Shakespeare's Mirrors

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Chapter 6

"Spacious Mirror"

The Epic Futility of Political Activity in a World without Redemption

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6 "Spacious Mirror"

The Epic Futility of Political Activity in a World without Redemption

Mirrors in this chapter frame the protagonists' misunderstanding of their destiny as they try to outwit their tragic fate. Whether it is Lear calling for a stone mirror to reflect Cordelia's breath in a world preceding the account of Christ's resurrection, or Macbeth confronting his folly in mirrors on stage showing the line of kings stretching out to the crack of doom, or Antony and Cleopatra vainly seeking to escape the confines of the pagan theatre of the world in which they are condemned to act, these mirrors define the tragedies they are in by showing the remorseless logic of fate imprisoning the eponymous protagonists of the plays in a world without the promise of redemption.

King Lear

Despite the underlying Christian themes of the play, *King Lear* is outwardly the tragedy of a pagan Celtic King. Gloucester declares that humans are subject to capricious and cruel gods: "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods. / They kill us for their sport" (4.1.38–9). However, the ethical lessons learned by Lear and Gloucester in the pagan tragedy are taken from scripture.

Cordelia's death establishes the paradoxical holiness of the play's pagan nihilism:

> I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
> She's dead as earth. [*He lays her down.*] Lend me a looking-glass;
> If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
> Why, then she lives.
>
> (5.3.258–61)

King Lear asks for a looking glass in the hope her breath will "mist or stain the stone." His mirror metaphor infers a clear distinction between the physical body of Cordelia and her spirit, her image and breath. Kent

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observes the lifeless body of Cordelia and asks, "Is this the promised end?" (5.3.261), the sacrifice of a beloved child theologically resonant in the deeply Christian culture of the play's original performances. Edgar responds, "Or image of that horror?" (5.3.262), turning the attention to Cordelia's physical image or external form.

Lear seeks signs of life not in Cordelia's reanimated image, but in her breath that may mist or stain the stone, the polished rock that constitutes a mirror. He tries to find life from within her physical image, hoping her soft voice will be resuscitated from her lifeless body: "I might have saved her; now she's gone forever. / Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha? / What is't thou sayst? Her voice was ever soft" (5.3.268–70). His search for Cordelia's breath reflects the act of Creation, "The Lord God also made the man of the dust of the ground, and breathed in his face breath of life, and the man was a living soul" (2:7), in which the breath of life is a conception of spirit beyond external form and mimetic imitation.[1]

Lear's despair triggers the hope that Cordelia may be alive, "This feather stirs, she lives: if it be so, / It is a chance which does redeem" (5.3.263–4), the miraculous breath of life that does not stir the feather or mist the looking-glass a longed-for sign of resurrection. The stone mirror reflects his hopes in a world beyond the visible and the performed, "a chance which does redeem." Lear's concept of breath as it relates to resurrection is a mirror of Creation; more crucially, it is analogous to *pneuma*, the holy spirit of Pauline metaphysics, and a sign of hoped for redemption.

St. Paul uses the word *pneuma* 146 times in his letters.[2] Breath or *pneuma* is used in a litany of multifaceted ways: literal breath (2 Thessalonians 2:8); an emotional spirit, "spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1); the human soul (1 Corinthians 2:11); a divine essence (1 Corinthians 15:45); the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 3:3); and "the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). His concept of *pneuma* aligns with conscience, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man, which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). It is the essence of the soul, the spirit that lies within. St. Paul repeatedly evokes the metaphysical aspect of *pneuma* or divine essence.

However, Lear inhabits a world that prefigures Pauline *pneuma* and is condemned to seek Cordelia's spirit, her breath, and the possibility of redemption during the nihilistic catastrophe: "No, no, no life! / Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life / And thou no breath at all? O thou'lt come no more" (5.3.304–6). In the bestial reality of pagan mortality, he compares beloved Cordelia to a rat. Lear's tragic understanding of pagan metaphysics in the shadow of Cordelia's death represents his recognition that the world he inhabits provides no redemption: "Never, never, never, never, never!" (5.3.307).[3] Nevertheless, in the depths of pagan despair in which the human is irredeemable, the evocation of breath foreshadows St. Paul's notion of spirit and conscience. Lear dies at the moment that

he imagines Cordelia's resuscitation: "Look on her: look, her lips, / Look there, look there!" (5.3.308–9).

Cordelia's conscience in a pagan setting sets the tragedy in motion. It is the reason she cannot flatter her father, as her heart, the physical symbol of spiritual integrity, is unable to perform love: "Unhappy that I am, / I cannot heave my heart into my mouth" (1.1.91–2). The performance of love that Lear demands is oxymoronic, his daughter's refusal to play along forbids deceit and is resonant of St. Paul, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience [*syneidesis*] bearing me witness in the holy Ghost [*pneuma*]" (Romans 9:1).

Cordelia cannot and will not perform love for profit and responds to Lear's demand with a keyword from the first letter to the Corinthians:

> CORDELIA:
> Nothing, my lord.
> KING LEAR:
> Nothing!
> CORDELIA:
> Nothing.
> KING LEAR:
> Nothing will come of nothing: speak again
>
> (1.1.87–90)

She uses the word "nothing" to paradoxically evoke her truth. Lear criticizes her failure to perform, "Mend your speech a little, / Lest you mar your fortunes" (1.1.94–5), and demands that she flatter to deceive by aligning speech and fortune. However, Cordelia represents St. Paul's vision of love, the scriptural term being *agape*, "love, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). She cannot perform her love for material gain because her conscience forbids heaving her heart into her mouth to flatter for her rightful inheritance.

