

# The Pragmatics of Dialogical Asides in Shakespeare

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## 1. Introduction

Shakespearean textual studies have highlighted the role of editorial additions and interpolations to either the Folio or Quarto versions of Shakespearean plays and made us aware of how these paratextual elements may affect reading, interpretation and performance as well. Since Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of the plays, successive editors have interpreted the texts trying to help readers "lacking in the visual imagination required to infer action from dialogue"<sup>1</sup> by embedding stage directions in the dialogue and indeed they have created what has become a long editorial tradition<sup>2</sup>. Among the added stage directions of which editors have sometimes been very prodigal or, on the contrary, rather thrifty, there is the "aside", an annotation marking a precise theatrical convention, which is, nonetheless, hardly ever used in the Folios and Quartos, even though it was well known as a performance practice to actors in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Wells, *Re-Editing Shakespeare for the Modern Reader*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> For the analysis of eighteenth-century editorial politics see J. Gavin Paul, "Performance as 'Punctuation': Editing Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century", *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 61:250 (June 2010), pp. 390-413.

<sup>3</sup> Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson affirm that variations in original stage directions are due mainly to "authorial idiosyncrasy" rather than to intrinsic different meaning of the words used to signal stage action: "Massinger and others regularly use *aside* to mean *speak aside*, but Shakespeare, for one, prefers other locutions (e.g., *to himself*) and uses *aside* primarily to denote onstage positioning" (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, revised ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. x).

Modern editions of Shakespearean plays, therefore, continue to insert the word “aside” throughout Shakespearean plays whenever editors interpret linguistic and contextual features which seem to require the presence of this theatrical convention. Scholars have also defined various categories for it: there can be monological, *ad spectatores*, and dialogical asides<sup>4</sup>.

This essay will limit its scope to the dialogical aside and analyse it together with the pragmatic strategies it involves, when during a multiparty talk dialogue becomes hidden and particularly guarded (and wary), so as not to be recognised by any other onstage bystanders but the addressee selected by the speaker<sup>5</sup>. In this specific case, the aside loses its most manifest improbability as a convention and may show, on the contrary, how ‘simple’ dramatic dialogue – even in Shakespeare – works when stripped down to its interactional essentials because of urgency, secrecy or other contextual situations.

## 2. The “aside to” in Shakespeare plays

Like all editorial additions, stage directions signalling “aside” or “aside to” are, in a certain sense, personal and subjective interpretations of the original texts made by the many editors who have succeeded in preparing readable and performable versions of Shakespearean plays. As a consequence, added stage directions may seem arbitrary (and, indeed, the comparison of different editions of the same play shows that editors do not always agree on a certain movement or gesture). For this reason it makes sense that a single edition with consistent edi-

<sup>4</sup> See Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 139-40.

<sup>5</sup> Well-known terms in pragmatics and discourse analysis will be used, without necessarily mentioning the direct source. Here follows the list of the main scholars on whose works this analysis is grounded: John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962; Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity”, in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1960, pp. 253-76; Penelope Brown and Steven C. Levinson, *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; Malcolm Coulthard, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, London, Longman, 1977; Malcolm Coulthard and David C. Brazil, *Exchange Structure* (Discourse Analysis Monograph 5), Birmingham, ELR, 1979; H. Paul Grice, “Logic and Conversation”, in *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, eds P. Cole and J. L. Morgan, New York, Academic Press, 1975, pp. 41-58.

torial decisions be chosen for the present analysis, and that the study itself be carried out based upon it, without precluding – though – a comparison with other editorial options.

The version of Shakespearean plays chosen is the electronic edition of *The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor<sup>6</sup>. It is fairly easy to search this version by means of a concordancer since the editors have encoded the word “aside” (or “aside to...”) in the text ‘regularly’ within brackets. The first step, then, will be to find the occurrences of dialogical asides in the various plays implementing the quite helpful and user-friendly AntConc concordancer<sup>7</sup>.

A second step will try to analyse some of the verbal exchanges between speakers ‘talking in asides’ to each other, in order to see which pragmatic strategies, for example, are introduced by a first sender to capture the attention of a selected interlocutor, and how conversational moves are structured in an “aside to”<sup>8</sup>. A preliminary search was carried out in order to see which plays host the highest number of dialogical asides (see TABLE One).

The results reveal that a comedy (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*) ranks highest with 16 occurrences, followed by a tragedy (*Antony and Cleopatra*) with 14, a history play (*Henry VI, Part 3*) with 12, and a romance (*The Tempest*) with 11. These will be the Shakespeare plays analysed in the following paragraphs, except *The Merry Wives* because – when compared with the Arden edition<sup>9</sup> – the comedy loses its top ranking position shown in the TABLE: out of the 16 cases of “aside to” resulting in the Wells & Taylor edition, only 11 are present in the Arden version.

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<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, Electronic Edition, eds Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988. The present essay was completed before publication of *The New Oxford Shakespeare, The Complete Works*, eds Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> AntConc, developed by Lawrence Anthony at Waseda University (Japan), is a free-ware corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing and text analysis, and is available at <http://www.laurenceanthony.net> (downloaded 23 August 2014).

<sup>8</sup> The passages commented upon in what follows are reproduced from Shakespeare, Electronic Edition, without the editorial encoding, after comparing them with the printed edition (William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, Compact Edition, eds Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988). To reproduce my reference sources exactly, the present numbering system of acts and scenes uses Arabic and not Roman figures.

