetition of *hear* is guardedly concessive: "my wounds, if not myself, desire to hear you." But the ambiguous "they smart to hear themselves remembered" signifies to his interlocutors that he has conflicted feelings: the wounds desire, burn, to hear themselves commemorated; they are *pained* to hear themselves commemorated; or, more simply—and with more lethal modesty—"let's cut this short; my wounds hurt; they want a *tent* and attention." The dramatically understated quantifier, "*some* wounds," and the displacement of the grammatical subject from the speaker to his wounds bespeak an aggressive coyness. It is precisely the ambiguity of the statement that allows Marcius to assert self-sufficient reluctance even as he encourages Cominius to continue with his praise.

In 2.3 the Third Citizen delivers himself of his wonderfully disgusting line, "if he show us his wounds and tell us his deeds, we are to put our tongue into those wounds and speak for them" (5–8). The metaphor conflates stabbing, sexual penetration, licking (to eat or heal), and a surgical probe or *tent* with the giving of voices that affirms Marcius's right to consular honor. Those "mouthed wounds," as Hotspur calls them, are mute, tongueless as Lavinia, for honor's tongue is always the tongue of another, and so for the hero to be honored is to receive another wound. The com-

ments on the wounds by Cominius and the Third Citizen suggest that Marcius's word, *remembered*, may also be understood as "re-membered"—healed, made whole. For this is a relevant danger: if the wounds are healed by the gratitude and praise of others, there is a way in which they can be forgotten, since the hero will have been paid back. And if he can be paid back, if his fellow Romans discharge their obligation, he will no longer be superior and unique, the sole possessor of himself and his value, the bene-factor who can claim, "I gave you all," and whose giving is enhanced by Portia's sentiment, "I stand for sacrifice." Considered as interlocutory war-fare, the dialogue with Cominius in 1.9 is a continual reassertion of this advantage and a defense against being paid back. The elegance of Marcius's refusals, themselves praiseworthy, elicit (perhaps solicit) the very "acclama-tions hyperbolical" (50) that they reject. The dialogue is itself a duel in which Cominius tries to overcome Marcius's advantage and heal the wound of obligation. Cominius scores a point by conferring the name Coriolanus on him (61–65), and his response to the acclamation (66) filters a flat "thank you" through a screen of diffidence:

> I will go wash;
> And when my face is fair, you shall perceive
> Whether I blush or no. Howbeit, I thank you. (67–69)

The next lines carefully temper the terms of his acceptance of the title, for he begins by claiming from Titus Lartius the steed he won in a wager (1.14), and links this paratactically to his acceptance of the title, implying that it, like the horse, is his by right and not by gift.

> I mean to stride your steed, and at all times
> To undercrest your good addition
> To th' fairness of my power. (70–72)

What follows, in one of the strangest moments of a strange play, is entirely consistent with this line of interpretation. Cominius takes charge by proposing a dispersal that will logically conclude the scene of Corio-lanus's triumph, which (since he urged it on Coriolanus) is also *his* triumph. Coriolanus, however, blocks this move. He delays the ending to put his col-league under another obligation; newly acclaimed, he reminds Cominius of his princely refusals of gifts and then stoops to beg a tiny favor:

> The gods begin to mock me. I, that now
> Refused most princely gifts, am bound to beg
> Of my lord general.
> Com.   Take't, 'tis yours. What is't?

> Cor.   I sometime lay here in Corioles
>   At a poor man's house; he used me kindly.
>   He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;
>   But then Aufidius was within my view,
>   And wrath o'erwhelmed my pity. I request you
>   To give my poor host freedom.
> Com.   O well begged!
>   Were he the butcher of my son, he should
>   Be free as is the wind. Deliver him, Titus.
> Lartius Marcius, his name?
> Cor.   By Jupiter, forgot!
>   I am weary; yes, my memory is tired.
>   Have we no wine here? (78–91)