The pagan setting is necessary as it foreshadows Pauline ethics that are conspicuous by their absence. Gods are mentioned twenty-seven times in the play with "high-judging Jove" (2.4.420) at their head. Yet, the subtext for *King Lear* is the first letter to the Corinthians:

> And though I had the *gift* of prophecy, and knew all secrets and all knowledge, yea, if I had all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and had not love, I were nothing. And though I feed the poor with all my goods, and though I give my body, that I be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long: it is bountiful: love envieth not: love doth not boast itself: it is not puffed up: It doth no uncomely thing: it seeketh not her own thing: it is not provoked to

> anger: it thinketh no evil: It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.
>
> (13:2–6)

The crucial components of *King Lear* are taken from the first letter to the Corinthians: the erroneous desire to quantify love, the suffering Lear must undergo to understand Cordelia’s piety, the realization that conscience is revealed by abandoning one’s role, insight through blindness and salvation through death.[4] Performed for King James as part of the Christmas festivities of 1606, the Pauline subtext of King Lear was likely obvious to the Jacobean audience.

Keywords from St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians become thematic motifs. Repetitions of “nothing,” “kind” and “endure” flow through the text as Lear learns the value of suffering and patience. Images from St. Paul’s letter also recur throughout the play. “That I be burned” is echoed in Lear’s, “but I am bound / Upon a wheel of fire” (4.7.46–7), the fiery wheel of pagan fortune, and again with the Fool’s, “Look, here comes a walking fire” (3.4.107). The emphasis on suffering, the repetition of patience, derived from the Latin root for passion, endurance in the face of fate, “men must endure / Their going hence even as their coming hither” (5.2.9–10), echo St. Paul and draw parallels with scripture. Lear is, then, a Job-like figure but existing in a world without redemption.[5] Cordelia’s piety and death, Lear’s wandering in the wilderness (Matthew 4; Luke 4), and Edgar’s compassionate acts of mercy have been compared to the story of Christ in the Gospels.[6]

The difference between corrupt performance and Cordelia’s integrity is reframed in a mirror metaphor. Kent decries the immoral machinations of Oswald, whose glass-gazing is a representation of egomaniacal and shallow ambition: “a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable, finical rogue” (2.2.17–18). Edgar calls him, “a serviceable villain, / As duteous to the devices of thy mistress / As badness would desire” (4.6.246–8); he is a slave to Goneril’s malevolent plotting. Oswald is a puppet, “and take Vanity the puppet’s part” (2.2.35), his ego the emotional signifier of an internal void, vanity his sin symbolized by the superficiality of his theatrical villainy.

Oswald’s glass-gazing makes him the stock-character of court villain. Kent likens him to an empty costume stitched together like a piece of cloth: “you cowardly rascal; nature disclaims thee – a tailor made thee” (2.2.53–4). Oswald’s superficial villainy offends nature, “nature disclaims thee.” Perplexed by Kent’s metaphor, Cornwall responds, “Thou art a strange fellow – a tailor made a man” (2.2.55–6). But Oswald so lacks in what constitutes character that he is threadbare artifice. Kent describes the lack of artistic nuance in Oswald’s villainy. He is a figure of amateurish

artistic sensibility representing banal evil: "Ay, a tailor, sir; a stone-cutter or a painter could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two years of the trade" (2.2.57–9). Oswald's lack of nuance makes him an artistically naive exemplar of the immoral courtier or a glass-gazing whoreson.

The Fool uses a mirror metaphor to describe the villainous vanity of Goneril and Regan. Their superficiality is evoked in a commonplace misogynist trope, "For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass" (3.2.35–6). This is reminiscent of Hamlet's criticism of Ophelia and Isabella's take on female frailty, in which the embellishment of outward show is perfected by women in the mirror. The Fool's misogyny attempts to coax the King to abandon his pride to find refuge from the storm, "ask thy daughters blessing" (3.2.12). The irony of seeking a blessing from either Goneril or Regan reemphasizes their immoral self-interest. The Fool does not realize their villainy is not only superficial and defined by glass gazing but represents an absence of conscience.

The Fool wants Lear to reflect upon his suffering. However, Lear justifies his suffering on different terms: "No, I will be the pattern of all patience, / I will say nothing" (3.2.37–8). He learns from Cordelia that integrity may require reticence and consequent suffering. He also parallels the suffering of Christ as the pattern of all patience. Through his suffering spectators imagine redemption: "I will say nothing." The Fool wittily associates Lear's suffering with grace (3.2.40). Echoing the Fool, Lear begs for salvation from the elements, "cry these dreadful summoners grace" (3.2.59), and insists that he is the victim of unforgiving elemental forces.

However, Lear begins to recognize that he is to blame for his tragedy. He achieves recognition, grasping the Fool's generic description of superficial performance by looking outward and away from self-pity to a clearer understanding of what constitutes his being: "My wits begin to turn" (3.2.67). Suddenly, he sees the Fool and is overcome with pity, "Come on, my boy. How dost my boy? / Art cold? I am cold myself" (3.2.67–8), his compassion foreshadowing Christian conscience. Suffering teaches Lear compassion, first acknowledging that the Fool must be cold and only then stating that he is cold himself.

This journey of self-recognition is theologically Christian in a pagan setting. He feels scriptural ethics, "Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel [...] / And show the heavens more just" (3.4.34–6), patience and holiness being hallmarks of the gospel story of Christ's passion. St. Matthew wrote, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen" (20:16). The sole hope for redemption, being one of the chosen few, requires suffering on the world stage. King Lear was first but, stripped of his preeminent role, is now last. Gloucester proclaims the justice of heavenly plenty promised to the wretched: "That I am wretched / Makes

thee the happier. Heavens deal so still! [...] And each man have enough" (4.1.68–74).

Lear and Gloucester learn morality through shared suffering. Gloucester offering his purse to the wretched Edgar is redolent of scriptural charity, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he being rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). The reception of grace is predicated upon giving away earthly riches. Lear searches for conscience, "Who is it can tell me who I am?" and the Fool responds, "Lear's shadow" (1.4.221–2), evoking the Pauline sense of earthly action as a shadow of the ontological self.

