CHAPTER 1

SHAKESPEARE: A LOCAL HABITATION AND A NAME

by Meg Harris Williams

O brave new world,
That has such people in't!
(The Tempest, V.i.184-5)

Miranda’s exclamation at the end of The Tempest undermines its own apparent irony, by throwing an aura of optimistic wonder over the specimens of common humanity assembled before her, who vary from the weak-minded to the irredeemable. The magician Prospero’s appetite has become jaded, but there is hope for the world because his sense of wonder has been released to colonize it and change its complexion. Although this is the end of Shakespeare’s play and of his life’s oeuvre, and the playwright has decided to shed his robe and break his staff, we feel that in a sense every Shakespearean play begins like this: with a collection of characters, perhaps aspects of a single mind, who are none of them much more than ‘arrant knaves, crawling between earth and heaven’ (as Hamlet describes himself). But when they start to become related to each other in the terms of a dramatic poem, animated by the poetic magic, a veil is stripped away and they become facets of a inner world, revealing the mind in the process of working. This applies even to those elements without poetry in themselves - those who, like Antonio, do not know the difference between their conscience and a chilblain. Yet even the hero in a Shakespeare play, well aware of the ‘deity’ conscience, is not necessarily particularly virtuous or the ‘noblest of them all’. He is the one who - in terms of Keats’s ‘Chamber of Maiden Thought’ metaphor - sees the door standing ajar into the next chamber of thought, and begins to move towards it, impelled
perhaps by forces which he would like to resist. This movement draws the other characters, who are realigned around him with the increasing inevitability of a network of psychic tensions. Ultimately this may lead to the threshold of a brave new world, in either tragedy or comedy; or we may find, instead, that more has been learnt about the forces which impede development than those which promote it. Bearing in mind this underlying concern with the struggle toward creative thought and development, this chapter will focus on some crucial aspects of a selection of the plays taken in chronological order.

**KING RICHARD II**

In *Richard II* (1595), Shakespeare can be seen to portray the violent disintegration of a society which is probably, without being aware of it, ripe for destabilization; the chivalric mode is ready to be exchanged for realpolitik. The unified society, or unified mind, is shown to be really at a crisis point, by the ease with which it splits when a perceptive individual refuses to uphold one of its codes - that is, when Richard dismisses the duel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke. The medieval tapestry of the play’s background imagery with its composite emblems, of crown, sun, green land, and tree circulating blood, reminds us continually that the very idea of England the mother-country corresponds to some primitive organism which requires the obedience of each component to maintain its health. As king, Richard is both the most dominant component, and the most dependent on the system. Initially, Gaunt in his famous speech about the `sceptr’d isle’ - `this other Eden, demi-paradise’ - presents in poetic terms the reigning vision of a united mind in a rounded space encompassed by the divine crown. It is a space fertile and magically protected like a fortress:

This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea, . . .
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings, . . . (II.i.43-51)
The blood-relationships which knit together this organism are repeatedly stressed, and they focus on the king, whose existence and authority depend absolutely upon his obedience to the total worldview. The body of the king is sacred in so far as it reflects the body politic, and his mind is almost adhesively identified with the image of the sceptred isle. Should he fail to uphold this identification, his deathbed will be (as Gaunt warns him) 'no lesser than [his] land'. Land, crown, and mind are one: ‘incaged in so small a verge’ (I. 101). There is an interlude in which the palace Gardeners describe the principles of the commonwealth, intending to condemn Richard for breaking the rules. However, the naive clarity of their analysis serves instead to expose the defects of the system. For while Gaunt’s speech conveys the original poetry of the medieval ideal, the Gardener-unintentionally so all the more effectively - highlights its Machiavellian and (spiritually speaking) uneconomic qualities. Thus the Gardeners’ solution to social unrest is to lop off the heads of ‘great and growing men’ because ‘all must be even in our government’:

Superfluous branches
We lop away, that bearing boughs may live;
Had he done so, himself had borne the crown . . . (III.iv. 63-5)

Richard has already lopped off the head of Gloucester before the play begins; but this in itself is not his crime against society, for if he had allowed a further murder to take place by means of the duel, that crime would have been expiated, in terms of the chivalric code. This would have been acceptable to all parties. It is not murder as such which the social organism abhors, but breaches in its unifying code of behaviour. This code is what keeps the blood circulating in the tree, and the sun or crown protecting the green island, womb of kings; and probably what stops a steady stream of surreptitious haemorrhages from becoming a bloodbath of civil war (the ‘Golgotha’ prophesied by Carlisle).

But there are signs that a more complex mentality is ready to emerge. Richard, in his position of privilege as mother England’s favourite son, has glimpsed the truth about the surreptitious haemorrhages - their wastage of expensively reared blood (which he is entitled to regard as his own), and also the absurdity and playacting which maintains this code of false art.
He deflates the ‘honour’ of Mowbray and Bolingbroke by dismissing the verbose and pompous chivalric ceremony which supports the social fabric, prologue to the aborted duel:

Let them lay by their helmets and their spears,
And both return back to their chairs again. (I.iii.1 19-20)

They feel their status as cousins to the crown has been ridiculed and undermined. One of them (Mowbray) accepts his fate as one whom the crown has in a sense entombed alive: symbolized by his tongue ‘doubly portcullis’d with my teeth and lips’ (l. 167); the other (Bolingbroke) implicitly prophesies a new social order in which he will be instrumental: the ‘sun will shine’ on other lands than Richard’s, and the idea of England - no longer fixed but movable - is ‘my mother and my nurse that bears me yet’ (1. 307).

The drama then focuses on the split between the political and the poetic, which Richard has initiated without foreseeing the consequences. The inevitable rise of Bolingbroke as political leader is interplayed with the downfall of Richard as the poet-politician king of the old England. Bolingbroke himself is not driven by ambition or even revenge, but by the need to reclaim his dignity. The complexity of the story lies in Richard’s internal changes as he sharpens himself against Bolingbroke in an attempt to discover what shape his new identity might take. In undermining the old order he has at the same time undermined himself (as Gaunt prophesied, he was ‘possessed to depose himself’ - a paradoxical degradation). Originally his personal as well as his political mentality was inextricably linked with his view of himself at the top of the tree, borne by the crown, with a narcissistic faith in its magically protective powers. This had its repercussions in his homosexuality, an integral part of the picture. Having dismissed the ‘helmets and spears’ of his blood-brothers as childish toys, Richard now has to confront the possibility that his own sceptre and crown are also no longer the expression of a divine poetry but mere toys of office. More than that, the crown in becoming ‘hollow’, is no longer a protector of England’s children but a murderer of those who appeared to be her favourites. The teeming womb of royal kings becomes a death’s head as it was for Mowbray (an emotional identification which Richard now has to pursue for himself); it is a cage starving its internal children.
to death, its infant kings

    All murthered - for within the hollow crown
    That rounds the moral temples of a king
    Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits
    Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
    Allowing him a little breath, a little scene,
    To monarchical, be fear’d, and kill with looks; . . .
    Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
    As if this flesh which walls about our life
    Were brass impregnable; and humour’d thus,
    Comes at the last, and with a little pin
    Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king! (III.ii. 160-70)

Richard bids farewell to a kingship which was a delusory place of nurture for body and mind alike, a castle of false art deflated by a pin-prick. In place of the crown, in the deposition scene he takes up a mirror, as if to consider its potential as a symbolic container for the meaning of his inner world:

    O flattering glass,
    Like to my followers in prosperity,
    Thou dost beguile me. Was this face the face
    That every day under his household roof
    Did keep ten thousand men? Was this the face
    That like the sun did make beholders wink?
    Is this the face which fac’d so many follies,
    That was at last out-fac’d by Bolingbroke?
    A brittle glory shineth in this face . . . (IV.i. 279-87)

Bolingbroke quietly observes that this also is an act: ‘The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed the shadow of your face’; yet this speech, together with Bolingbroke’s reaction (internalized by Richard as a contrary tension to the Mowbray identification) seems to mark Richard’s understanding of his ‘brittle’ narcissism, a genuine self recognition. He had imagined himself as some Helen of Troy (the ‘face which launched a thousand ships’ in Marlowe’s Faustus), whose innate beauty governed England like the sun, rather than simply retaining power according to the principle of rights of succession stated by Bolingbroke.
Yet in Richard’s pageantry there is also genuine poetry, just as there was in Gaunt’s vision of the sceptered isle; the poetic strand in both the older and the younger generation contrasts with the rhetorical bombast used by the protagonists of the duel. But the poetry is now being split away from the superficial glamour of political office, a split reflected in the shadow of civil war. The Richard who had the perception to find the duel distasteful, uneconomic and unaesthetic, was not wholly deceived in his sense of some innate privilege in spiritual qualities which would accompany him from the sceptred isle, through the hollow crown and the brittle glass, to his ultimate containing symbol (before the grave itself) - the shadow-world of the prison at the end of the play. Bolingbroke, passively and against his will, finds it his destiny to accept the hollow crown which Richard has (also unwillingly) imposed upon him, together with the illusory glamorous shell of a public identity. Thus in the account of his coronation given by York (who is throughout impressed by such externalities), Bolingbroke is seen as a ‘well-dress’d actor’, a player-king dependent on popular favour; he is ‘painted imagery’ for the ‘greedy’ eyes of the gawping multitude (V.ii.11-17). The face of a united poetic England will never be seen again. Meanwhile Richard, in prison, is faced with a problem which cannot be solved in this play, since the play’s action has consisted in singling it out and defining it: namely, how to construct an artistic or poetic identity which is not a shadow but genuine self expression, a real drama of the mind:

I have been studying how I may compare  
This prison where I live unto the world . . .  
My brain I’ll prove the female to my soul,  
My soul the father, and these two beget  
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,  
And these same thoughts people this little world . . . (V.v. 1-9)

This is Richard’s first and only soliloquy, despite the impression of soliloquizing given by the declamations of Flint Castle and the deposition scenes. In it, Shakespeare focuses on the condition of the playwright in his solitary but not lonely prison: ‘hammering it out’ between contrary poles of the mind (‘male’ and ‘female’), and awaiting inspiration from outside the ‘Chamber of Maiden Thought’.
- the illumination of a brave new world. The prison doors will shortly open to put an end to Richard’s life; but before this there is a curious episode, heralded by music, between the ex-king and the Groom who (unacknowledged by him) used to look after his passionate energies in his previous life (the horse now overtaken by Bolingbroke). When Richard finds he cannot perform his creative act unaided, Shakespeare introduces, as in many another play, the unseen music which so often signifies a divine intervention. But here, the music is not harmonious but awkward and jarring, and it takes Richard a while for the meaning of the symbol to penetrate and bring to him the revelation of his true tragic fault: ‘I wasted time, and now doth time waste me’ (l. 49). Having done this, he can recognize that this inharmonious, uncourtly music (so different from the days of the sceptered isle) is in fact a sign of ‘love’: that it carries a quality and a meaning which his previous culture and inheritance had prevented him from hearing:

Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me,
For ‘tis a sign of love; and love to Richard
In a strange brooch in this all-hating world. (11. 64-6)

The music ‘mads’ him, but it is the appearance of madness which accompanies the first steps toward insight, with their initial discordance. Richard is now ready to receive (or imagine) the Groom, who is emotionally if not literally associated with this new music. The Groom in Richard’s previous existence was the lowest of his minions, but on the threshold of his new mental existence he represents a Hermes-like spirit of communication with lost or unknown emotional depths (the horse). Richard’s renewed contact with the ugly and the humble elements of what was once his kingdom reminds him of a beauty which Helen of Troy never possessed, a ‘strange brooch’ which could supersede all the jewels in the lost hollow crown - his true sources of poetry in the inner world, had he but world enough and time to pursue them. In Richard II, therefore, Shakespeare presents a model of mental destabilization, initiated from within, which undermines the system of basic assumptions that had cemented the fabric of society. These centred on the image of the infant-mind (king) protected by the crown-paradise (mother space): an identification which
had rigidified into the superficial beauty of narcissism. Gradually this is broken down as some real emotional contacts are made or remade (including that with the queen), and the play ends at the beginning of a new story of reconstruction.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM

A Midsummer Night’s Dream belongs to the same group of ‘lyrical’ plays of Shakespeare’s early maturity as does Richard II (written c. 1595). In a sense it begins where Richard ends, and presents the making of a philosopher-ruler by means of inspired dreaming rather than omnipotent patronage. The relationship between Richard and the Groom is developed in that between Theseus (at the head of the mental hierarchy) and Bottom, at the other end. The play was probably an epithalamion for an aristocratic wedding; and while most characters display a passionate zest for role-changing and play-acting, Theseus and Hippolyta stand apart statuesquely, scarcely in the role of protagonists. Yet there is a psychological as well as a social reason for this. In a sense, everything that happens in the moonlit wood (and its extension, the mechanicals’ play in Act V) happens within the mind of Theseus, and expresses his symbolic endeavour to think about his forthcoming marriage before its actual consummation. Both Oberon and Bottom are his alter-egos, or serve Theseus (the passive self) the function of internal objects; they present creatively an emotional drama and its resolution, in a way which Theseus is not equipped to do for himself. It has often been observed that the opening of the play has all the classic ingredients of a potential tragedy, which then mysteriously and almost accidentally turns into a comedy (while Romeo and Juliet does the opposite). At what point does this happen? The death sentence on Hermia, showing the incompatibility of mechanical ‘law’ with enlightened ‘reason’, not only casts a shadow over the Duke’s marriage (a species of curse), but also seems to draw attention to an unspoken shadow within his relationship with Hippolyta. He reminds Hippolyta that he won her ‘with the sword, doing thee injuries’, but hopes to wed her ‘in another key’ (I.i. 16-18); yet there is a suggestion that this transposition has not been fully made; and Hippolyta, though silent, clearly identifies with the adolescent Hermia, and is not cheered by Theseus’ ‘What cheer, my
love?’ (1. 122). As Duke of Athens, Theseus is ruler of the sunlit citadel of reason; yet he also is unhappy about the ruling and finds himself (like Richard) ostensibly the voice of authority, yet in reality a prisoner within the deathly restrictions of society’s basic assumptions - the ‘law’ which he is pledged to uphold, and for which he is merely a mechanical instrument. Egeus in classical mythology is the father of Theseus, and so he is in spirit in this play: representing a dangerously unappeased primitive omnipotent god at the back of Theseus’ mental heritage, who has to feel in control of the puppets of his creation. For the chains of the law are associated with an omnipotent view of art, in which Egeus’ daughter is seen as his artefact, ‘a form in wax/By him imprinted’ (11. 49-50), rather than a being with a spirit of her own. Theseus’ Athens at the beginning of the play is a place of rigidly hierarchical values liable to clamp down and stifle any potential brave new world: even though, as individuals, all the characters (except Egeus himself believe they are ‘in love’, or would like to be. A ‘new key’ is indeed necessary if the aristocratic marriage is to be a happy and creative one.

The turning-point in this tragic situation occurs when Theseus, having delivered the law’s verdict, then turns his back and walks off the stage, sweeping everyone with him apart from the star-crossed lovers who are left to their own devices (I.i. 126). The expected guards do not materialize; instead, the inhabitants of the unconscious mind take over the action of the play (the fairies and workmen) to carry on Theseus’ internal investigations for him; it is he, as much as Hermia, who needs time to think. In a romance ballad, Theseus would have fallen asleep under a tree at this point while the other characters danced around him; as it is, the mechanicals agree to meet ‘at the Duke’s oak’ in the wood, to prepare him for his wedding day. Through their unconscious interplay with the fairies, with appropriate malapropisms and poetic reversals of verbal reasoning, new imaginative modes of expression are evolved which unearth and catharsize the lover’s anxieties and enrich his appreciation of the opposite sex. In the process, the vestigial false aesthetics of the god who imprints ‘forms in wax’ is overturned, and a new, dynamic, and revelatory idea of creativity emerges. Bottom recognizes immediately that a play about love, if it is to have any emotional validity, must be rehearsed
`obscenely and courageously' (I.ii. 100), and that `a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living' (III. i 30). In his ventures into the female world of Titania's fairy court he sets the pattern for genuine `courtesy', which involves overcoming `fearfulness' that is, not simply feeling like a monster who looks frightful, but also, learning not to be afraid of being bitten or of appearing a fool. The union of Bottom with Titania (`Bottom’s Dream') is the core revelation at the heart of Theseus’ dream, with Bottom acting on behalf of all the men in the play, and Titania on behalf of the women, both turning the appearance of humiliation into the exaltation of humility:

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the baky fingers of the elm.
O how I love thee! How I dote on thee! (IV. i. 41-4)

Titania fell asleep in the midst of the mortal adolescent lovers’ quarrels in the wood, and lies at the centre of the stage while these are presented to her as part of her dream. Her response to their plight is to exchange her role as the chaste huntress Diana for that of Venus, and to momentarily unite with mortality. She becomes their unconscious guide, even though none save Bottom himself actually see her. Bottom is selected for sexual initiation owing to his innate fine qualities - a `paramour for a sweet voice', as Quince calls him, an `angel’ despite his ass’s head:

Titania: And thy fair virtue’s force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.
Bottom: Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends . . .
Titania: Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful. (III.i. 135-42)

The union of Bottom with Titania, which on the surface appears inappropriate and impossible, is a model for the ‘friendship’ of other qualities which seem incompatible - such as reason and love, which
Theseus with all his education could not unite. With this going on in the depths of his mind, Theseus will gradually discover a way out of his impasse.

Despite the use of the love juice, this union is not premeditated by Oberon, but falls out accidentally — that is, according to the mind’s internal necessity — and is, he says, ‘better than I could devise’ (III.ii. 35). For Bottom is in a sense another facet of Oberon himself, coming to heal the rift between the Fairy King and Queen. At a level deeper than the exigencies of plot, the play’s pageantry shows us that Titania prefers Bottom to Oberon as a lover, not because she has been tricked, but because of his innate gentility — his freedom from obsession with his own power and status. The vague shadow implicit between Theseus and Hippolyta shows as overt hostility in the night-time, woodland world of their fairy counterparts: ‘Ill met by moonlight’ (II.i 60). Through Bottom, Oberon woos his queen anew. The stories of both the adolescent lovers and of the fairies’ past involvement with the mythological Theseus and Hippolyta in their warring, hunting days, link the sedate aristocrats of daylight Athens with turbulent confused forces in their past history — forces which, in the night-world, are no longer past but still very much present. The quarrel over the mysterious, theatrically non-existent ‘changeling child’, centred on the question of its ‘ownership’ (like Egeus with Hermia), turns out to be the expression of a problem of identity which it is feared may dissolve or ‘die’ when the chaste boundaries between male and female or mortal and immortal are crossed and ‘entwist’ together. Thus Titania tells of her Indian votaress (her mortal self) who died in childbirth whilst in the very process of laughing at man and mortality:

Full often hath she gossip’d by my side;
And sat with me on Neptune’s yellow sands,
Marking th’embarked traders on the flood:
When we have laugh’d to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind . . . (II.i 125-9)

Her own sails ‘conceive’ in the dangerous flood of passion, resulting in death; so she refuses to allow Oberon access to her own ‘rich merchandise’: ‘thy fairy land buys not the child of me’. Then her dream of the mortals’ predicament, culminating in her encounter with
Bottom as an ass, results in a change in her own attitude to men. The relationships of the mind’s internal gods are inextricably entwined with the self’s development struggles. To serve the present necessity, Bottom in his new humble status becomes godlike, though he is ‘but a man, as other men are’ (III.i 42). The model for his ‘translation’ is that of the high priest donning sacred vestments which elevate him beyond his mortal statue: ‘Bless thee, Bottom! Thou art translated’, is Quince’s awe-inspired cry (III.i. 1 14); and on awaking from his ‘most rare vision’, Shakespeare has Bottom echo St Paul’s revelation:

The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called ‘Bottom’s Dream’, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke. (IV.i. 210-16)

In emotional terms, Bottom’s Dream is indeed the subject of the mechanicals’ play which is performed before the Duke, extending the experience of the wood into another medium and into the court, and providing the ultimate test for Theseus: namely, whether he will be able to accept and assimilate the symbolic, unconscious work which the inhabitants of his mental dukedom have performed on his behalf.