This is a finely timed gesture of magnanimity, whatever else it may sug-gest. He articulates a nonthreatening debt of gratitude to one who was poor, an enemy, and a Roman prisoner, a victim of his successful assault; he failed the man then, and would like to make it up to him now. The magnanimity is extended to Cominius, but edged with the condescension of one who can well afford so modest a personal request after his trium-phant refusal. It is a way of using Cominius "kindly" by placing himself in his debt, and also by giving Cominius a chance to do a little something for the man whose monstrous favors to Rome are scarcely repayable. But his lapse of memory frustrates the project. Cominius will not be able to place him in his debt or pay him back. When Coriolanus lets the matter drop, pleads weariness, and fails the poor man again, how is this to be taken? As a planned move or a spontaneous lapse? It is impossible to determine inten-tion in so spare an episode. But that scarcely matters. What we can say is that the fate of the anonymous man seems less important than the gesture for which he provides the material; he is an instrument in the illocutionary struggle between Marcius and his interlocutors. We interpreters may dis-agree as to whether or not the speakers are aware of what motivates them, but the strategy unfolded in their discourse characterizes that motivation. The moves the speakers make in the language-game of honor are chosen, not determined; but the range of choices is constrained because the dis-course has its own logic. And for Marcius to be re-membered by others—which he clearly wants—is nevertheless to be dismembered, unmanned, in his own eyes.

✢

The permutations produced by the interplay of discourses might well light up a Greimasian square, if one is inclined to such video games. But my

concern at present is with the critical difference produced in the rhetorical tone and grammatical voicing of the interplay by the sinner's discourse. Its effect is to interrogate the motives inscribed in the speaker's performance of the other discourses. This interrogation may be characterized in grammatical terms as *diathetical*, or voice-related. For example, the relation of donor to donee, and of revenger, hero, or villain to victim (donee and victim often end up being identical), is one of active voice to passive voice. But the sinner's discourse recasts those relations in the middle voice of shared responsibility, or of complicity, and thereby destabilizes all clear distinctions based on the active/passive opposition. Thus, (1) "Look what they did to me" translates into "Look what I let or had them do to me," and (2) "Look what I'm doing to them" translates into "Look what they're letting or having me do to them," which may be another way of saying "Look what they're doing to me," which in turn gives way to "Look what I'm having or letting them do to me," namely, "what they're letting or having me do to them." In this discursive merry-go-round it seems impossible to circumscribe the limits of either responsibility or culpability within the confines of individual speakers. Complicity and the site of agency are shuttled back and forth in the oscillation of discourses within one speaker's language and in the circulation of discourses through the language of one, then another, speaker.

The middle voice diffuses the force of any attribution of agency by placing the subject of the verb "inside the process" so that "it effects while being affected," as in "Look what I let or had them do to me" and "Look what they're letting or having me do to them."[44] These two examples get their force from their demystifying modification of the simple active constructions to which they are coupled. And even if in the second and longer of my two sequences the discursive merry-go-round concludes on a note of vertiginous cynicism, the force remains moral. As Hayden White observes, in Greek the differences "between the active and the middle forms of the same verb have to do with the kind of consciousness on the part of the subject involved in the action indicated and the force of involvement of the subject in the action"; the middle voice "is used especially to indicate those actions informed by a heightened moral consciousness on the part of the subject performing them."[45] The shift from "Look what they did to me" to "Look what I let or had them do to me" precisely illustrates such heightening; structurally, it is the grammatical equivalent of the shift from the victim's to the sinner's discourse.

Benveniste defines "voice" as "the fundamental diathesis of the subject in the verb; it denotes a certain attitude of the subject with relation to the

process—by which the process receives its fundamental determination." He notes that one advantage of his account of the middle voice is that "it frees us from resorting to the elusive and, moreover, extralinguistic notion of the 'interest' of the subject in the process."[46] But the "interest" of the subject is by no means an extra*discursive* notion, and the humanistic rhetoric of White's phrase, "heightened moral consciousness," marks a level of analysis that is pertinent to the discursive interactions discernible in Shakespeare's text. The interactions that most concern me are those in which heightened moral consciousness is conspicuously excluded but exerts its force, reveals its traces, in the uneasy rhetoric of—for example—a speaker caught between opposing desires of self-punishment and revenge; a speaker in whose language the forbidden desire for revenge seeks to conceal itself by displacing punitive power into the discourse of the other(s) delegated both to enact and punish the desire and to suffer for it. In this situation, "heightened moral consciousness" may describe "a certain attitude of the subject," an "interest" adhering to the project of self-representation, but an attitude and interest that may betray themselves even to the subject as marks of the bad faith that intensifies guilt. Thus the discursive interplay that underwrites Edgar's Poor Tom scenario produces mutually intensifying oscillations between guilt and self-loathing, on the one hand, and anger and defensive self-justification, on the other. Edgar's language betrays a conscience that is "heightened" in the sense of "made more irritable."[47]

Edgar, Lear, Cordelia, Gloucester, and Kent all try to ensconce themselves in the victim's discourse, and most of them at one point or another activate its passive-aggressive potentialities. The sense of injured merit and unappreciated (therefore depreciated) value is strongest or at least most durable in the self-representations of Cordelia and Kent. They compete with each other—and with the king who failed to appreciate them—in the deeds of soterial service by which they lovingly and loyally Rise Above what had been done to them. The speech performances of Edgar and Lear are more persistently troubled by traces of the self-directed fears and scruples against which their rhetoric defends with a verve at times flamboyant, at times zany.