Lear discovers his unadorned self in the glass provided by Edgar playing Poor Tom. Looking outwards, Lear sees his own human nature, "Is man no more than this? [...] Thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art" (3.4.101–7). He is the unaccommodated man, poor, bare and forked of his own description.[7] Edgar fulfils his redemptive role disguised as Poor Tom by demonstrating the emptiness of the pagan theatre of the world, "I nothing am" (2.3.195), and relinquishes his ego as a sign of faith and conscience. St. Paul defined conscience beyond the visible and performed as, "the veil is laid over their hearts. Nevertheless, when their *heart* shall be turned to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (2 Corinthians 3:15–16). Suffering unveils Lear's capacity for compassion and pity, and self-recognition is granted by looking outward.

The Fool prophesies the Christian era in Britain in a speech that metatheatrically supersedes the action of the play:

> When slanders do not live in tongues,
> Nor cut-purses come not to throngs,
> When usurers tell their gold i'the field,
> And bawds and whores do churches build,
> Then shall the realm of Albion
> Come to great confusion:
> Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
> That going shall be used with feet.
> This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time
> (3.2.87–95)

Metatheatrically describing the cockpit of the Globe, "nor cut-purses come not to throngs," the Fool imagines a time of Christian morality. He envisages an England, "Albion," in which "bawds and whores do churches build," the time of greatest sin presaging the coming of Christ. Merlin, the Celtic prophet, was instrumental in establishing the court of King Arthur. Arthurian legend depicts the Holy Grail, the chalice used by Jesus at the

Last Supper that conferred eternal youth.[8] The Fool describes the Christian era and obliquely prophecies the promise of eternal life that St. Paul envisioned, manifest in Christ's resurrection.

Alongside other keywords that link the play to scripture, nature is used in *King Lear* in both its pagan and its Pauline sense. Edmund evokes nature as his goddess as he develops his evil plot: "Thou, Nature, art my goddess" (1.2.1). He deceives his father, "Seeing how loathly opposite I stood to his *unnatural* purpose" [my italics] (2.1.49–50), by fabricating his brother's plans for unnatural parricide. Edmund performs his villainous role, deceitful and false, with such skill that his father, Gloucester, calls him, "Loyal and natural boy" (2.1.84), the word "natural" here implying moral integrity. Regan delineates the boundaries of the pagan theatre of the world, in which death is terminal oblivion, and nature finite and bordered: "O, sir you are old: / Nature in you stands on the very verge / Of her confine" (2.4.338–40). Lear, finding nature an abhorrence, asks Jove's physical thunder to raze the ungrateful wickedness of humankind by spilling seed: "Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once / That make ingrateful man!" (3.2.8–9).

Cordelia has an alternative view of nature that evokes pagan gods but imagines nature as a redemptive force: "O you kind gods, cure this great breach in his abused nature!" (4.7.14–15). She hopes that moral order will be salvaged from the wreck of her father's psyche. Her role is a counterpoint to the unnatural ethics of pagan drama, as her redemptive sensibility leads to tragic catastrophe: "redeems nature from the general curse / Which twain have brought her so" (4.4.202–3). Kent describes the difficulty of surviving in a world without redemption, in which nature is broken by the tyranny of faithless night: "The tyranny of the open night's too rough / For nature to endure" (3.4.2–3). Lear wants pagan nature to make Goneril barren, "Hear, Nature, hear" (1.4.266), revealing his initial vengeful fury.

A Christian understanding of nature is glimpsed as Lear's tragedy unfolds. He first visualizes the merciless nature of pagan life, "Allow not nature more than nature needs, / Man's life is cheap as beast's" (2.2.261–2), the bestial nothingness he later finds in the horror of Cordelia's breathless corpse. He gains insight as his sight fails and questions how nature can breed immorality: "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" (3.6.75–6), spiritual blindness to an unrevealed divine justice the cause of hardened hearts. He abhors the desolate world of superficial performance, mistakenly criticizing Kent as a "similar of virtue" (3.2.54). Blind Gloucester mirrors Lear's journey of discovery into an abyss, becoming known to himself as the world wears out to naught: "O ruined piece of nature, this great world / Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?" (4.6.130–1).

Lear turns mad at the lack of conscience in a pagan world, in which the nihilistic will of eyeless rage comes to nothing: "Which the impetuous blasts with eyeless rage / Catch in their fury and making nothing of, / Strives in his little world of man" (3.1.8–10). The pagan theatre of the world represents the little world of man, its borders, like the stage at the Globe, belying the Christian metaphysical truth revealed by implication.

Edgar is a merciful and compassionate guide to blind Gloucester in terms reminiscent of St. Paul: "And persuadest thyself that thou art a guide of the blind, a light of them which *are* in darkness" (Romans 2:19), with the light of compassion heralding the possibility of salvation from darkness. Blind Gloucester foresees the truth of conscience as he contemplates the folly of his suicide. Paradox establishes conversion, "I see it feelingly" (4.6.145), he says, as he blindly feels his way towards a vision of truth. Gloucester's discovery echoes St. Paul's: "For we walk by faith, and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), sight being the visible, reflections in mirrors, theatrical performance, images of deceit. Only suffering can reveal the true nature of the world, through a glass darkly: "Thou must be patient" (4.6.174). The evocation of madness presages the image of the world beyond, "What art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes" (4.5.146–7). The loss of sight produces insight, "Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight" (5.3.277). Eyes are objects of pagan misery, "If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes" (4.6.172), where fortune marks amoral fate in a world of unrevealed Christian ethics. Gloucester's physical blinding evokes the conversion of St. Paul, struck by light on the road to Damascus, thus forming a perception of nature beyond sight.

Oswald is conceptually blind and sees Gloucester's mutilation with the shallow ambition of a courtier pursuing his own fortunes without fear of divine judgement: "A proclaimed prize; most happy! / That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh / To raise my fortunes!" (4.6.222–4). The superficiality and blind ambition of the courtly world are evoked by Lear in his reconciliation with Cordelia:

> So we'll live
> And pray and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too –
> Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out –
> And take upon the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies.
>
> (5.3.11–17)

Mystery is Pauline metaphysics, the term used by Hamlet, the intangible promise of redemption beyond the spoken, the visible and the performed.