The proving of Theseus occurs during the struggle which he has to accept the true meaning of the workmen’s play with all the woodland experience behind it; he has to use his imagination, and recognize that true reason incorporates what appears to be madness. It is not enough for him simply to have found a way of dismissing Egeus’ claims on ‘the law’. In this final act, Theseus’ struggles for the first time have an aura of heroism, since everybody else has reached a plateau of contentment, and he alone is endeavouring to understand what Bottom is able to convey, and not to sink into superiority or complacency, rejecting the profundity of ‘a dream that hath no bottom’. The workmen, according to Philostrate, have ‘never labour’d in their minds till now’; and Theseus has to learn that, despite all his worldly experience, he also is a species of novitiate in the progress of his earthly body and mind towards the ‘hallow’d house’ which they
become when blessed by the fairy world, the mind’s internal governors. In this sacred place he, too, can aspire to be a workman rather than a ruler. On this stage, any elevating vestments are a sign of service not of personal precedence. Before the play begins, Theseus tries to rationalize his doubts about ‘antique fables and fairy toys’; but he ends up, despite his conscious intention, in providing the most famous apologia for the reality of the imagination:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact: . . .
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name. (V.i. 4-17)

This is his counterpart to Bottom’s revelation, and prepares him to accept the play, through which he implicitly acknowledges Bottom’s dream as his own. Hippolyta here reinforces the concept of the birth of ideas (‘bodied forth’), with her image of how the story of the night ‘grows to something of great constancy . . . strange and admirable’, differentiating this mental transfiguration from the superficial effect of ‘fancy’s images’ (11. 23-7). This is the basis for Coleridge’s future distinction between imagination and fancy. This new aesthetic of symbol formation, catching the ‘shapes’ to which imagination gives birth and watching them grow, replaces the omnipotent ‘wax imprint’ aesthetic of the first act, and enables Theseus to recognize Bottom’s play as the true epithalamion for his marriage. Despite being told it is not suitable, he insists, ‘I will hear that play’, for

Out of this silence yet I pick’d a welcome . . .
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity. (ll. 100-5)

He chooses their ‘tongue-tied simplicity’ not from paternalistic indulgence (disguising hidden sneers) but owing to his unconscious
remembrance of Bottom being led ‘tongue-tied’ to the chamber of the Fairy Queen, and to his genuine perception of a ‘welcome’ available to his own humble novitiate self in the mysteries of love. Ultimately, this enables him to announce that ‘tis almost fairy time’ (l. 350): to invite the mind’s internal gods to step over the threshold, light his house from the inside and bless his bed, so that ‘the issue there create/Ever shall be fortunate’ (11. 391-2). In A Midsummer Night’s Dream, therefore, Shakespeare demonstrates in what sense a ‘dream’ constitutes ‘work’. A rigid hierarchical model of the mind is set aside, while the mind’s workmen pursue the nature of imaginative experience, love and revelation, through various aspects of identification between the self and its objects. Poetic language is revivified by this means, and the self released from its preconceptions and inhibitions, and put back in contact with the fairy world of its internal deities, who are themselves restored to harmony. The ruler becomes a learner and therein finds happiness and the promise of creative conception.

**HAMLET**

In the ‘problem plays’ of the middle of his career, such as *Hamlet* (1600-O1) and *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), Shakespeare pursues relentlessly the nature of the forces which hinder such ‘fortunate issue’ - such creative thoughts - emerging from the mind’s hallowed house. Egeus in *The Dream* is merely a token caricature of such forces. Shakespeare is bitterly critical of plays and acting during this period; ‘playing’ becomes a byword for manipulation, rather than for discovery-through-art, or fictions about truthtelling. In *Hamlet*, the very structure of the play seems to expand and crack the neat model of the revenge-tragedy which is its anti-type; in this way a latent, metaphorical drama emerges which makes it in effect a dream-play. *Hamlet* explores the internal frustrations and evasions which the soul encounters in its search for symbolic reciprocity or understanding. *Hamlet* is throughout plagued by the sense that everyone else wants to write his story, play upon his stops, pluck out the heart of his mystery (III.ii 256-7), before he can envisage who he really is, internally: ‘Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,/They had begun the play’ (V.ii. 30-1). Before the death of the previous king
and the subsequent appearance of `rottenness' and `sickness' in the state of Denmark, Hamlet is the ideal Renaissance prince, `the glass of fashion and the mould of form/Th’observed of all observers' (as Ophelia describes him: III.ii 155-6). His shape seems readymade - to others and perhaps also to himself, until he is faced with the necessity for becoming a prince, as opposed to merely acting the prince through any of the various `actions that a man might play' - socially acceptable role-playing. Society’s pressure on Hamlet to conform is, however, proportional to its unspoken need for him to do something different and to provide a new model of princeship: as in Richard II, there are signs of eruption below the complacent prosperous surface of the status quo. Fortinbras is waiting in the wings with his simplistic solution to internal turmoil, and there are `more things in heaven and earth' than philosophy ever dreamed of (I.v.l 74-5). We do not know whether the present instability may prove developmental, or reactionary. Hamlet is the `expectancy and rose of the fair state', the figure on whom the entire mind of Denmark relies for its continuing fruitful evolution and defence against invasion.

Yet the forces of invasion are not merely external, like hot-headed Fortinbras with his `list of lawless resolutes', but internal, as embodied in the return of the Ghost. The Ghost presents Hamlet with a dual legacy - an accusation of murder goading to revenge and, more puzzlingly, a strange poetic dream about his relationship with the Queen (his wife - or his mother?), which expresses his infant-like vulnerability when he felt expelled from some idyllic Eden-like afternoon sleep in the garden. Ostensibly describing the poison poured through his ear, the Ghost (on the dream-level) describes his sense of unwelcome knowledge in terms of the infant’s pure milk curdling and possetting:

> with sudden vigour it doth posset
> And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
> The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine,
> And a most instant tetter bark’d about,
> Most lazar-like, with  (I.v. 68-73)

This is the undigested, indigestible emotional constellation which
precipitates *Hamlet* as a dream-play, and which lies behind Hamlet’s poignant exclamation: ‘O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space - were it not that I have bad dreams’ (II.ii. 254-6). He begs the Ghost: ‘let me not burst in ignorance’ (I.iv. 46). This dream, piercing the nutshell of ignorance, lies behind the ambivalence in Hamlet’s relationships with his mother and Ophelia, initiated as much by the dawn of love for Ophelia as by the funeral-coronation-marriage of his parent figures. It lies behind his pacing up and down the lobby for hours on end, reading a sterile and circular diet of ‘words, words, words’ (II.ii. 192), yet debating the shapes of the clouds and their relation to his sense of identity (III.iii. 366). The turbulent experience which drags Hamlet out of his state of quiescent scholarship at Wittenberg poses problems both deeply philosophical and, as he tells Horatio, ‘beyond philosophy’. Searching for a relationship which will express for him the meaning of his revolutionary feelings - a symbolic correspondence - Hamlet feels himself in a condition akin to madness; his ‘antic disposition’ is both his cover and (for want of a better form) his temporary self expression. In the soliloquy ‘To be or not to be’, he makes his closest solitary approach to a solution; it is the beginning of a dream about his own identity which both incorporates and exorcizes the Ghost’s disturbed inheritance: ‘in that sleep of death what dreams may come’? The embryonic soul which has emerged from the womb or entered weaning process (‘shuffled off this mortal coil’) ‘pauses’, disoriented in its new nakedness, for unknown ‘dreams to come’: dreams which lead eventually to the ‘pale cast of thought’. Is this death of a previous state of mind a condition to be desired or not? It is the ‘undiscovered country, from whose bourne/ No traveller returns’ - the unknown inner world:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action. (III.i. 83-8)

The Ghost’s injunction was to ‘pursue the act’ without ‘tainting [his]
mind’; but in the inner world, what constitutes action? ‘Thought’ is initially experienced as a sickness, while the implications of original sin are digested. All the false actions of an externally supported identity (‘enterprises of great pitch and moment’) are suspended for a moment, including the frenzy of play-acting which is even now going on behind the scenes. The ‘sudden vigour’ of the Ghost’s curdling blood (in the garden dream) is ‘turned awry’, while the literal disfigurement of his body (‘barked about most lazar-like’) is transmuted into the ‘pale cast of thought’, in a metamorphosis of mental elements. Hamlet seems on the verge of finding a symbol for his emotional predicament, and of glimpsing the undiscovered country of his dream-world.

Yet at this very moment, when Hamlet is at his most vulnerable, Ophelia appears, in her fatal position as emissary of Polonius and Claudius, the two father-figures whom Hamlet justifiably feels to be most instrumental in plucking out the heart of his mystery. He immediately turns to her as a sort of saviour and container in which ‘all [his] sins’ may be ‘remembered’ (III.i. 90). But when, instead, she says she comes to return ‘remembrances’ to him (l. 92), he feels betrayed, by someone who is not his idea of Ophelia, but a puppet or vehicle for her father. Ophelia and Gertrude both become painted deceptions in Hamlet’s eyes; and he commits himself totally at this point to the false, anti-symbolic action of the Mousetrap, which he has been devising to trap his father just as they are attempting to trap him. In both cases, an identical process of false investigation is taking place, which treats the ‘mystery’ of experience as if it were a riddle or secret to be ferreted out of its hiding place. Hamlet calls this ‘catch[ing] the conscience of the king’; Polonius calls it finding ‘where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed/Within the centre’ (II.ii. 158-9). The lobby is an ambiguous space, not unlike the Ghost’s purgatory, with potential to be either a chamber of dreams or a prison for nightmares, a nutshell or a trap. But the inner stage on which the Mousetrap is enacted, is an anti-symbolic space, framed by a misconception about the nature of truth. In it, Hamlet caricatures the figures of his inner world and abuses the external characters most intimately associated with his emotional crisis. Here the rhetoric of revenge is indulged to the full: instigated by the Ghost’s ‘eternal blazonry’ and his threats
to ‘harrow [Hamlet’s] soul’ (I.v. 15-21 ). The manic violence aroused by what he deems (despite Horatio’s disapproval) to be the Mousetrap’s success, leads Hamlet directly to the Queen’s chamber, in which he enacts the phantasy of rooting out and exposing (killing) the interfering father-baby who is forever hiding in the skirts of her arras and manipulating her, to the neglect of Hamlet himself. In his obsession with plucking out the heart of his mother’s mystery, he has literally speared ‘that great baby . . . in swaddling clothes’ (as he once called Polonius (II.ii. 378)). The following outburst of disgust at his mother and uncle-father from a standpoint of judgmental sanctimony, hides from himself the knowledge that it is he not Claudius, who has just proved a ‘cutpurse of the empire’ - the empire of his mother’s body, his own mind. But Hamlet’s unspoken, unconscious remorse at this spectacle leads to a renewed encounter with the Ghost of his father, this time in soft indoor clothing appropriate for intimacy, without chain mail or leprous disfigurement:

Hamlet: . . . a vice of kings,
   A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
   That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
   And put it in his pocket -
Queen: No more.
Hamlet: A king of shreds and patches -
Enter GHOST  (III.iv. 98-103)

Hamlet in effect summons the Ghost by describing his alter-ego, the ‘vice’-like aspect split off into Claudius, such that they are on the verge of integration. Gertrude does not see the Ghost, but she sees the ghost in Hamlet, and for the first time seems to realize that there is more within him than passes show. For one long moment, as the triangle of mother, father and son are held by a mutual gaze, there is another approach towards recognition. But - as is the pattern throughout Hamlet - this melts away, as the Queen dismisses Hamlet’s vision as ‘ecstasy’ or madness. Ophelia is the only one who literally believes in Hamlet’s madness; and in identifying absolutely with this, she comes closest to containing his ‘sins’ as he had once requested. Her mad speeches with their poetic double entendres (‘lord we know what we are, but know not what we may be’ (IV.v. 43) intuitively
sympathize with his `bursting in ignorance' in his failure to discover or remember internal parents who could lead him out of his impasse.