❖

Victim, revenger, donor, hero, villain, savior, sinner: such patterns have lent themselves almost too readily to characterization in terms of role theory. Thus, in his powerful reading of *Othello*, James Calderwood notes that in the protagonist's attempt to give "an honest account of the true Othello,"

what emerges is not the image of a unique and essential self but a series of generic snapshots: The Soldier-Servant ("I have done the state some service"), The Unfortunate Lover ("one that loved not wisely but too well"), The Jealous Avenger . . . , then more ambiguously The Unlucky Indian or The Villainous Judean, and finally a fusion of the Infidel Turk and the Venetian Christian. Instead of a core-self discoverable at the center of his being, Othello's "I am" seems a kind of internal repertory company, a "we are."[48]

Calderwood argues that if "an expression like 'I am playing roles' raises the question of whether the *I* is something separate from the roles played," *Othello* answers the question in the negative: "even when he tries to tell the definitive inner truth about his essential self he is inevitably led outward to the generically commonplace—The Soldier-Servant, The Unfortunate Lover, and so on." Although Othello tries in his final speech to justify his earlier claim that " 'My parts, my title, and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly' . . . the unique *me* is betrayed by its generic manifestations, even as the word *parts* turns false and takes on a theatrical cast. That the self is a series of parts tried on, acted out, and left behind is most memorably expressed perhaps in Jacques' [sic] account of the seven ages of man in *As You Like It* (2.7)" (104–5).

In his expressly Lacanian attempt to interrogate the "essential self," Calderwood insists that the analogy of an actor playing parts falsifies the relation of the *I* to its roles (104). Yet his own reliance on the theatrical metaphor and his appeal to Jaques's speech tend to obscure this point, for they encourage us to imagine that *some* agent, some unrepresented "self," is trying on and acting out the parts that multiply represent the plural self. In order to carry out a Lacanian interrogation, one would have to place Jaques's "all the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" in contraposition to another formula, "all the world's a text, and all the men and women merely characters"—characters first in the graphic sense (alphabetic inscriptions), then in the theatrical sense (dramatis personae), which may further include the two ethic senses (having character, being a character). In this contraposition, the men and women who represent themselves to themselves and each other as players of roles are (whether or not they are aware of it) simultaneously being represented as the roles, the characters, the dramatis personae, written and performed by—by whom, or rather, by what? By the motives, the desires, the fears, inscribed in language. Not, however, in language *tout court*, not even in what Lacan calls the "symbolic" *tout court*, but in the "discourse networks" of specific "social texts."

I don't mean to imply that "all the men and women" are reduced to sites or conduits of autonomous discursive agency. Both sides of the contra-

position, the theatrical and the discursive, are equally important to this dialectical conceptualization of agency. The relation between discourse and roles in some respects resembles the relation between the Symbolic and the Imaginary implied by Lacan's rhetoric if not by the surface of his exposition: the Imaginary is the product, the genealogical back-formation, the ghost or specter, of the Symbolic, the reductive embodiment of discursive patterns in (quasi-)perceptual and organic forms. The Imaginary is to the Symbolic as the body is to a text.[49] The structures of the Imaginary are produced by condensation, displacement, and visualization of the Symbolic; the structures of theatrical or social role are produced by similar transformations of discourse. To advert briefly to another lexicon, role is logocentric while discourse is grammatocentric.