Gilded butterflies, artifice adorning nature, symbolize the superfluity of human show. The poor rogues talking of court news represent superficial dramatic action, who's in, who's out, dressed in brief authority. They do not recognize the tragedy of their risible performance, previously characterized by Isabella in *Measure for Measure* as making angels weep. Lear bonds with Cordelia in looking beyond the outward show, "as if we were God's spies," like the messengers sent ahead of the Israelites to seek the Promised Land.

Lear defines role-playing in a world before Christ, in which the confines of conventional tragedy turn every player into an irredeemable fool: "When we are born, we cry that we are come / To this great stage of fools" (4.6.178–9). Lear determines the stock-character of fool the only available role in pagan drama but, seven lines later, declares himself the paragon of irredeemable fools, re-establishing himself at the centre of his tragedy, "I am even the natural fool of fortune" (4.6.186–7). Pagan nature makes him the focal victim of fortune's whims, his self-recognition of playing on the pagan stage presages an alternative theatre of the world.

As Lear loses his role and his psyche fragments a revelatory journey towards conscience takes place on the pagan stage. Cordelia describes Lear, "poor perdu" (4.7.35), that which is lost will be found.[9] Jesus described penitent sinners welcomed to heaven in the gospel of Luke: "Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost" (15:6). Love and suffering, St. Paul's *caritas patiens est*, reveals truth.[10] The paradox of *King Lear* is the holy nihilism of a world stage where Christian redemption is unrevealed, but suffering, death and the absolute loss of self evoke conscience and the redemptive power of love.

Macbeth

Steeped in scriptural references, *Macbeth* directly addresses the Jacobean Christian controversy following the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the fear of Jesuit equivocation. The "Scottish Play" was written for the English monarch, previously James VI of Scotland, who was the new patron of Shakespeare's company, rebranded The King's Men. A physical mirror on stage reflects Scottish James seated in London as King:

> *A show of eight Kings, the last with a glass in his hand; BANQUO following...*
> And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
> Which shows me many more; and some I see
> That two-fold balls and treble scepters carry:
>
> (4.1.112–21)

Macbeth describes King James reflected in the stage mirror, with a metatheatrical commendation of the monarch's ancestral legitimacy: "Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: down!" (4.1.112).

James traced his ancestry to Banquo and, staring at his regal image in the mirror held on stage, saw the subtext of violent religious controversy that instigated his near assassination in 1605. Banquo's line will "stretch out to th'crack of doom" (4.1.117), into the Jacobean era embodied by the Protestant King and, through his progeny, his mirror images, to Judgment Day. The "two-fold balls," the orb of monarchy, topped by a crucifix indicate the divine right of kings, while the "treble scepters" evoke the Holy Trinity.[11] James is the rightful Christian King, decked in the sacred artefacts of coronation, framed on stage by a mirror.

Macbeth's misinterpretation of the witches' prophecy results in the relentless process of downfall, "She should have died hereafter: / There would have been a time for such a word" (5.5.17–18), until he finally acknowledges his instigation of the fatal action. As the play ends, Macduff announces the temporal shift: "Behold, where stands / Th'usurper's cursed head: the time is free" (5.9.19–20). Time is now free to resume its healing Christian arc. Macbeth recognizes the temporal logic of his tragedy, "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, / To the last syllable of recorded time" (5.5.19–21), as it ticks towards unavoidable doom determined by his misinterpretation of equivocal prophecy and his calamitous decision to act.

Macbeth defines the prison of his tragedy as relentlessly unfolding action rushing towards his fate: "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly" (1.7.1–2). He thus defines the rapid temporal linearity of his tragedy. Lady Macbeth echoes her husband, "what's done cannot be undone" (5.1.69), explaining the temporal trap they have laid for themselves. She initially believes time can be outplayed, "To beguile the time, / Look like the time" (1.5.62–3); however, in this concise tragedy, one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, the quick passage of time proves decisive. Macbeth's performance, his misinterpretation of prophecy, augurs "dusty death" (5.5.23).

Macbeth describes the superficial inevitability of the drama that he has created as a short and anguished performance: "Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage" (5.5.24–5). His tragic actions are a walking shadow, "full of sound and fury / signifying nothing" (5.5.27–8), a meaningless march to the music of inexorable fate. However, a Messenger interrupts Macbeth's fatalism, describing the unstageable and fantastical movement of Birnam Wood: "I report that which I say I saw, / But know not how to do't" (5.5.31–2). The mysterious movement of the wood, a magic defying rationale, confirms his tragedy that began with the witches' equivocal prophecy. Recognizing

his own performance, Macbeth re-examines his misinterpretation of the witches' prophecy and rebels against the logic of blood-soaked tragedy by ridiculing Stoic convention: "Why should I play the Roman fool, and die / On mine own sword?" (5.8.1–2).

Surrounding characters define Macbeth's satanic performance, with Malcolm characterizing his vaunting ambition as Luciferian rebellion against divine order: "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell" (4.3.22). Macduff contemplates the sacrilegious murder of King Duncan, "Not in the legions / Of horrid Hell can come a devil more damn'd / In evils, to top Macbeth" (4.3.55–7), Macbeth is identified as a supreme devil from hell. Ross describes the tragedy on Christian terms: "Ha, good Father, / Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act" (2.4.4–5). Man's immoral actions on the world stage are seen by the virtuous father refracted through the metaphysical prism of a troubled heaven. Ross imagines the actions of Macbeth associated with darkness, "That darkness does the face of earth entomb, / When living light should kiss it?" (2.4.9–10), as the benighted world stage that Macbeth struts across holds the promise of a redemptive dawn. Macbeth lacks God's grace as represented by the light of Christ and his shining promise of redemption: "the Light of the World" (John 9:5); "For God that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is he which hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The recurring motif of night is evoked by Lady Macbeth to describe Macbeth's performance, as hellish darkness hides Macbeth's actions from the judgement of heaven:

> Come, thick Night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
>
> (1.5.49–52)

The immoral action of the play takes place shrouded in literal darkness that metaphorically provides an unethical stage for sacrilegious murder.