After the murder of Polonius it becomes clear to Hamlet that his fate is ultimately sealed, and he has lost the chance to create the new prince-ship within his own life-span, at least. But like Richard, he has almost at the last moment an unexpected chance to recover meaningfulness, from the confines of the grave itself - the space into which Ophelia is finally to sink with all his sins remembered. In the graveyard scene, the Ghost - or at least, the teasing vengeful aspect of the Ghost - seems to re-emerge in the figure of the Gravedigger. In the ensuing punning match, Hamlet finds his enslavement to sterile rhetoric (`words, words, words') outdone by the peasant who is his master in this field - and in the process, exorcized: `equivocation will undo us' (V.i. 134). This is symbolized in action by the clods of clay and stray bones - the mind’s rubbish - which the Gravedigger unearths and chucks aside, in the process reviewing (or so it seems) the decaying history of the entire court of Denmark. With the rubbish removed, a jewel is uncovered: the skull of Yorick, which is seized upon by Hamlet as a genuine symbol, containing the true meaning of his internal parents:

Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath bore me on his back a thousand times, and now - how abhorred in my imagination it is. My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. . . . Now get you to my lady’s chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. (V.i. 178-89)

Like Richard with his inharmonious music, the very ugliness of the skull vitalizes the imagination, and leads Hamlet to an image of the lost father for whom he has been searching - not the Player King, or the armoured Ghost, or the tortuous rhetorician Polonius, or the lecherous, ambitious Claudius, but the `jester’ who once enlivened all those aspects of his father and made the court a place of happiness, of `infinite jest’. Another interpretation is put on the `vice of kings’, the `king of shreds and patches’. The jester-father of Hamlet’s inner world did not exclude him from his own sources of joy but carried the seven-year-old
child on his back, easily sustaining the burden. These are the parents not
of wish-fulfilment but of ‘imagination’, including the necessary emotional
grit of ‘abhorrence’. Hamlet’s imagination puts the flesh back on the
skull, which then becomes ‘my lady’s chamber’, the female container for
the ‘sins’ which seem an intolerable burden to his naked self alone; the
breast nourishing the infant mind can ‘laugh’ even at these, instead of
vengefully curdling the milk. This is the way the inner world was, before
the young prince was sent to prep-school at Wittenberg at the age of seven:
returning to find that the possibility of falling in love himself, seemed to
have turned his mother into a lust-blinded matron, and his father into a
cross between a drunken satyr and a senile policy-monger. So in Hamlet,
Shakespeare tackles the painful depths and complexity of the soul’s search
for the mystery of its own identity. In the continual vacillations of both
Hamlet and others between regarding this as an awesome mystery and
alternatively as a tantalizing riddle to be prised open, Shakespeare shows
how integral is the problem of symbol formation (or symbol perception)
to the mind’s self knowledge. The cloudy identity of the new prince-to-be,
desperately needed by the over-ripe state of Denmark, cannot resolve into
its true shape without a clearly established relationship between the self
and its internal objects. And Hamlet is frustrated by himself and by others
in achieving more than momentary glimpses of this internal foundation.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare’s next serious play (discounting The
Merry Wives), expresses his enraged hostility and contempt for the
voyeuristic philistinism which was (perhaps inevitably) excited in relation
to the depth and sensitivity of the artistic explorations in Hamlet.
The play addresses an audience (originally, possibly one of young
lawyers at the Inns of Court) which is accused of going to the play as if
to a brothel, prompted by an instinct for pornography and ideological
wordplay, and hence becoming bawds to their own minds. An armed
Prologue announces that he does not come `in confidence/Of author’s
pen or actor’s voice’, and is taking an aggressive stance towards the audi-
ence; there is to be no confiding here, as there was in Hamlet. The
epilogue is delivered by Pandarus, who speaks explicitly to the audience as to all panders - ‘good traders in the flesh’, ‘brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade’; beneath their ‘painted cloths’ lie the ‘aching bones’ of venereal disease. In *Troilus and Cressida* the playwright, armed and angry, offers a specific type of audience-mentality a mirror image of itself: ‘do as your pleasures are . . . ‘tis but the chance of war’ (Prologue, ll. 30-31). The pervading linguistic texture of the play is one in which flocks of metaphysical abstractions are generated like flatus by a seething mass of indigestible cookery and bodily malfunctions. The ‘stewed phrases’ of pornography’s language-games revolve in the ‘hot digestion of this cormorant war’ (II. ii. 6); love is a ‘generation of vipers’ (III.ii. 129) and the pageant of pride ‘bastes’ itself in the cooking-pot (II.iii.l86). In this context, Greeks and Trojans are not heroic contraries, but blind basic-assumption groupings, in which a sense of status is substituted for a sense of identity. Inevitably, each camp is conditioned to select its most stupid member to be president - manipulated by the decision makers to wave the banner. Thus the ‘elephant Ajax’ in the Greek camp has his counterpart in the ‘ransack’d queen’ Helen, at the pinnacle of Trojan values. The background atmosphere is a farcical mixture of soap opera, sports match (the ‘sport’ of bed or battle), and election campaign. And Cressida, as she well knows, is expected by everyone to follow the example of Helen - the willing passive monument to the play’s equation of woman, the city and art, as fields to be ‘toppled’, conquered and degraded.

The buzzwords of the Greek camp are: distinction, degree, policy, wisdom, dignity and import. The specialized function of Ulysses (the master-contriver) is to rearrange ‘degree’ within its disturbed ranks so that mutual subservience can be achieved and the army become an effective fighting machine again:

> Take but degree away, untune that string,  
> And hark what discord follows. Each thing melts  
> In mere oppugnancy; the bounded waters  
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
> And make a sop of all this solid globe . . . (I.iii. 109-13)

To admire this Renaissance soap-box cant as ‘Shakespearean’ is to fall into the trap of being the type of audience Shakespeare is attacking. The
underlying assumption of the play is that the intransigent (female) world whose `saucy boat . . . co-rivals greatness’ (in Nestor’s words) or lifts its bosom liigher than the shore, must be brought to heel: `distinction . . . winnows the light away’, as Agamemnon says (1. 28). They voice the perennial anxiety of the fascist or totalitarian mind, that without `distinction’ and `degree’ there must be `chaos’ (1. 125). The present problem of the Greek council is that Achilles, who is their prize tool for maintaining order, has gone `womanish’ and spends his time with his `masculine whore’ Patroclus, making a `pageant’ of the Greek hierarchy and ridiculing it, undermining Ulysses’ position as the ruling intellect:

They call this bed-work, mapp’ry, closet-war
So that the ram that batters down the wall,
For the great swing and rudeness of his poise,
They place before his hand that made the engine,
Or those that with the fineness of their souls
By reason guide his execution. (I.iii. 205-10)

Ulysses, an extension of the Egeus-mentality, represents the false artist who believes his own `fineness’ or `reason’ manipulates his tools (the `ram’) in a type of sordid `bed-work’ which will batter down the wall of the city of art. The battering-ram Achilles has rebelled, but Ulysses contrives to seduce him by appealing to his sense of fashionability: presuming (correctly) that this is the `touch of nature’ which makes him `kin’ with everybody else in the play. If Achilles is not admired in the eyes of others, there is little point in his rebellion against Ulysses and the principle of order. Ulysses reminds him that

to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty nail
In monumental mockery . . .
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin –
That all with one consent praise new-born gauds . . .
(III.iii.151-76)

He undermines Achilles by insinuating that, through his police-state information service, he is somehow inside his head, in the place where `thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles’:
There is a mystery, with whom relation
Durst never meddle, in the soul of state,
Which hath an operation more divine
Than breath or pen can give expressure to. (11. 199-203)

The tyranny of the omniscient ‘watchful state’ is the archetypal anti-artistic stance, subverting the individual’s thinking processes and the artist’s ‘breath or pen’, and hijacking the language of creativity - mystery, birth, divinity. In the event, however, all Ulysses’ tyrannical psychical manipulations are themselves subverted when the basic-assumption mentality which he has been using, gets beyond his control; and Ajax (the Achilles substitute) instead of fighting Hector in a duel, is overcome by the pseudo-revelation of their kinship, in the ludicrous episode of ‘my sacred aunt’ (I V.v. 133). Shakespeare’s point is that tyrannical structures based on the enforcement of codes rather than the growth of true value-systems are ultimately not even effective: resulting in the football-hooliganism quality of the last battle, in which the two sides start ‘clapper-clawing’ and eventually ‘swallow’ one another (in Thersites’ words: V.iv. 1, 34).