Social and theatrical roles, which Calderwood aptly describes as "a series of generic snapshots," are thus foreshortened versions, misrecognitions, of the discourses they represent. But the main obstacle posed by the figure of role-playing to the interpretation of discourses is that the sociotheatrical notion of role freezes and personifies what in textual perspective are dynamic and interactive discourses; role is the detextualization and allegorization of discourse. Were a speaker's language to be wholly invested in or taken over by a single discourse he or she would become a personification. The volatility with which discourses combine and modify each other, or flow in and out of each other, in the speech action of major speakers can't possibly be captured by the image of serial role-switching suggested in Calderwood's figure of the "internal repertory company." The figure is, however, valuable in one respect: as "generic snapshots," roles are conventional personae, cultural readymades that preexist their players and possess distinct and relatively stable characterological profiles. Similarly, the discourses individually possess distinct and relatively stable motivational profiles and are part of the cultural capital of speech communities. They are language-games in Wittgenstein's sense, readymade community practices informed by socially constructed patterns not only of behavior but also of self-representation.

It should be obvious that the distinction between role and discourse conforms to the distinctions I previously made between the two senses of performance and between the two interpretive principles I referred to as metatheatrical and discursive. My focus in discussing the previous distinctions was on the limits of awareness occasioned by the difference between the attentiveness to self-representation that dominates speakers' relations to their utterance (and to their interlocutors), on the one hand, and the tacit performativity of the discourses that inhabit their speech, on the other. In

making the present distinction between role and discourse on the heels of my account of Shakespeare's ethical discourses, I have tried to suggest that self-representation is shown to motivate not only the interlocutory performances of speakers but also, if more obscurely, the shape their use of language gives to—or is given by—the interplay of discourses. Discourses, then, are patterns of reflexive self-representation that operate at a level different from, and often at odds with, the patterns disclosed by imaginary audition in speakers' rhetorico-theatrical performances.

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Most of the ethical discourses I have been sampling are keyed to dominant or characteristic practices in different types of institutional and cultural formations—the practices and strategies involved in gift exchange, warfare, vendetta, or those involved in maintaining (or transgressing, or renegotiating) boundaries between genders, generations, and classes. Since the discourses are patterns of reflexive self-representation, it is better to view them as functions loosely affiliated to such general *types* of structure rather than as functions of historically specific situations in a cultural sequence or configuration. But a cluster or network of discourses the interactions and performances of which are destabilized by the traces of the sinner's discourse obviously belongs to the sequence or configuration we call the Christian era, and to the historically motivated task of constructing a particular form of *identity*, which is another term for a paradigm of reflexive self-representation.

The formation of Christian identity presupposes and exploits the recognition that the human subject is self-divided by its entry into, its imprisonment within, mediation. This identity is founded on the desire, the promise, and the hope of transcending self-division and mediation toward unmediated union with self and God. The desire itself is animated by a cultural decision to treat self-division not as an ontological and therefore morally neutral effect of the entry into mediation but as a fall, an unregenerate state for which the subject is responsible, is culpable, but which—precisely because the state is ontological—the subject cannot transcend merely by its own effort. Christian identity thus exhibits the basic attributes of narcissism in the Lacanian definition I prefer: "the impossible effort of the subject to reunite with himself in his own objectified image . . . within the register of representation" and the consequent "alternation between self-deprecation and pretension."[50] One aim of many traditional strategies of identification is to construct subjectivity as an agency continuously chal-

lenged or summoned or called upon to give an account (that is, a representation) of itself to itself as well as to others. The desideratum of *continuousness* means that interpellation, as Althusser appropriately calls the subjectifying process, is never merely inscription, or is partial inscription at most. In the passage from tuition to intuition the challenge or summons is internalized by a dialectical procedure: interpellation is the simultaneous generation of the desire to resist the cultural discourse of inscription and the desire to resist the resistance and voluntarily complete the work of inscription that "society" began but left unfinished. The objective of continuous challenge is continuous dissatisfaction with self-representation.

This unhappiness is narcissism, and the Lacanian account of it given by Joan Copjec precisely describes that objective in its Christian form: narcissism must

> consist in the belief that one's own being exceeds the imperfections of its image. Narcissism . . . seeks the self beyond the self-image, with which the subject constantly finds fault and in which it constantly fails to recognize itself. What one loves in one's image is something *more* than the image. . . . Thus is narcissism the source of the malevolence with which the subject regards its image, the aggressivity it unleashes on all its own representations. And thus does the subject come into being as a transgression of, rather than in conformity to, the law. It is not the law, but the fault in the law—the desire that the law cannot ultimately conceal—that is assumed by the subject as its own.[51]