Macbeth's unethical performance is continually lamented on Christian terms. The Old Man replies to Ross, "'Tis unnatural, / Even like the deed that's done" (2.4.10–11), unnatural political violence a sacrilege against the natural Christian order. Lenox describes how the evening of the murder is filled with unnatural portents, the sounds of hell and false prophesy: "Strange screams of death, / And, prophesying with accents terrible" (2.3.56–7). Ross mentions "Saint Colme's inch" (1.2.63), an islet in the Firth of Forth named for St. Columba, the Irish missionary who converted Scotland to Christianity. Macduff tells Malcolm, "Thy royal father / Was

a most sainted King" (4.3.108–9), establishing his legitimacy by emphasizing the sacral nature of monarchy. Lady Macbeth questions her husband's capacity to carry out his role, "That would thou holily; wouldst not play false" (1.5.20), playing false being the measure of a smooth, but credible villainy undermined by religious ethics. Macduff describes the initial murder of Duncan, "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece! / Most sacrilegious Murther hath broke ope / The Lord's anointed Temple" (2.3.66–8), as he compares the assassination of an anointed king to the desecration of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Macbeth himself asks the murderers, "Are you so gospell'd, / To pray for this good man" (3.1.87–8), questioning whether they mourn their deeds and seek repentance because of their faith in the Gospels.

Equivocation as Christian controversy explains Macbeth's tragic misinterpretation of the witches' prophecy. The prophesying witches declare, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.11), the paradoxical truth provoking the lie. King James's treatise *Daemonologie* was published in 1599, providing Christian justification for the persecution of witches. However, the main purpose of the witches' paradoxical prophecy is the controversy surrounding Jesuit equivocation.

Jesuit equivocation, the ethics of lying for a holy purpose, came to the fore during the trials that followed the treasonous Gunpowder Plot. Therefore, misinterpreted equivocation is understood to conceal evil that can provoke political violence. Macbeth's misinterpretation of the witches' prophecy is rooted in Catholic sedition. Equivocation is a central linguistic motif in *Macbeth* and is addressed in the comic scene that evokes the trial of Henry Garnet. The Porter introduces an imaginary Garnet, a metatheatrical figure that explains Macbeth's fatal error: "Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough to heaven: O! Come in equivocator!" (2.3.8–9).

Equivocation to signify a sacrilegious crime demystifies the witches' prophecy, causing Macbeth to commit treason enough to heaven, but also handing the English crown to James, who is himself the subject of an attempted assassination. Duplicity and equivocation determine Macbeth's fate, inviting his gamble: "Two truths are told, / As happy prologues to the swelling act" (1.3.127–8). Macbeth predicts the paradox impossible to parse, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (1.3.38), the strange atmosphere of day, both foul and fair, foretells Macbeth's descent into darkness. At the end of the play, Macbeth realizes, "I pull in resolution; and begin / To doubt th'equivocation of the fiend, / That lies like truth" (5.5.42–4), the witches' fork-tongued prophecy identified as satanic doublespeak.

Equivocation is presented by the Porter as similar to the effects of alcohol, the removal of inhibition determining woeful performance: "it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance. Therefore, much drink

may be said to be an equivocator with lechery" (2.3.29–32). The witches' prophecy, like a dram of Scotch, sparks the desire in Macbeth, who acts under the toxic influence of delusional potency. Macbeth's misinterpretation, like a lecherous drunk imagining sexual potency, leads to the tragic results of wanton ambition. Equivocation within the witches' prophecy guarantees Macbeth's tragic response. The Porter recognizes damnation on the evening of the murder, "But this place is too cold for Hell. / I'll devil-porter it no longer" (2.3.16–17). Too cold for fiery hell, equivocation in unethical tragedy terrifies the honest porter.

The porter scene introduces the idea of Satan with continual knocking. St. Luke associated Beelzebub with the sound of knocking (9) and described Satan, "And he said unto them, I saw Satan, like lightning, fall down from heaven / Behold, I give unto you power to tread on Serpents, and Scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you" (10:18). Lady Macbeth encourages action, "look like the innocent flower, / But be the *serpent* under't" [my italics] (1.5.64–5), like an Eve persuading her husband to mimic the satanic snake. Macbeth, crippled by the writhing torment of his demonic actions, describes psychological division: "O! full of *scorpions* is my mind, dear wife!" [my italics] (3.2.36).

A further image from Luke—"Blessed *is* the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked" (11:27)—is echoed by Lady Macbeth, "I have given suck, and know / How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me" (1.7.54–5), but she rebels against her own maternal nature and graphically paints infanticide: "I would, while it was smiling in my face, / Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums, / And dash'd the brains out" (1.7.56–8). This is the same satanic sentiment that entices Macbeth to murder. She cries, "Come to my woman's breasts, / And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers" (1.5.46–7). Here, nurturing milk is the metaphorical sustenance for the massacre of innocents. She describes her weak husband: "Yet do I fear thy nature: / It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness" (1.5.15–16). His kind nature, not conducive to his role, is metaphorically filled with the nurturing kindness of breast milk.

However, the morally worthy ancestor of King James is saved from evil by his ability to see through the wickedness of equivocation. Banquo recognizes the devilish nature of the witches' prophecy:

> The instruments of Darkness tell us truths;
> Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
> In deepest consequence. –
> Cousins, a word, I pray you.
>
> (1.3.124-–7)

His heirs, represented by King James framed within a mirror held on stage, have the moral right to reign in the context of Macbeth's tragic misinterpretation of the truth. Banquo begs Macbeth—"I pray you"—to realize the deepest consequences of being won over by "the instruments of Darkness." The virtuous Christian nature of his heir, King James, is flatteringly framed in a mirror that predicts Stuart supremacy stretching out until Doomsday despite the sacrilegious attempt on his life while simultaneously reflecting Macbeth's psychic horror at his tragic misinterpretation of satanic equivocation.