In this play, Shakespeare shows how the hooligan gangster mentality is by no means the prerogative of the lower classes but is generated by the highly educated. Thus the Trojan court embodies a sophisticated sub-mentality precisely equivalent to that of the Greek camp, with its own set of buzzwords: value, honour, worth, truth, merit, taste, estimation, right. Their academic debate (‘What’s aught but as ‘tis valued?’) focuses on Troilus’ narcissistic excitement at his approaching union with Cressida (though this is of course not overtly confessed, since it is a union both clandestine and public). He argues,

how may I avoid,
Although my will distaste what it elected,
The wife I choose? There can be no evasion
To blench from this and to stand firm by honour.
We turn not back the silks upon the merchant
When we have soil’d them, nor the remainder viands
We do not throw in unrespective sieve
Because we now are full. (II.ii. 66-73)
He has not yet met Cressida; but this speech foreshadows the inevitable history of their abortive love, since it expresses a mentality in which the very idea of love presupposes a ‘soiled’ object, modelled on the ‘ransack’d’ Helen. It is a pervading assumption which Cressida has already recognized, despite her cloistered existence observing the world from a ‘watch tower’; anticipating Ulysses’ words to Achilles, she tells Pandarus ‘Things won are done’ (I.ii.292). According to the Trojan code here perfectly expressed by Troilus in his institutional maiden speech, the woman is inevitably violated in accepting the man and therefore will inevitably become ‘false as Cressida’ (as in their strange marriage pact). But this in itself is an excellent opportunity for narcissistic gratification, since it reinforces his own worthiness, that of an ‘eternal and fixed soul’ which will never betray its code. Troilus’ elder brothers are indulgently impressed by his grasp of what it takes to be officer material. Cressida, however, is less easily reassured. During the few minute scraps of dialogue which she has alone with him, she attempts to inject some fear, respect and realism into the concept of love between them. Troilus indeed has expressed to Pandarus his fear of losing ‘distinction’:

I fear it much; and I do fear besides
That I shall lose distinction in my joys, . . . (III.ii. 24-5)

He has some sense of the power of love to dissolve his system of codes, but is frightened and repelled by Cressida’s voicing the same feeling: her ‘fears have eyes’, she says, but it is better to acknowledge fear and be led by reason, than to deny its existence: ‘Blind fear, that seeing reason leads, finds safer footing than blind reason stumbling without fear. To fear the worst oft cures the worse’ (III.ii. 69-71). Troilus is filled with anxiety because she is speaking to a level of deep emotional reality which he recognizes but would prefer to deny, and which suggests that she knows more about love than he supposed, immediately prompting the suspicion - are all women whores, even when they are virgins? (Shakespeare’s Cressida is not a widow, like Chaucer’s.) Immediately Troilus takes shelter in his code, and praises his own virtue:
Few words to fair faith: Troilus shall be such to Cressida as what envy can say worse shall be a mock for his truth, and what truth can speak truest, not truer than Troilus. (11. 94-7)

In this way he avoids the exploration of uncomfortable feelings including why he should imagine he is soiling her in the first place, or guilt about the vulnerability of her social position as the daughter of a traitor, or later in the Greek camp where she is given the choice of being ‘whore’ either to Diomed or to the Greeks ‘in general’, as Ulysses puts it (IV.v. 21). Although he insists he is a man of chivalry and of ‘few words’, this is another facet of his identity-shielding code; in fact like Ulysses, he is obsessed with his own rhetoric, and is displeased when Cressida interrupts him before he has finished his ‘protestations’. In flight from all emotional reality, Troilus concentrates on writing his posthumous reputation, when ‘fame [will] canonize us’ and

`As true as Troilus’ shall crown up the verse  
And sanctify the numbers. (III.ii. 180-1 )

Thus the story of Troilus and Cressida, though it takes up little space in the play as a whole, is at the core of its presentation of false art and of relationships based on status-shuffling and emotional unreality. The link between the abortive lovers, presided over by the Ulysses-mentality, is mirrored in that between play and audience; but it is a vision reflected back by the playwright implying that it is they, not he, who regard the play as soiled goods; and that this rigid, narcissistic attitude to art will eventually lead to the destruction of their own minds.

**KING LEAR**

The deaths of Richard and of Hamlet are in a sense accidental; they mean that the play has come to an end, rather than that a spiritual struggle has been completed and a brave new world achieved. This is not so in the true or archetypal tragedies such as *King Lear* (1605) or *Antony and Cleopatra*. In these, the deaths of the protagonists represent a genuine catastrophic change in the mental world of the play as a whole; death is a point of metamorphosis, not of closure. *Lear* is perhaps the quintessential expression
of a phase in the infant-mind's development: presenting the stages of loss of omnipotence, turbulent disintegration, and ultimate recovery of aesthetic vision, which underpin the mind's capacity to create itself. The struggle in Lear is between the thirst for wisdom or self knowledge ('salvation'), and the temptations of ignorant omnipotence ('damnation'). In Keats's words in his sonnet 'On sitting down to read King Lear once again':

once again, the fierce dispute
Betwixt damnation and impassioned clay
Must I burn through.

Damnation is the 'barren dream' of false or uninspired art; salvation consists in the metamorphosis of 'impassioned clay', burning until it rises phoenix-like from the ashes, living through the emotional crisis and submitting to the structural change which this entails. The great fire of Lear's wrath, and the lesser fire of Gloucester's lust, provide the passionate momentum which carries them through these transformations and is purged in the process. Lear is the archetypal passionate baby who believes he has decided to wean himself from the kingdom of his mother and whose rage is aroused when his omnipotent arrangements for this are not obediently followed: 'Come not between the Dragon and his wrath' (I.i. 122). Instead, he is faced with the unbearable suspicion that she is relieved to be separated from him. Goneril and Regan (who become cruel or bad aspects of the mother) believe that he has 'ever slenderly known himself (I.i 293) and that his rage is genuinely intolerable: saying 'let us hit together' (1. 303) and, when they finally shut him out of the house, 'wisdom bids fear' (II.iv. 309). Meanwhile the banishment of Cordelia, who offers a 'kind nursery', is considered by the Fool to be 'a blessing' for her, done 'against [Lear's] will' (I.iv. 108). Lear's hundred knights - his mythical powers - melt away, and he prepares to experience the violence of his emotions, in the form of the storm, for the first time turned against himself, uncontained by the mother to whom he is no longer king:

you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both
T'hat all the world shall - I will do such things,
What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep;
No, I’ll not weep:
I have full cause of weeping, [storm heard], but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
Or ere I’ll weep. O Fool! I shall go mad. (II.iv. 280-9)

When this happens, the Fool comes into prominence as Lear’s only support: partly because he represents the means of spiritual contact with Cordelia—being her shadowy representative, ‘pining away’ since she left for France (I.iv. 78), yet clinging to Lear as long as he is needed. Also, the Fool supports Lear’s mental struggle by suggesting an avenue out of his egocentricity; he is Lear’s real child-soul, the ‘little tiny wit’ (III.ii. 74) through whom he maintains contact with emotional reality - expressed partly through sensuous awareness of cold, hunger, and the battling of the elements. When Lear asked why the Fool had become so ‘full of songs’, he explained:

E’er since thou mad’st thy daughters thy mothers; for when thou
gav’st them the rod and putt’st down thine own breeches,

Then they for sudden joy did weep,
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among. (I.iv. 179-85)

The Fool’s upsurge of creativity is intimately connected with Lear’s newly demoted status in the nursery. Responding to this, Lear’s attitude to the Fool changes as the storm progresses, from one of petty paternalistic tyranny (such as, threatening to whip him) to one of solicitude, in line with his acceptance of his own faults as a ruler (‘I have ta’en too little care of this’):

My wits begin to turn.
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
And can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.
Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That’s sorry yet for thee. (III.ii. 67-73)
The discovery of a maternal aspect within himself - an internal idea of what Cordelia would have done - is inextricable from the coming ‘madness’ which accompanies his world’s disintegration. He must throw off the ‘lendings’ of a superficial status which have disguised the ‘unaccommodated man’ within (III.iv.109) and shielded him from emotional experience.

Halfway through the drama, the function of the Fool is superseded by Edgar as Poor Tom. He is discovered in the ‘hovel’ (the primitive depths of Lear’s mind) by the Fool, who is shocked to see the form which his transmigrating soul is destined to take: ‘Come not in here, Nuncle; here’s a spirit’ (III.iv. 39). Nevertheless Edgar is to become Lear’s next ‘philosopher’ (I. 159), while the original Fool dies, his role completed - ‘going to bed at noon’ in Platonic sunlight (III.vi. 88). Through Edgar, the struggles of Lear and Gloucester coalesce. Edgar embodies the type of the nascent inspired poet who is drawn into the action against his will, forced to enter in to the emotional states of others: ‘Edgar I nothing am’ (II.iii. 21 ). With negative capability, he performs the spiritual services which are required by the mind as a whole: ‘I cannot daub it further . . . and yet I must’ (IV. i. 51-3); he must carry the story on though his ‘heart breaks’ (IV.vi. 143). The Fool saw that Lear had to ‘go the fools among’ and play bo-peep amongst the others in the nursery, no longer uniquely privileged. Edgar sees that Lear is both a child, and a knight on a quest: ‘Childe Rowland to the dark tower came’ (III.iv. 186). He restores him to the type of folly or madness which precedes spiritual philosophy: just as he will lead eyeless Gloucester, who ‘stumbled when [he] saw’ (IV.i.19), to ‘see feelingly’ with inner vision (IV.vi. 150). Edgar, who is the structural hero of the play, draws his inspiration from twin sources or fathers, and becomes for both of them the representative of the brave new world. For Gloucester, Edgar and Edmund represent antithetical aspects of his own mind’s potential for being either inspired or omnipotent. His confusion at the beginning of the play as to which of them is the ‘bastard’ reflects his deep insecurity about his own creativity, and the nature of the ‘act of darkness’ in which they were conceived. One of his ‘sons’ (or mental directions) is guided by an internal deity described by Edmund as ‘whoremaster man’ - offering a ‘divine thrusting on’ to his social ambition (I.ii. 125-40), a restless, promiscuous attitude to the world which (as Edmund’s later attitude
to Goneril and Regan shows) is not even motivated by genuine lust. The ‘little fire’ of genuine lechery - Gloucester’s essential spark of life - turns out to have produced Edgar rather than Edmund, not the ‘dull, stale, tired bed’ Edmund imagines (1. 13). This we learn from the imagery of the meeting on the heath, which in a sense re-enacts the original act of darkness within Gloucester’s mind, and restores him to contact with creative internal objects. In this beautiful recognition scene, Gloucester appears at night across the heath with a torch, and the Fool emblemizes his spiritual quest with the comment: ‘a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher’s heart’ (III.iv. 1 14). The old lecher is unconsciously searching for the guiding light of his creative ‘son’ who inhabits the darkness of his mind somewhere - ‘lurk, lurk’ as Edgar murmurs. Yet he vacillates; and only after Goneril and Regan have ‘tied him to the stake’ and literally destroyed his vacillating vision, is he able to commit himself to this alternative course, when compromise is impossible: ‘They have tied me to the stake, and I must stand the course’ (III.vii. 53). Thus the wild and barren heath becomes the womb or cradle of mental fertility for both Lear and Gloucester, a Vale of Soul-making where conception can occur. Once Gloucester’s eyes are removed, he returns to the place where he first encountered Poor Tom: unconsciously recognizing him as his son, and seeking out this ‘worm’ as a substitute for the ‘vile jelly’ of his own extinguished eyesight:

I’th’ last night’s storm I such a fellow saw,  
Which made me think a man a worm. My son  
Came then into my mind; and yet my mind  
Was then scarce friends with him. (IV.i. 32-5)

Gloucester has reached the stage at which interpenetration has become possible between his new and old self; his mind has become ‘friends’ with the child who will prove father to the man. Dependence on ‘the worm’ images the mind’s acceptance of its embryonic new identity: the process of conception itself. The new idea, Edgar, has mysteriously entered through some unconscious identification, and taken root. Gloucester’s conscious recognition towards the end of the play of the son who has been his spiritual gift, rather than his omnipotent creation, results immediately in the completion of his story - his heart
‘bursts smilingly’. His little fire has always been weaker and less stubborn than the great fire of Lear’s nature; instead of forging forwards on his spiritual journey towards Dover as does Lear, he has required continual propping up and tying to the stake, by both Edgar and Lear himself - who offers sage advice (of the sort which he could never stomach himself) to this fellow novitiate pilgrim:

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know’st the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry. (IV.vi. 180-2)

Lear’s story has a two-stage resolution: first, reunion with Cordelia; then, parting with Cordelia and handing over to Edgar. The initial reunion represents an idyllic false ending, a sort of return to the womb of adhesive, inseparable emotional security and mutual understanding:

We two alone will sing like birds i’th’ cage . . .
And take upon’s the mystery of things,
As if we were God’s spies: and we’ll wear out,
In a wall’d prison, pacts and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by th’moon. (V.iii. 9-19)

Lear would like to retreat back into Plato’s cave and forever watch the shadows on the wall, secure in his feeling that he is at the heart of the mystery of his mother, and that his good mother Cordelia (his cordial, heart’s elixir) would never be so cruel as to wean him and send him out into the world. But this womblike security must be shed - imaged in Cordelia’s body becoming ‘dead as earth’; and Lear’s ultimate heroic effort of imagination, in which he believes he sees the spirit emerging from her lips, enables him finally to relinquish his omnipotent hold on the ‘daughter’ or creative spirit of his inner world. In King Lear, therefore, Shakespeare presents a parable of the false ‘lendings’ of a delusory infantile omnipotence being stripped to reveal unaccommodated man at the centre of his own internal tempest, the scene of catastrophic change. From this worm-self in its heart of darkness, a new identity is generated, via the language of folly and madness which express the ‘blindness’ of inner vision and true
feeling - ‘what we feel, not what we ought to say’. It comes to be embodied in Edgar, whose negative capability subsumes the emotional trauma of his two fathers, while through him they recognize their dependent status and, ultimately, joyously relinquish their previous identities in favour of the spirit of the new world to which they have given birth.

MACBETH²

_Hamlet_ follows the frustration of the intelligent and joyous soul’s attempt to clamber out of the debris which has been heaped upon it by external and internal forces, and to make a creative relationship based on a truthful understanding of its inner life and godlike figures. In _Macbeth_ (1606), Shakespeare analyses a specific problem of perversion, a ‘mind diseas’d’ (V.iii. 40): a mind which would appear to be of a simpler and perhaps nobler complexion than Hamlet’s, save for its dependence on its perverse partner - a Jekyll and Hyde combination. As the background deities - the three witches - indicate, it is the perversion of femininity which is being explored; focusing on Macbeth himself. Initially Macbeth’s own femininity is known to exist as the ‘milk of human kindness’ of which Lady Macbeth feels he has too much (I.v. 17). But the violent and bloody atmosphere of continual civil war which pervades Scotland in the play, is an inhospitable background for femininity’s survival. The gentle, noble Macbeth appears to have picked a wife whose ‘masculine’ nature will compensate for his own feminine one during the periods when he is not actually fighting - when as ‘Bellona’s bridegroom’ he can forget himself (I.ii. 55). We meet Macbeth at a point of transition between the bloody haze of the battlefield, and his domestic life - which can at a stroke be converted into a continuation of that bloody haze. The first words to unite Macbeth, his wife, and the witches in our mind, are those which Lady Macbeth reads from the letter announcing his return as Thane of Cawdor: ‘They met me in the day of success’. ‘Success’ is a crucial concept in the play, and essentially it refers to the type of delusion which is socially countenanced - represented by the murky, red-hazed, smoke-filled atmosphere generated by ‘unseaming from the nave to the chops’ (I.ii. 22) and being hero-worshipped for it. ‘More is thy due than more than all can pay’,
Duncan tells Macbeth prophetically (I.iv. 21). The witches themselves seem to be precipitated out of this atmosphere, taking on a momentary solidity then dissolving back into the pall of unnatural darkness which hangs over the earth, obscuring its normal complexion:

> Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
> Hover through the fog and filthy air. (I.ii. 11-12)

The witch-world of equivocation (‘the fiend that lies like truth’: V.v. 44) is the opposite of poetic ambiguity; it represents the false clothing of the lie (a consistent metaphor in the play). Macbeth's bloody deeds earn him adulation and the ‘borrow’d robes’ of new titles (I.iii. 108), thereby confirming the equivalence of success and of false identity. ‘Was the hope drunk/Wherein you dress’d yourself?’ demands Lady Macbeth (I.vii. 35-6). The ideas of success and of witch-femininity are inseparable; and Macbeth’s subservience to their offer of the ‘golden round’ (I.v. 27) means, as he recognizes soon after the murder, the loss of his ‘eternal jewel’, his soul (III.i. 60-9). The counter-concept to ‘success’ in the play is ‘growth’, though this exists throughout as a shadowy suggestion of that which has been lost, aborted, or made impossible: we see it in the vulnerability of the Macduff home with its unguarded internal children, or in Macbeth’s fleeting vision of ‘Pity like a naked new-born babe’ (I.vii. 21). There is no place in the play for the type of masculinity which is protective of growth; Macduff is no less a ‘traitor’ in this than Macbeth; while Shakespeare makes clear that the masculinity which is socially esteemed is in reality a type of perverted femininity, a manifestation of the witch-mind.

Lady Macbeth’s castle represents the outward feminine aspect of herself, or of herself and Macbeth taken together as a couple. It is taken by Duncan at its surface value as an idyllic haven or ‘cradle’ for ‘temple-haunting martlets’, a source of security and nurture for the spirits who cling to its ‘jutty, frieze and buttress’ (I.vi. 1-6). But in reality the buttresses are those of ‘Hell Gate’ as in the Porter scene, inhabited by the ravens of revenge:

> The raven himself is hoarse,  
> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
> Under my battlements. (I.v. 38-41)
Lady Macbeth converts fair into foul with ‘unsex me here’, making her castle-body into a trap rather than a haven, in a version of the Clytemnestra legend. As with Iphigeneia, the idea of a murdered child perpetrates the revenge cycle; and though it is here introduced by Lady Macbeth, it touches deep springs of guilt in Macbeth associated with his wartime identity, which make him acquiesce: ‘Bring forth men-children only!’ he says admiringly after Lady Macbeth’s image of infanticide:

I have given suck, and know
How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this. (I.vii. 54-9)

In this context, Duncan with his white-haired saintly innocence, comes to symbolise the Macbeths’ child, who - like the cherub in Macbeth’s soliloquy about the new-born babe, or Lady Macbeth’s image of ‘Heaven’ - might ‘peep through the blanket of the dark,/To cry, hold, hold!’ (I.v. 53-4). The thing which is murdered between them is not the king alone, nor a child alone, but the possibility of creativity itself - Thought, Sleep, and all the inhabitants of mental life: ‘Macbeth does murther Sleep - the innocent Sleep’ (II.ii. 35). Only after symbolically murdering this child does Macbeth realize the significance of his being king yet having no heirs - a fact which he knew before yet which seemed irrelevant until he became emotionally heirless, and imaginatively sterile. The spiritual murder which is demanded by total dedication to the ‘golden round’, the ‘imperial theme’, to social mastery, results in the self becoming fearful and terrified of revenge by those internal gods who have now been turned into witches. Soon after the murder, Macbeth’s poetic language ceases, and he becomes obsessed with trying to act before he can think: ‘be it thought and done’, or

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which must be acted, ere they may be scann’d. (III.iv. 138-9)

In the fearful condition of internal emptiness, the word ‘safe’ comes to
mean ‘dead’ (III.iv. 24). Macbeth’s imagination dries up, and in lieu of symbol formation and thinking, appears a mental space filled or blocked by hallucinations, with a solid faecal actuality:

  the time has been,
  That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
  And there an end; but now, they rise again,
  With twenty mortal murthers on their crowns,
  And push us from our stools. (III.iv. 77-81)

The hallucinations, like the witches, seem precipitated out of the atmosphere, in a conglomeration of poisons, entrails and deformities, stewed in ‘double double’ equivocation. Macbeth’s obsessive reaction to these hallucinations is to try to erase them, to wipe them from his mind in an authoritarian clean-up operation; instead of ‘heirs’ which are denied to him, he starts to look for a condition which is ‘safe’, ‘clean’, with ‘no botches’ in it: ‘The very firstlings of my heart shall be/’The firstlings of my hand’ (IV.i. 147-8). This botch-less condition is one in which everyone is dead, and he is ‘perfect’ (III.iv. 20), in complete control of the stool-like evacuations (firstlings) of the omnipotent mind, which are all that is left him now the imaginative inner world has been destroyed. The possibility of living out the future, either through actual heirs or through the spiritual heirs of an imaginative developing mind, has been replaced by the delusion of ‘knowing the future’ - that is, of controlling the future: a function of the witch-mind and essentially a misconception, a substitute for true thinking.