In Christian discourse, the meaning of the phrase "the fault in the law" is best glossed by St. Paul's "I had not known sin but for the law," which may be unpacked as follows: what I desired and did wasn't sinful in my eyes until the law told me it was; the new knowledge simultaneously intensifies guilt and intensifies desire by making the once-accessible fruit forbidden and thus more tempting; the law arouses resistance to itself and punishes as it arouses; this double effect makes me feel more unworthy, sinful, helpless to overrule the contrary "law of the members," and it thus drives me to resist my resistance—drives me beyond myself and beyond the law toward the violence of grace that alone can shatter and transform and redeem both.[52]

Christian discourse is—to give it an Althusserian acronym—an ICA: an Ideological Cultural Apparatus for the production of narcissism. It aims to instill in the subject an initial and sometimes lasting effect of self-deprecation, insufficiency, even self-loathing. It actively cultivates the self-division, the psychomachia, latent in the very structure of subjectivity as an agency that apprehends itself, is present to itself, only through historically delimited forms of mediation and representation. It induces the sinner

to seek identification with "the self beyond the self-image" in the forms of self-transcendence sanctioned by God and Church. These forms and inducements undergo historical variations within a more or less constant paradigm: Christian ideology establishes guilt at three levels—as an ontological structure, as articulations of ethical agency, and as a pattern of self-representation. The first is established through the concept of original sin, the second through the various categoreal schemes enumerating particular sins and vices, the third through confessional and penitential practices designed to maintain or refresh bad conscience and give shape to the interior drama of the sinner's discourse.

The constancy of this paradigm derives from that of the Old Testament narrative transformed by the Gospel into the Greatest Story Ever Told, the story to which St. Paul "gave a structured character. . . . After Adam's crime, man, cut off from Redemption, is . . . inevitably bound unto eternal death. . . . Nevertheless, this black picture is rigorously made only to heighten, in contrast, the necessity and grandeur of Christ's redemptive mission. Original and personal sin become an integral part of a system of salvation, whose other component is justification."[53] Susan Harding's characterization of the effect of the rhetoric of contemporary fundamentalist discourse testifies to the durability of the paradigm and reproduces, in the pathos of conversion, a condensed and therefore parodic manifestation of the universal subject of semiotics and psychoanalysis:

> I am emptied, stripped of all vestiges of personality and uniqueness. My life is rendered meaningless, my past erased. I am primarily distinguished by what I lack, and, given my lacking, by what I need. I stand for absence, for void, yet I am aware of something more, something missing, unseen, hidden, and I come to need that, to desire it, perhaps to crave it, and am thus launched on a quest for affirmation and revelation which may be achieved only through conversion. All this is accomplished in me by implication and presupposition, not by direct argument. My consent is not sought; I am implicated, already enlisted as a collaborator, in my own metamorphosis.[54]

The quest for affirmation is a quest for identification, for what Lacan calls "the armor of an alienating identity" in which one may lose oneself, may disappear into the peace of union with the Other. This is narcissism with a vengeance. The necessarily schismogenetic effect of mediation and self-representation is here displaced from the defining structural condition of subjectivity to a defective but corrigible state of consciousness and desire that is posited precisely so that it may be "treated" and "cured." The power of this ideological construction lies in its appropriative reliance on the basic

model of subjectivity as self-division. I cite Harding's account because its sympathetic responsiveness to the power is balanced by its implicit critique of the interest, the bad faith, with which Christian rhetoric strives to transform the universal effect of mediation—the fate of subjectivity—into the goal of an ideological project: "Witnessing, like evangelical preaching, 'is intended to create a spiritual crisis by calling to the fore one's desperate and lost condition, which one may have been totally unaware of.'"[55] I have tried to show that the same combination of sympathy and ironic distance informs Shakespeare's dramatizations of the sinner's discourse. But if that can be shown, the historical question remains: What makes such a perspective possible? Given the constancy and durability of the Christian paradigm, what specific changes in cultural performance of the sinner's discourse makes possible the sympathetic critique of a discourse that produces guilt by rhetorical inoculation?