Antony and Cleopatra

Attempts to exceed the pagan conception of nature, to transcend the realm of politics and empire through self-dramatized love, ends in tragedy for Antony and Cleopatra. Condemned to the Stoic cliché of suicide, the coming Christian theatre of the world is forecast. Set at the apogee of pagan antiquity, the play ends with Caesar becoming "the universal landlord" (3.13.76). However, *Antony and Cleopatra* hints at another universal landlord with repeated evocations of Herod of Jewry, the tyrant that tried and failed to prevent the coming of Christ with the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem, reported in the gospel of Matthew (2:16). The gospel story takes place off stage but casts a shadow over the theatre of the world controlled by its Roman protagonists.

In a mirror metaphor, Maecenas describes the scope and limits of the pagan theatre of the world:

> AGRIPPA:
> A rarer spirit never
> Did steer humanity: but you, gods, will give us
> Some faults to make us men. Caesar is touch'd.
> MAECENAS:
> When such a spacious mirror's set before him,
> He needs must see himself.
>
> (5.1.31–4)

Caesar is uncharacteristically emotional at the news of Antony's death. He sees his own fate in Antony's salutary fall from greatness.

Caesar is the undisputed ruler in Rome and the inheritor of a vast empire, stretching from the Caucasus to the Atlas ranges, from the Rhine to the Nile. However, Maecenas's spacious mirror, referring to the downfall of Antony, simultaneously demonstrates the squeezed parameters of earthly dominion. Caesar's victory within the pagan theatre of the world, however expansive the scale of the stage on which he acts, is earthbound

and performed, "His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm / Crested the world" (5.2.81–2). His universal empire nonetheless has outer limits.

The repeated evocation of Olympian gods emphasizes the earthly limits to the pagan drama of mortals cursed with faults that guide the tragic narrative, "but you, gods, will give us / Some faults to make us men" (5.1.32–3). Caesar weeps at the mirror to mortality provided by Antony's fall. The reminder of mortality at the moment of triumph is reminiscent of Xerxes' tears at the crossing of the Hellespont from Herodotus's *Histories*, which Shakespeare read in Italian.[12] Demonstrating the limits of earthly power, of the fragility and inconsequence of a life that ends with death, Caesar worries, "The breaking of so great a thing should make / A greater crack" (5.1.14–15), temporal reality unscathed by the breaking of great Antony.

Maecenas notes that Caesar is looking at himself in the mirror of Antony's demise. Caesar considers the blade used for suicide and becomes embarrassed by his tears: "The gods rebuke me, but it is tidings / To wash the eyes of kings" (5.1.27–8). His goal of uncontested power is a memento mori that produces an outward show of grief. Caesar is struck by the small and confined world in which he acts and pities Antony's part: "Poor Antony!" (4.1.17). Agrippa suggests that human action is itself paradoxical: "And strange it is / That nature must compel us to lament / Our most persisted deeds" (5.1.28–30). The confines of pagan nature make Caesar lament his most persistent deeds as he seizes control of the world stage.

Maecenas's mirror intimates the confined boundaries of the pagan theatre of the world that pre-dates St. Paul's depiction of Christ's resurrection, regardless of the scale of Caesar's coming role as emperor. Pompey was promised earthly dominion, "Thou art, if thou dar'st be, the earthly Jove" (2.7.67), as a reflection of Olympian metaphysical glory. Cleopatra mythologizes her own transcendence through love, "'Tis paltry to be Caesar" (5.2.2), the world monarch confined by the finite stage on which he acts. Caesar describes the glory of Cleopatra's capture, "For her life in Rome / Would be eternal in our triumph" (5.1.65–6), and seeks eternal splendour by capturing her transcendent persona. All-conquering Caesar begins to resist the demands of action with Stoic contemplation: "How hardly I was drawn into this war, / How calm and gentle I proceeded still / In all my writings" (5.1.74–5). He sees himself a calm and gentle scholar, drawn into a victorious war that inevitably reflects mortal glory, as nothing eternal can result from even the greatest Roman triumph.

The scale of the greatest performers from classical antiquity is subverted by the coming of Christ.[13] Five times Herod of Jewry is evoked to remind the audience that they are watching the final days of the pagan world before paradigmatic overhaul. The coming of a new age is prophesied, "The time of universal peace is near" (4.6.5), a reference to Caesar's Pax Romana and an oblique divination of the coming of Christ. Agrippa's, "a rarer

spirit never / Did steer humanity," flattering Antony's resplendent role, ironically hints at a rarer spirit on the horizon with the advent of Christ.

This influences the ethics of the protagonists. Despite the betrayal of his loyal comrade Enobarbus, Antony responds with humble generosity: "Go, Eros, send his treasure after. Do it. / Detain no jot, I charge thee. Write to him – / I will subscribe – gentle adieus and greetings" (4.5.12–14). The word "jot" evokes the scripture of St. Matthew: "For truly I say unto you, Till heaven and earth perish, one jot or one tittle of the Law shall not escape, till all things be fulfilled" (5:18). The spirit of generosity overcomes Antony as he commends Enobarbus to God: *adieu*.

Enobarbus interprets Antony's unlikely warmth by dramatizing himself in the villainous role to be played by Judas, "I am alone the villain of the earth" (4.6.31), his treachery shaming him into sudden death: "This blows my heart" (4.6.35). Antony's gentle adieus break his heart, mirroring Judas hanging himself after attempting to return the bounty for his treachery (Matthew 27:1–10). Enobarbus mysteriously dies, shocked by the compassionate gesture: "how wouldst thou have paid / My better service, when my turpitude / Thou dost crown with gold!" (4.6.33–5). The ethics and metaphysics of the theatre of the world are on the cusp of paradigmatic apocalypse.