The play Macbeth offers no real alternative to this destroyed state of mind. The ultimate denouement is a circular one rather than an achievement of integration between the split ‘Macbeth’ and ‘Macduff’ aspects of femininity. The two families and castles (one heirless, the other initially full of children but made heirless before our eyes in an instant), suggest split aspects of one mind, which finds it impossible to develop or even survive in the prevailing social context, in which to be ‘successful’ means to be a ‘bloody butcher’ of the mind’s internal contents. There is no catharsis in Macbeth’s ultimate defeat; he is simply obliterated by the same primitive mentality that prevailed at the beginning of the play, with its Greek
tragedy atmosphere of an eternal revenge cycle in which nothing can come to fruition since it is bound to the past. When Macbeth finally gives himself to Macduff (which is in effect what happens), it is as though the mind of Scotland has made the switch from its wartime to its domestic mentality, and recovered from a species of nervous breakdown; yet we feel that this is a reversible pattern which may yet be endlessly repeated. Nothing in the play’s conclusion approaches the depths of recognition which Macbeth in fact achieves in his lonely last soliloquy, encapsulating the meaning of meaninglessness:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (V.v. 19-28)

These magnificent lines are inspired by the news of his wife’s suicide and by awareness of the grief that is not there; she represents his ‘brief candle’ as in her sleepwalking— the soul that is but a ‘shadow’, the pageant of the ‘mind diseas’d’. Here, Macbeth paradoxically brings us closer to hope for imagination’s rebirth than does the official pageant of Birnam wood marching to restore Nature’s order. He has recovered the ability to express the truth about his inner self; the figure of ‘pity like a new-born babe’ recurs here, in the idiot-infant who wails ‘full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing’: the infant who, as throughout the play, symbolizes Macbeth’s own creative soul. In the course of Macbeth, therefore, the potential new identity or increment in the sense of identity which is represented by the ‘babe’ image throughout, is suffocated before birth by the pervading witch-mentality, a perversion of femininity. This is applied to Macbeth through his wife, and in succumbing to it, he finds that his capacity to think becomes aborted: poetic language is replaced by hallucinatory forms of fear, denuded of emotional content - the very antithesis of
dream-symbols. Instead of revealing meaning to him, these stimulate him to compulsive repetitive murderous actions. This is Shakespeare’s analysis of a mind diseased; and as Macbeth’s last soliloquy suggests, the very symbolization of this condition is the first step in recovery from it.

**THE WINTER’S TALE**

The reparative march of Birnam wood in *Macbeth* is a fiction superimposed on the play’s real emotional substance. But the concept of ‘great creating nature’ in *The Winter’s Tale* (1611) is a genuine inspirational force, describing the restoration of female fertility goddesses to preside over the mind after its sterile winter of discontent. The romances or dream-plays of the culmination of Shakespeare’s career all focus single-mindedly on the mental conditions in which creativity may flourish. Macbeth’s diseased mind, his sense of meaninglessness, is transferred to different soil for its regeneration. The winter’s tale of the fragile, omnipotent self is a dreary one full of ghosts and graveyards, like that of Mamillius; but the winter’s tale of the hibernating, chrysalid self watered by its own tears of repentance, is one of underground growth, closely monitored by deities of the unconscious mind. Leontes says, ‘tears shall be my recreation’ (III. ii. 240); he places his mind in the lap of ‘great creating nature’ based in Bohemia (IV.iv. 88). The implications of this dormant, creative winter are imaged in the brilliant sunlight and floral fecundity of the Bohemian sheep-shearing feast which lies at the heart of the play and colours its overall atmosphere. And when Leontes surrenders control over his diseased mind to Paulina, who is as it were the high priestess of this mental landscape, his self induced sterile winter is transformed into the living soil of re-creation. The growth of Perdita -unknown to him - represents the unconscious development of his own mind during this dark period, and his child-self or lost principle of development and joy; when she returns, she is ‘welcome . . . as spring to th’earth’ (V.i. 150), and the bringer of inspiration. The underlying myth of Proserpine vibrates through the play—a myth to be used by Milton and Keats, also, as a metaphor for the poetic process. Proserpine-Perdita is snatched away into a dormant period of apparent death; when spring returns, she not only revitalizes the earth, but
also restores the earth’s goddess, Ceres-Hermione, whose name suggests that of Mnemosyne, the Muse. It transpires that Leontes’ muse was not dead, but entombed in stone: that he had destroyed not the internal deity herself, but merely his own access to her. This is the link which Paulina, a combination of conscience and artist, helps him to forge anew.

In the first section of the play, in Leontes’ court, we are presented with an idealized myth about Leontes and Polixenes like ‘boys eternal’, narcissistically identified:

We were as twinn’d lambs that did frisk i’ th’ sun.
And bleat the one at th’other: what we chang’d
Was innocence for innocence: we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream’d
That any did . . . (I.ii. 67-71)

This idealization disguises an unspoken mutual dislike between the two grown ‘lambs’, and obliterates from recognition the distress of Mamillius, the real child, at the prospect of the new baby, since he is likewise supposed to be a frisking lamb, ‘as like as eggs’ to his father (I.ii. 130). Indeed in a sense, the figure of Mamillius on the stage is Leontes himself—a concrete projection of his mental age. He disappears (dies) when this period of narcissistic mania comes to an end. Hermione recognizes that the whole picture is one in which she and Polixenes’ wife are considered to be the snakes in the grass, instigators of ‘offences’ (‘Your queen and I are devils’: I.ii. 82); yet instead of confronting the problems of jealousy of the new baby and envy of her pregnancy, she tries a policy of appeasement (flirting with Polixenes, as if the twin lambs/eggs story were a true one), which has an explosive effect. The moment that she does, finally, make some space for Mamillius to voice his feelings - for he has been ‘troubling [her] past enduring ‘ (II.i. 1-2) - he immediately starts on his expressive ‘winter’s tale’, upon which his alter-ego Leontes enters on cue and sweeps Hermione off to prison. Hermione’s trial and imprisonment finally images the true state of Leontes’ hatred of her evident manifestation of creativity as she ‘swells apace’. At last the wintry state of his mind has achieved appropriate expression for all to see; and now it is possible for Paulina to intervene with ‘words medicinal’ and become his mentor.
or means of communication with those cut-off, entombed inhabitants of
his inner world. As Hermione tells him in the trial scene: ‘My life stands in
the level of your dreams’, and Leontes replies: ‘Your actions are my dreams’
(III.ii. 81-2). Everything that happens in the Bohemian section of the play
is in a sense his ‘dream’ about Hermione’s inner world, through which she
recreates his own. In casting out the baby whom he is unfit to bring up,
Leontes is sending it to fitter soil for nourishment. So Hermione becomes
the goddess of dreams, and appears to Antigonus in a dream on shipboard,
to instruct him in the care of the baby Perdita:

To me comes a creature,
Sometimes her head on one side, some another;
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
So fill’d, and so becoming: in pure white robes,
Like very sanctity, she did approach
My cabin where I lay: . . . thrice bow’d before me,
And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
Became two spouts . . . (III.iii. 19-26)

The baby has been snatched from its mother with ‘the innocent milk
in its innocent mouth’ (III.ii. 100), yet through this dream of spouting
milk from the eyes, the white ‘sanctity’ of motherhood is transferred
to Antigonus, as in Bottom’s ‘translation’. Antigonus then lays down
his courtly identity, which has become a prison to his better self, and
metamorphoses into the Good Shepherd - a metamorphosis expressed
by his being eaten by a bear. Leontes’ court is obsessed by questions
of bastardy and inheritance - obsessions of an omnipotent mentality
concerned with its own status. Having shed these aspects of himself, the
shepherd Antigonus fulfils his feminine potential and adopts the child:
‘thou met’st with things dying, I with things new-born’ (II.iii. 1 11-12).
The ‘fairy gold’ which accompanies the infant is only discovered after his
decision to father it has been made, and represents Perdita’s inner worth
- his reward. In the land of milk and honey she becomes the ‘queen of
curds and cream’ (IV.iv. 161). In terms of the overall mental drama of
the play, the Shepherd teaches the dreaming Leontes how to be a true
father, just as Bottom taught the dreaming Theseus how to be a true
lover. Like the Ass, the role of the Shepherd has religious implications. Meanwhile, the superficial aspects of Antigonus his courtly robes - seem to find their home in the person of Autolycus: ‘seest thou not the air of the court in these enfoldings?’ (I V. iv 731 ). He suggests a gentle parody of the type of artist who is only concerned with the ‘nothing’ of pageantry, and who sees himself as leading his audience by the nose - ‘those moles, blind ones’ (1. 837). Yet it is the ‘blind ones’ - the Shepherd and his son - who ultimately forgive Autolycus his superficiality, and allow him a place in the revised courtly family at the end of the play.

In the final stage of the drama, Leontes confronts those internal figures whom he thought his omnipotence had destroyed. Keats said: ‘The Imagination may be compared to Adam’s Dream - he awoke and found it Truth.’ Now Leontes awakes from his dream, with a revitalized imagination, to find it truth. Paulina’s ‘poor house’, never yet visited by Leontes, appears to contain an entire ‘gallery’ of works not merely collected but made by Paulina herself, of which Hermione’s statue is the culmination (`the stone is mine’, she says: V.iii. 58). Paulina’s status is that of the artist-craftsman who, in a traditional metaphor for creativity, provides everything except the inspiring breath of life which is engendered by some divine influence. This influence only takes effect when the rest of the family ‘awake their faith’ (1. 95); then she can summon music, and say to the statue:

Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
Dear life redeems you.