Historians of Christianity often factor into their diachronic patterns the fluctuating relations of the sinner's discourse to the official and institutionally sanctioned discourses of the Church. The Lutheran critique of the sacramental and confessional abuses of the discourse, and the attempt to extricate it from the "shackles" of Catholic ritual, have been shown to give it a new and more flexible life in a variety of media that transgressed the boundaries between sacred and secular authority. It has seemed obvious to many that an important aim and effect of the reforms initiated by Luther and Calvin was to intensify the pressure of the sinner's discourse in the economy of self-representation. Arguing from other evidence, the archive of "the history of manners," Norbert Elias found this intensification already at work in Catholic Europe. He attributes it to the effects of humanism, literacy, and the need to respond to destabilizing pressures on class structure with new techniques of boundary maintenance that relied on the internalization of social control: "The development Elias has traced in the period," writes Steven Mullaney, "represents, on the one hand, the secularization and expansion of the realm of scrutiny from that of sin to the minutiae of everyday life, and on the other, the incorporation of judgmental authority within the self. The result was an expanded threshold of shame and apprehension."[56] I give the Elias thesis in Mullaney's words because he cites it in support of his argument that the Elizabethan public theater took over some of the psychological functions leached out of confession by the Reformation's attempt to eliminate the priestly confessor's "apprehensive powers" (100). He claims that this "theater of (self) apprehension" (132) had the power "to induce an audience . . . to view themselves as actors in their

own lives" (113), to produce in them "a sense of dread or shame, . . . a sense of being observed . . . that made the spectators, in an imaginary but potent sense, the object of their own gaze" (102).

Stephen Greenblatt's distinction between theater and ritual—the former "elicits from us complicity rather than belief"—is the epigrammatic germ from which Mullaney develops his account of the crisis produced by the Reformation in "the symbolic economy of the period" (91, 96), a crisis in which the weakening of customary mytho-ritual controls was offset by technologies of justice, edification, and display reinforced by such "partly illicit cultural phenomena" (97) as that most dangerous supplement, the popular stage.[57] Greenblatt's examination of a variety of texts leads him to conclude that "Renaissance England had a subtle conception of the relation between anxiety and the fashioning of the individual subject, and its governing institutions developed the discursive and behavioral strategies to implement this conception by arousing anxiety and then transforming it through pardon into gratitude, obedience and love. These strategies," he adds, "are already implicated in cultural practices that are essential to the making and staging of plays." The theater is "a virtual machine" for the production and management of "salutary anxiety."[58] But even as he comments on "the startling increase in the level of represented and aroused anxiety" in the dramaturgy of Marlowe and Shakespeare (133), Greenblatt notes theater's stake in the process: "Anxiety takes its place alongside other means—erotic arousal, the excitement of spectacle, the joys of exquisite language . . . —that the players employ to attract and satisfy their customers. The whole point of anxiety in the theater is to make it give such delight that the audience will pay for it again and again" (134–35).

There is of course a difference between claiming that the drama represents a theater of "(self) apprehension"—that is, represents dramatis personae who view themselves apprehensively as actors in their own lives—and claiming that it had this effect on actual audiences. While I strongly support the first claim, I'm not convinced by the evidence Mullaney adduces for the second. I can well imagine that plays induced and produced such effects, though I'm not sure how I could go about verifying that hypothesis. Greenblatt's remarks on Marlowe and Shakespeare suggest a more guarded view that implies the distinction between virtual and actual audiences: his emphasis falls on the playwrights' efforts to arouse anxiety and on the effect the plays were supposed to have (133–35). What seems uncontroversial is that some plays dramatize theatrical self-apprehension—represent the discursive games people play in the schismogenetic theater of self-representation—as if that is what really goes on in the extratheatrical lives of spectators,

whether or not they are aware of it. And perhaps that is evidence enough. Perhaps the documented conversion of theatrical practices to metaphors of extratheatrical practices testifies to the power of the public stage to persuade its audiences that all the world's a public stage and all the men and women merely sinners exposed to the "gaze that circumscribes [them], and . . . makes [them] beings who are looked at" even when there is no one to look at them—beings who, in giving themselves to be seen, "encounter . . . not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by [them] in the field of the Other."[59] This is unquestionably a theme of Shakespearean dramaturgy; it may or may not have been one of its effects. But as a theme—the metatheatrical theme of theater as critique of itself and of the world—it testifies to something else.

In *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Keith Thomas argues that "Malinowski's picture of magic giving way before technology" does not hold for Tudor and Stuart England: "It was the abandonment of magic which made possible the upsurge of technology, not the other way round," for "the Protestant attack on sacramental magic had severely eroded the ritual of the established Church."[60] Thomas supports his claim that magic "was on the wane" before technology "was ready to take its place" by noting that the Reformation did not "coincide with any technological revolution."[61] But this can be maintained only by a narrow construal of the term *technological*. Theater is a new technology, and so is printing, and, together with new developments in the visual arts and what Martin Kemp calls "the science of art," they compose a technological revolution of a particular kind: a revolution in technologies of representation and self-representation.[62] There may still, as Mullaney insists, be residual or displaced magic in the web of theatrical technology, but its displacement from religious to secular technology exposes not only the magic to the disenchantment process but also the whole psychological system constructed to justify and indeed to necessitate the confessional and penitential functions of sacramental magic, the system of Christian narcissism that has the sinner's discourse as its centerpiece.