Dismissing the unities of time, place and action, the play crosses wide geographies over a lengthy timeframe. Juxtaposing the rigid order of Rome, "the wide arch of the ranged empire" (1.1.34–5), and the luxurious and fertile "slime and ooze" (2.7.22) of Egypt, the pagan theatre of the world is metatheatrically diminutive, a portrait of the wooden galleries at the Globe: "The little O, the earth" (5.2.80). Antony rejects his role as warrior for the love of Cleopatra: "his goodly eyes, / That o'er the files and musters of the war / Have glowed like plated Mars" (1.1.2–4). Philo determines this submission to love a debasement, the antithesis of Roman virtue: "the bellows and the fan to cool a gipsy's lust" (1.1.9–10).[14] However, Antony regards his transformative love heroic by dismissing the petty world of politics, "Let Rome in Tiber melt" (1.1.34), until military defeat reawakens his relationship with physical reality.

Antony reprises his role as pre-eminent warrior after his defeat at Actium. Cleopatra notices the revival, "but since my Lord is Antony again" (3.13.192), Antony's previous commitment to love the cause of his military weakness. Antony intimates the irreconcilable demands of his identities within the play, "Eros! Mine armour, Eros!" (4.4.1). The character Eros, emblematically named for pagan love, brings his armour. He calls on his servant, "Unarm, Eros. The long day's task is done / And we must sleep" (4.14.35–6), in the final stage of a journey from heroic warrior to epic lover to the sleep of death. Torn between two heroic roles, the virtuous Roman and the romantic Egyptian, the warrior and the lover, his Stoic

suicide is a tumble into Cleopatra's bed: "But I will be a bridegroom in my death and run into't / As to a lover's bed" (4.14.100–2).

The action of the play is determined by pagan Fortune. The soothsayer tells Antony, "If thou dost play with him at any game / Thou are sure to lose; and of that natural luck / He beats thee 'gainst the odds" (2.3.24–6), as Caesar possesses an uncanny skill at beating the odds. "Fortune" is repeated 45 times, for example, "Fortune pursue thee!" (3.12.24). Alongside Fortune, the relentless work of time, mentioned 48 times in the play, marks an inescapable fate which Antony finally accepts when his luck runs out: "The time is come" (4.14.68).

The epic scale of Antony and Cleopatra's self-dramatized love cannot transcend the pagan theatre of the world. Cleopatra suggests the transcendental nature of her own performance, "Give me my robe. Put on my crown / I have immortal longings in me" (5.2.278–9), but her immortal longings are defined by theatrical baggage, her costumed gown and crown as props. Antony calls on the pagan underworld and evokes Virgil's *Aeneid* to mythologize their romance: "Dido and Aeneas shall want troops, / And all the haunt be ours. Eros! Eros!" (4.14.54–5). He compares his fate to the centaur killed by Hercules, "The shirt of Nessus is upon me" (4.12.43), mythological in grandeur but still a figurative costume. Cleopatra mythologizes Antony by evoking an Argonaut, "O, he's more mad / Than Telamon for his shield" (4.13.1–2). This paradoxically highlights the eponymous protagonists repeated and doomed attempts to transcend the confines of the pagan theatre of the world. Superstitious soldiers echo self-mythologizing Antony, "'Tis the god Hercules whom Antony loved / Now leaves him" (4.3.21). The pagan demigod leaves mortal Antony to his self-inflicted fate, and the confined scope of the pagan theatre of the world is defined by neoclassical hyperbole.

Cleopatra imagines herself rhetorically exceeding the borders of drama: "It cannot be thus long; the sides of nature / Will not sustain it" (1.3.17–18). She rejects Roman order and almost exceeds pagan nature with her orientalizing majesty, "O'erpicturing that Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature" (2.2.210–1). The artifice of regal splendour outdoes the Roman goddess of love, sexuality and fertility, as she swoops down the Nile.

Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra is an amendment of North's translation of Plutarch as the earthly representation of the goddess: "She herself lay all along under a canopy of cloth of gold, dressed as Venus in a picture." Enobarbus projects Cleopatra beyond pagan conceptions of nature: "O'erpicturing that Venus." Despite the transcendental effect of Cleopatra's glamour, she remains subject to the boundaries of the pagan theatre of the world, the air bound by the rules of physics: "Whistling to the air, which, but for vacancy, / Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra, too / And

made a gap in nature" (2.2.226–8). Theatrical boundaries and the rules of pagan nature cannot be broken, despite Cleopatra's transcendental artifice.

Self-mythologizing attempts to exceed pagan drama lead to tragic bathos. Antony's suicide is a failed cliché of Stoic self-dramatization becoming farce as he is hoisted to Cleopatra: "Here's sport indeed! How heavy weighs my Lord!" (4.15.33). Remembering her role, Cleopatra returns to hyperbole in an exaggerated swoon as Antony's lumpen body is mechanically hoisted: "Had I great Juno's power, / The strong-winged Mercury should fetch thee up / And set by Jove's side" (4.15.35–7). She recognizes the pagan theatre of the world in which she performs: "To throw my sceptre at injurious gods / To tell them that this world did equal theirs" (4.15.80–1). She describes the classical elements of Aristotle's *stocheion*, "I am fire and air" (5.2.286), echoing Antony's Roman heroics: "I would they'd fight i'th'fire or i'th'air" (4.10.3). She foresees herself as a neoclassical figure on the Jacobean stage: "I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I'the' posture of a whore" (5.2.217–219). Iras responds to the metatheatrical description with an appeal to the Olympian deities, "O the good gods!" (5.2.220), but cannot deny Cleopatra's claim, as pagan metaphysics parodies her indignation at theatrical mockery.

Cleopatra's suicide is a metatheatrical parody of neoclassical convention. The Roman guards allow a clown into her chamber. The clown bawdily calls the poisonous snake a worm, slang for penis. Cleopatra finds tragic resolution through suicide because of the clown's comic intervention in the tragic plot, and manages to kill herself because of the theatrical misapprehension by her Roman guards of the significance of "mingling kings and clowns."