. . . That she is living,
Were it but told you, should be hooted at
Like an old tale; but it appears she lives . . . (II.102-17)

In The Winter’s Tale, therefore, Shakespeare answers the question formulated in Macbeth: ‘Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas’d?’ The diseased mind is cured by restoring the internal child to the internal mother, the self to the Muse - a process dependent on both artistry and faith, the inspiring force. This is the ‘old tale’ which re-writes that of Mamillius: a process of re-creation which is inseparable from the concept of redemption: ‘Dear life redeems you’. These internal relationships are outside the control of the self, but are facilitated by the artist.
THE TEMPEST

In *The Winter's Tale*, both artist and muse were female figures, while the only truly maternal actions were performed by the male shepherd (owing to his introjection of the spirit of his wife, and ultimately of Hermione). In *The Tempest*’s island of the mind, Prospero figures a more standard male magician figure who on one level appears in control of everything and is almost continuously on stage. Yet on another level - the intimacy of his relations with Miranda, Ariel and Caliban (relationships of love and hate), he is powerless except in the negative sense of power to punish; the poetic or creative developments in the play are the function of poetic spirits whose existence is beyond him. As master of the island’s ‘full poor cell’, he takes over from the witch Sycorax, superseding her in power whilst retaining many of her methods (cramps, threats of imprisonment, etc.). The next drama of supersession occurs when his daughter reaches marriageability, which brings all his ‘enemies’ back to his mind’s shore an action which he recognizes as one of ‘divine Providence’ just as was his own arrival on the island, twelve years before. In both cases it is his concern for Miranda (like Leontes’ Perdita, his poetic spirit) which guides him: ‘I have done nothing but in care of thee,/Of thee, my dear one; thee, my daughter, who/Art ignorant of what thou art’ (I.ii. 16-18). When Prospero was Duke of Milan, he became trapped in a Faustian self imprisonment characteristic of the Shakespearean view of false learning; from this he was rescued by violent ejection, along with his infant sense of wonder. Now that Miranda has grown up, it is brought to his notice (by Caliban, who wants to ‘people the isle with Calibans’ by her (l. 352), that it is time she colonized a new world. Originally she rescued Prospero from mental death in his own library - from sinking with the ‘rotten carcass of a butt’ which symbolized his state of mind: ‘A cherubin/Thou wast, that did preserve me’ (11. 146-53). And she is intimately associated with Caliban, who is in some sense her foster-brother, in terms of language and openness to experience. Like Edgar in *Lear*, she has the ability to follow the true voice of feeling rather than obedience to authority, though this involves ‘breaking [her father’s] hest’ (III.i. 37) - a quality springing from the Caliban aspect of the mind. Indeed Caliban is less an unsatisfactory suitor, than a force within her own mind (as well as Prospero’s) which has been reared
alongside her; the attempted rape symbolizes the upsurge of this force in a way which temporarily frightens and repulses her. He is a ‘thing of darkness’ (as Prospero calls him: V.i. 275) essential to the mind’s vitality and continuing poetic existence. Her choice of Ferdinand is not an escape from Caliban but an assimilation - hence Prospero’s obsession with virginity before marriage.

Ferdinand, likewise, immediately identifies with the native poetic forces of the island embodied in Caliban and Ariel; his internalization of Caliban is figured in carrying the logs Caliban’s job - and of Ariel, in Ariel’s own account of the shipwreck:

I boarded the king’s ship; now on the beak,  
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,  
I flam’d amazement . . .  
[the mariners] quit the vessel,  
Then all afire with me, the King’s son, Ferdinand,  
With hair up-staring, - then like reeds, not hair –  
Was the first man that leap’d . . . (I.ii. 196-214)

The idea of ‘flaming amazement’ applies both to Ferdinand and to the ship which has in a sense given birth to this Arielized son. Through a mental metamorphosis, Ferdinand is born into a new state of mind which makes him immediately recognize Miranda as a ‘wonder’ (I.ii. 429), and she reciprocally recognizes the Ferdinand of Ariel’s description, which she heard while asleep that is, dreamed. To her, Ferdinand is a sort of transformed or Arielized Caliban whose lust has been purified rather than tamed. This is the network of intertwined identifications which begins to form the foundation for the ‘brave new world’ which is, and is not, Prospero’s, since it is created not by his omnipotence but by the inner world of his mind as it gradually grows to take on an existence beyond himself. The self-knowledge theme of ‘virtue rather than vengeance’ (V.i. 28), which would have been central to a Shakespearean tragedy, here becomes secondary to the fascination of the island itself and the ability of its native forces to transform relationships. Ariel embodies those imagining-into, negative-capability exploratory aspects of the imagination which ‘tread the ooze of the salt deep’, ‘run upon the sharp wind of the north’ and do ‘business in the veins o’ th’ earth/When it is baked with frost’ (I.ii. 252-6).
Caliban’s nature is a complementary one of receptivity, drawing within himself those ‘wonders’ which nature seems to pour on him as a result of Ariel’s explorations (the Miranda-world). Ariel pours the poetry into the mind’s veins, including places beyond the reach of the human eye, and Caliban catches the riches when they ‘drop’ upon him:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,  
That, if I then had wak’d after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open, and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me; when I wak’d  
I cried to dream again. (III. ii. 133-41)

Through this receptive interchange, the ‘blessed crown’ of the dream-world is realized, like that which Gonzalo sees dropping upon the heads of Ferdinand and Miranda, and which contrasts with the crown of ambition which Antonio sees dropping on Sebastian’s. In this the young lovers are following in Prospero’s footsteps; it was Caliban who first showed him ‘all the qualities of the isle’, the dream-world’s light and shade: ‘fresh springs. brine-pits, barren place and fertile’ (I.ii. 334-9). The philistine and cynical aspects of the mind (Antonio and Sebastian) or depressed ones (Alonso) are unable to see these qualities, and regard the island as hostile and deserted, sterile. Ariel provides the haunting music which changes the mind’s aspect, yet which is only heard by those with Caliban’s faculties. And Caliban is described as a ‘moon-calf, a primitive follower of spiritual light, attracted by Ariel’s invisible manifestations like an animal to its mother: in Ariel’s phrase, ‘calf like, they my lowing follow’d’ (IV.i. 179). Miranda, who taught him language and showed him the man in the moon, is an object of his worship, goddess of his mother-space the island (as for Ferdinand). Caliban is easily perverted - following the ‘bottle’ of Stephano and Trinculo when addled by alcohol - but regains his innate sense of value, dismissing the trumpery of Prospero’s garments as ‘trash’,
and ends determined to `seek for grace' - his natural orientation. Thus Caliban is educable, but not by Prospero's omnipotent means (based on fear and denial during this crisis-point in his life); in imprisoning Caliban and separating him from his vision of beauty, he merely invites his perversion. Only the Ariel-faculty of the mind can educate Caliban, which is what happens within Ferdinand.

The intimate identification of the young lovers with these native forces of the island-mind underlies the `tempest' in which Alonso `loses' his son, and Prospero (as he says) his daughter (V.i. 152-3). The loss is both desired and abhorred, as always in the catastrophic change from one stage in development to the next. Their worldly destiny is to unite Naples and Milan in a new prosperity. But as always in Shakespeare, the idea of `prosperity' is ambiguous, as is the idea of the crown of material or spiritual riches. Edmund’s banner in Lear was: `I grow, I prosper! ye gods, stand up for bastards!' Sebastian remarks sarcastically on how well they have `prospered' since their return from Tunis with its `sweet marriage' (II.i. 70). Yet the name of Prosper', when it has been Arielized in Ariel’s harpy speech, brings Alonso to the sense of spiritual values which is a turning-point in his depression and ultimately leads to his `son' being restored and his inner world revitalized:

Methought the billows spoke, and told me of it;
The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,
That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounc’d
The name of Prosper; it did bass my trespass,
Therefore my son i’ the ooze is bedded . . . (III.iii. 96-100)

Alonso catches Ariel’s own sonorous rhythms, ’bassing his trespass'; and through this identification, he confronts the real issue of what constitutes the mind’s prosperity. Prospero himself is awed by Ariel’s `grace devouring’, the poetic expression beyond his control. Through poetry, one type of loss of a child is replaced by another type - the price of internal prosperity, associated with the relinquishment of a delusory power and authority. Prospero’s own crisis occurs before the ‘virtue rather than vengeance’ speech, which is in a sense a foregone conclusion; it occurs when the idea of Caliban breaks into the ‘vanity of [his] Art’ during the
wedding masque (IV.i. 41), dissipating for ever the stilted quality of its entertainment, the fruit of fancy rather than imagination. Only in the process of its vanishing, does it become a symbolic equivalent to the emotional reality of the marriage he desires to celebrate, and which he knows means the end of his career as Prospero-the-magician:

The cloud-capp’d tow’rs, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (IV.i. 151-8)

Like Antony on the point of catastrophic change, ‘even with a thought/
The rack dislimns’ (Antony and Cleopatra, IV.xiv. 9-10), and identity seems to ‘dissolve’. The cloud-shaped symbol of the self (as in Hamlet) means, correspondingly, that the self only has temporary status and then dissolves into the material of which dreams are made, in a continual process of remaking its identities. Yeats similarly defined the poet’s task as ‘Myself must I re-make’. 5 This is the equivalent moment to life being breathed into Hermione’s statue; but focusing on the artist’s sense of disintegration and superfluity. Only in ‘losing’ his daughter and giving Ariel ‘freedom’ from the confines of his own technical ‘rough magic’ (V.i. 50), his artistic vanity, can Prospero give the brave new world the opportunity to create itself; it will not be shaped according to any blueprint of his own.

This recognition is Prospero’s internal tempest, resulting in his ‘beating mind’; it is not his literal fear of death from Caliban’s conspiracy but his awareness that from now on, having given away one ‘third’ of his life (as he calls Miranda), ‘Every third thought shall be my grave’ (V.i. 311). The price of the new world of creative thinking, founded on wonder, is the death or dissolution of the self in an insubstantial pageant. The condition of the new world’s becoming real, is that it should not be his. In the very process of giving it a habitation and a name, the playwright loses the egotistical solidity of his own identity, which is superseded and subsumed. As Keats was to say: ‘A Poet is the most unpoetical of any
thing in existence; because he has no Identity - he is continually informing - and filling some other Body.' In *The Tempest*, the omnipotent and the imaginative self coexist. The play presents the ‘little world’ of the essential Shakespearean mind which Richard II was struggling to cast as drama in Pomfret Castle; and the result of his success is, paradoxically, the slow death which represents the playwright’s having to continue living with the insignificant identity of his mere self: ‘what strength I have’s mine own/ Which is most faint’. In the epilogue, therefore, Prospero tries to convey the significance of his role not as commander, but as servant of the imagination, which has an existence beyond himself:

> Gentle breath of yours my sails
> Must fill, or else my project fails . . .

This role demands a new sense of responsibility or awakening of faith on the part of the audience, for whom he can no longer undertake to do everything.

**Notes**


1  This section is based on Williams, ‘Macbeth’s Equivocation, Shakespeare’s Ambiguity’ in D. Meltzer, *The Claustrum*, Clunie Press 1992, pp. 159-85.
2  This section is based on Williams, ‘The undiscovered country: the shape of the aesthetic conflict in *Hamlet*’ in D. Meltzer & M. H. Williams, *The Apprehension of Beauty*, Clunie Press, 1988, p. 84-133.
3  The term ‘stool’ had the same faecal connotations in Shakespeare’s day as in our own (OED).
4  Most editors emend the original punctuation of this passage, placing a colon instead of a comma between ‘afire with me’ and ‘the King’s son’ because they cannot believe that Ferdinand could be described as being on fire (see *The Tempest*, p. 23, note 212. This interference flattens the poetry; also it is traditional to be ‘on fire with love’ (as with the cherubim).
5  W.B. Yeats, ‘An Acre of Grass’.