Greenblatt's discussion of theatrical anxiety and pleasure suggests that to the series of proliferating oppositions Mullaney picks out—Protestant vs. Catholic, monarchy vs. papacy, Puritan vs. Anglican—we should add another: theater vs. all of the above. And whether we think of theater's relations to the others as one of contained or of uncontained subversion, it provides the stage from which Shakespeare launches a sustained textual inquiry into the uses and abuses of the religious ideology and discursive economy centered on the sinner's discourse. To understand this inquiry we have to begin with the obvious fact that guilt and redemption, the polar terms that structure the system of Christian ideology and motivate

the production of Christian narcissism, are related to each other as bound variables. As Jean Delumeau puts it, in both Catholic and Protestant versions of Christianity's narrative paradigm "menace was counterbalanced by consolation," and, especially in Lutheran homiletics, "the pair menace and consolation . . . seem to be . . . inseparable."[63]

The thesis of Delumeau's "cultural history of sin" (555)—"the history of a negative self-image" (3)—is that the menace dramatized in "guilt-instilling discourse" (550) was intensified during the early modern period: "from the fourteenth century on, even among laypeople, the formation of a guilt consciousness had become the main preoccupation of the ruling culture" (207), and the objective of an inculpatory "discourse of fear and intimidation," the appeal of which rapidly widened "from the Black Death to the end of the Wars of Religion," was to turn Christian warfare inward so as to raise consciousness of "the fear of one's self" (556, 1). The "evolution toward a culture of guilt" after Lateran IV (1215) was contemporary with and intersected a movement "to fix the theology of the sacraments and . . . aggrandize the powers of the clergy. . . . The new theology of penitence, by enlarging the priest's role, risked diminishing that of the sinner and his or her necessary contrition" (197–98). The Protestant response to this has received differently inflected interpretations. Delumeau follows Keith Thomas in emphasizing the need for measures that would alleviate the new anxiety aroused by the decline or rejection of the Church's recourse to sacramental magic (523–54). Steven Ozment, however, argues that this rejection was itself intended to alleviate anxiety: "The first Protestants attacked the medieval church for demanding too much, not too little, from laymen and clergymen, and for making religion psychologically and socially burdensome, not for taking it too lightly. . . . The traditional practice was criticized for demanding a contrition no man could achieve and leaving the penitent in doubt and anxious about forgiveness." Not that Protestants softened the sinner's discourse. On the contrary, the sinner is urged to say to himself before God, "'All that I am, whatever I say or do, is mortal and damnable'. By so maximizing the state of sin Protestants actually sought to minimize preoccupation with sinning."[64]

Ozment discusses the dilemma with which the Reformers struggled—the opposing claims of freedom and discipline, spirit and structure, the "freedom fighter" and the "new papist"—and emphasizes the care with which they tried to implement religious punishment so as not to jeopardize the final goal, which was "not to terrorize but to create 'peace, inner calm, and a quiet life'" (155–59).[65] Yet the change of focus from "sinning" to "the state of sin" must be assumed to rub against the grain of this objective. Praising Luther's *Small Catechism* for its promotion of religious freedom, and for

shifting the confessional initiative from the priest to the penitent, Ozment finds it "an irony still to be appreciated by many scholars that by so maximizing sinfulness (before God every man is guilty of every conceivable sin) Protestants tried to minimize its psychological burden (no man is required to ponder and recite his every actual sin)" (155–56). But to redirect attention from what the sinner does to what the sinner is—"What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?"—seems to be a good recipe for *normalizing* the self-representation and -flagellation of the overnice or fastidious conscience, for internalizing the confessional dialogue—("Go to your bosom, / Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know")[66]—and at the same time giving it the stability, the repeatability (citationality), of discursive form.