An emblem of the pagan world, Cleopatra becomes a work of art by performing suicide. She rhetorically makes her warm flesh monumental, "Now from head to foot / I am marble-constant" (5.2.238–9), sculpted stone the symbol of pagan posterity. She imagines a world in which she and Antony are transcendent:

> You lie up to the hearing of the gods!
> But if there be nor ever were one such,
> It's past the size of dreaming. Nature wants stuff
> To vie strange forms with fancy; yet t'imagine
> An Antony were nature's piece against fancy,
> Condemning shadows quite
>
> (5.2.94–9)

Cleopatra's imaginative rhetoric cannot exceed the Olympian scheme. Antony is a natural force who resists artifice and condemns the shadows on the pagan stage. She accepts her physical, pagan mortality, "If thou

and nature can so gently part, / The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch" (5.2.292–3), and parts from nature with the physical tease that defined her role as transcendental lover.

Caesar describes their graves, like Maecenas's mirror, a reflection of the confines of earthly glory. Cleopatra will be, "buried by her Antony. / No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous" (5.2.356–8). Clipped in the grave, their famed personae are imprisoned by the physical reality of death. Antony had imagined love exceeding the boundaries of the pagan theatre of the world, "Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth" (1.1.17), which placed his love beyond quantification. Echoing the words of St. Peter, "But we look for new heavens, and a new earth, according to his promise, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13), and the apocalyptic vision of St. John, "And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1), and the prophecy of Isaiah, "For lo, I will create new heavens and a new earth (65:17), Antony reimagines a theatre of the world that provides redemption from the tragic confines of earthly performance.

Coriolanus

Coriolanus is raised by his mother, Volumnia, to play the warrior.[15] He refuses to relinquish a role that represents his nature: "You have put me now to such a part which never / I shall discharge to th' life" (3.2.105–6). Volumnia tries to convince him: "To have my praise for this, perform a part thou hast not done before" (3.2.108–9). But he cannot undo his nature: "O mother, mother! / What have you done?" (5.4.185–6). He laments, "Like a dull actor now / I have forgot my part" (5.3.40–1), reprising the fate determined by his part. Embodying the role that reflects his nature, he refuses to reauthor his destiny: "I'll never / Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand, / As if a man were author of himself" (5.3.34–6). He believes his own nature determines his role. Typifying the Roman warrior, Coriolanus's constant nature produces a tragic, bloody performance.

In this chapter, titled for Maecenas's "spacious mirror," the tragic confines of human action in a world preceding the possibility of redemption is played out on an epic scale. The futility of trying to outwit fate evokes Christian ethics in which patience and suffering rather than confronting the storm and strife of human affairs will provide salvation. This leads us directly to the final chapter of mirror metaphors that attempt to reconcile political action in the world with the scriptural message of patience, making performance a necessary part of finding redemption.

Notes

1 "Breath" is evoked by a penitent Gloucester: "You ever gentle gods, take thy breath from me; / Let no my worser spirit tempt me again / To die before you please" (4.6.212–14).

2 Samuel Benyamin Hakh and Jakarta Theological Seminary, "The Conscience According to Paul," *Journal of Biblical Theology*: 235–52.
3 Cordelia's catastrophe was reworked for centuries, most famously by Nahum Tate, to deny the uncomfortable logic of a world without redemption.
4 Lear echoes Richard II's, "Nor I, nor any man that but man is / With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd / With being nothing" (5.5.34–41).
5 "But vis-à-vis the Gospel narrative, we come upon the startling-and monumental- discrepancy that Job is unequivocally pre-Christian, while Lear, though *set* in the pre-Christian world, was written with full, indeed profound, consciousness of the Christ-event as an historical, literary and theological phenomenon" (Lefler, p.217).
6 "Modern students of Shakespeare frequently point out analogies between Cordelia and Christ, based predominantly on her selfless love for her father and her innocent death … Harry Morris not only takes this argument further than some of his contemporaries, but sees in Edgar a redemptive character whose stature as a Christ figure nearly matches Cordelia's … certain other parallels become evident between the last days of King Lear's life and the last several years of Christ's: both had cathartic wilderness experiences; both had small bands of loyal followers … In III, iv, Lear's intention to pray outside alone on the heath before entering the hovel echoes Jesus' habit of drawing away to a quiet place alone to pray (Mark 1:35, etc.)" Nathan Lefler, "The Tragedy of King Lear: Redeeming Christ?," *Literature and Theology* 24.3 (2010): 211–26.
7 Ibid.
8 For instance, Robert de Boron's twelfth century *Merlin* and *Joseph d'Arimathie*.
9 Luke 15:1–31.
10 "Love suffereth long: it is bountiful: love envieth not: love doth not boast itself: it is not puffed up: It doth no uncomely thing: it seeketh not her own thing: it is not provoked to anger: it thinketh no evil: it rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13).
11 Plausibly, King James, impressed by the flattering glass placed in front of him as a prop in *Macbeth*, would later use a mirror metaphor to describe his rights as King in a speech to Parliament in 1609: "Yee know that principally by three ways yee may wrong a Mirrour…"
12 *Delle Guerre de Greci et de Persi* by Herodotus, translated by Mattheo Maria Boiardo contains material found in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.
13 Tom Holland argues, "The relationship of Christianity to the world that gave birth to it is, then, paradoxical. The faith is at once the most enduring legacy of classical antiquity, and the index of its utter transformation (*Dominion,* p.xxii)"
14 See Miles, "*'Infinite Variety"*: Antony and Cleopatra," *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*: "Coriolanus falls because he is too constant, Antony because he is not constant enough and in love with a woman who is inconstancy incarnate. But where Plutarch saw his subjects as merely driven to disaster by moral flaws and irrational compulsions, Shakespeare sees each as pursuing, blindly, confusedly, and self-destructively, a genuine moral ideal. Coriolanus' ideal is that of constancy, an ideal taught him by Volumnia and Rome, and bearing a strong likeness to the Stoic codes of *Julius Caesar*. Antony's ideal is un-Roman and un-Stoic, and is best defined in the words of Montaigne: in a mutable world, he chooses to embrace 'the benefit of inconstancy.'"
15 See Miles, "*Coriolanus* is Shakespeare's definitive critique of the contradictions of 'constancy', and its potentially destructive consequences for an individual or a society which holds it as the supreme virtue."