If we map this change onto the basic Christian paradigm, "menace counterbalanced by consolation," two consequences would seem to follow: (1) intensifying or maximizing sinfulness should be counterbalanced by the intensification of reassurance—and this is a development in religious rhetoric Ozment, Delumeau, and Thomas have all noted; (2) internalizing the menace from sins to sinfulness should be counterbalanced by a comparable internalization of reassurance so that sinners will have the discursive resources enabling them to confront increased autophobia and misautia and to reassure themselves they aren't as bad as they suspect they are. It is in this second area that Shakespeare finds material for his nuanced and varied studies of the negotiations between the sinner's discourse and the other language-games in the discourse network he depicts. (It is here, too, incidentally, that the interpreter of Shakespearean discourses can realize the value of Stanley Cavell's studies of the relation between knowing—or disowning knowledge—and acknowledging in Shakespeare. Cavell, who doesn't deal with *The Tempest*, might have made something of Prospero's "this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine.")

I note in passing that although Foucault's analysis of the compulsion to confess is ancillary to his history of the compulsion to transform sex into discourse, the analysis applies to the broader topic of the compulsion to transform sinfulness into discourse, "shifting the most important moment of transgression from the act itself to the stirrings of desire" and then "extracting from the depths of oneself . . . a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage":

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (*or virtual presence*) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which truth is corroborated

by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (my italics)

This profile of the Christian paradigm, with its concluding reassurance, is what Foucault sardonically calls "a shimmering mirage," the "internal ruse of confession": viz, that confession "frees," and the truth it brings forth "does not belong to the order of power."[67]

Students of Shakespeare influenced by Foucault have, in my opinion, diminished the rich interpretive value of his analysis by taking his one-sided emphasis on power—one-sided in that, unlike Weber and others, he doesn't distinguish between power and authority but subsumes the latter under the former—and limiting its applicability to Shakespeare's representations of political relations. I don't deny that issues of political power are central to the plays and that much can be—and has been—learned from interpretive emphases similar to or influenced by Foucault. But "the political" is a flexible category not only because it includes the micropolitics of interlocutory negotiations but also because the political issues in Shakespeare are inseparable from and modified by questions of moral authority and legitimacy. These questions are raised within the discursive framework of reflexive self-representation, within the institutional framework of what Mullaney calls a "theater of (self) apprehension," and within the cultural framework of religious reform—a set of frameworks at the center of which I situate problematic enactments and evasions of the sinner's discourse.

In its normative form, the discourse may be characterized in Foucault's terms as a quasi-confessional dialogue with the "virtual presence" of the interior partner "who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile." But the implication of fear or anxiety in the idea of self-apprehension (which, in conjunction with *theater*, is focused on being seen, looked at, heard, overheard) reminds us that the norm may be honored more in the breach than in the observance. Continually modified and distorted in its interactions with other discourses, the sinner's discourse may deviate on the one hand toward masochistic pursuit of the punishment or judgment that confirms misautia, and on the other toward prophylactic deployment of self-exculpating strategies that expose it in the mode of conspicuous exclusion. For my next, and final, example, I turn to *Measure for Measure*, where these two deviations are sharply juxtaposed in the discursive performances of Angelo and the Duke. Since Angelo's melodramatic explosions of misautia are self-explanatory, I shall concentrate my attention on the Duke.

What Does the Duke Know and
When Does He Know It?
Carrying the Torch in 'Measure for Measure'

Opinion and interpretation of *Measure for Measure* tend to gather around the critical hearth kindled by reactions to the Duke of Vienna. Some argue that he is a good person, others that he is a bad person; still others, remembering this is a "problem play," argue that he is at least both at once. Some argue that the play fails, and others that it succeeds, because he is so good, or so powerful, or so bad, or so hard to fathom, or all of the above. My view of the Duke differs from most of these views in premising that my view of the Duke is less important or interesting than the Duke's view of the Duke. But if I distinguish in this way between what I think of the Duke and what I think he thinks of himself, I should be a little more precise about the second half of the proposition: whether or not we agree that we can say of the Duke as a fictive speaker, a mere speech-prefix, that "*he* is thinking (of himself or anything else)," we can at least say that the language that constructs the speaker expresses thoughts about him—opinions, interpretations, desires, fears—and we may even be able to agree on what it is that gets expressed. But we would still have to decide—and here there is plenty of room for disagreement—whether the thoughts we ascribe to the utterance should or should not be ascribed to the utterer, and what the mode of ascription might be. The conditions for arriving at such decisions are complex, and I shall not theorize about them in advance because the conditions have arisen for me as methodological or heuristic orientations that are contingent on (and not merely operative on) a particular set of reading practices. I hope the following account will clarify the double