<sup>9</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. H. J. Oliver, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen, 1971.

Before proceeding it is convenient to remember what Manfred Pfister observes about the nature of the dialogical aside; according to this critic, it “is generally conditioned by conspiratorial dialogue or dialogue in an eavesdropping situation”<sup>10</sup>.

**TABLE ONE**  
**Occurrences of “aside to” per play<sup>11</sup>**

	TITLE	OCCURRENCES OF “ASIDE TO”
1	<i>Ado</i>	3
2	<i>Ant.</i>	14
3	<i>AWW</i>	4
4	<i>Cym.</i>	5
5	<i>Err.</i>	3
6	<i>Ham.</i>	5
7	<i>1H4</i>	6
8	<i>2H4</i>	3
9	<i>1H6</i>	2
10	<i>2H6</i>	10
11	<i>3H6</i>	12
12	<i>H8</i>	3
13	<i>JC</i>	5
14	<i>Jn.</i>	2
15	<i>LLL</i>	6
16	<i>Mac.</i>	5
17	<i>MM</i>	9
18	<i>MV</i>	3
19	<i>Per.</i>	2
20	<i>R3</i>	3
21	<i>Shr.</i>	5
22	<i>Tit.</i>	4
23	<i>Tmp.</i>	11
24	<i>TN</i>	2
25	<i>Tro.</i>	3
26	<i>Wiv.</i>	16
27	<i>WT</i>	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>147</b>

### 3. *The various interactional levels of “asides to” in The Tempest*

The first example to be taken into consideration from *The Tempest* occurs at 3.3.11-17, soon after King Alonso has expressed his hopelessness

<sup>10</sup> Pfister, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup> The acronyms of the plays follow the standard MLA abbreviations.

about the life of his son Ferdinand. It takes place between Antonio and Sebastian, two characters the reader and the audience have already encountered in 2.1 when commenting cynically on Gonzalo's utopian speech and discussing how to get rid of Alonso. There is no aside in that scene because all the others have fallen asleep and the two conspirators can speak overtly. On that occasion their murderous intention is forestalled by Ariel, but now, when once again the structure of the play zooms in on that part of the island where Alonso and the others are, the conspiracy can go on. Thus, Antonio and Sebastian, in a clear 'conspiratorial aside' necessitated by the onstage presence of others, resume their regicidal plan:

11 ANTONIO. (*aside to Sebastian*) I am right glad that he's [King Alonso] so out of hope.

12 Do not for one repulse forgo the purpose

13 That you resolved t' effect.

SEBASTIAN. (*aside to Antonio*)                      The next advantage

14 Will we take throughly.

ANTONIO. (*aside to Sebastian*) Let it be tonight,

15 For now they are oppressed with travel. They

16 Will not nor cannot use such vigilance

17 As when they are fresh.

SEBASTIAN. (*aside to Antonio*) I say tonight. No more.

The exchange consists of four moves, the fourth being a reinforcement of the third. From Antonio's initiation the spectators are reminded that Sebastian has been brooding and plotting something against the king for some time, and that his interlocutor is in the know. Antonio does not use any specific linguistic strategy to involve Sebastian (such as a vocative), but simply recalls a shared 'unsafe' topic. The "aside to" is thus justified by the risky nature of the topic itself. Furthermore, although not at the very beginning, Antonio uses an imperative ("do not... forgo", l. 12) so as to compel his addressee to feel involved in the action. Actually Sebastian answers with an inclusive "we" (l. 14), which stresses the common intent and implies active cooperation. Antonio's follow-up "Let it be tonight" (l. 14), without specifying the meaning of "it" and thus highlighting the conspiratorial tone of the whole exchange, asserts the common will of the two speakers, and Sebastian's final words simply reaffirm the assent to Antonio's sug-

gested time: the last move confirms the joint enterprise by the repetition of “tonight” from the previous move. In this case, the first speaker captures his addressee’s attention by reminding him of some shared knowledge, and no appellation is necessary to start the exchange. The deixis of the four moves refers to an undefined murderous deed against someone who “cannot use such vigilance / As when they are fresh” (ll. 15-16), i.e. those other characters onstage with the speakers, who the audience have just heard talking of their tiredness. The secrecy and the allusiveness of the dialogue certainly take us back to 2.1, without needing any further explanation.

All the other “asides to” occur in 5.1, at the end of the play, when Prospero has decided to be merciful to his old enemies. The speakers here are Prospero and Ariel, well known to the spectators as master and faithful servant:

228 ARIEL. (*aside to Prospero*) Sir, all this service  
 229 Have I done since I went.  
 PROSPERO. (*aside to Ariel*) My tricky spirit!  
 [...]  
 243 ARIEL. (*aside to Prospero*) Was 't well done?  
 244 PROSPERO. (*aside to Ariel*) Bravely, my diligence. Thou shalt be free.  
 [...]  
 254 (*Aside to Ariel*) Come hither, spirit.  
 255 Set Caliban and his companions free.  
 256 Untie the spell. *Exit Ariel*  
 [...]  
 317 PROSPERO. I'll deliver all,  
 318 And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales,  
 319 And sail so expeditious that shall catch  
 320 Your royal fleet far off. (*Aside to Ariel*) My Ariel, chick,  
 321 That is thy charge. Then to the elements  
 322 Be free, and fare thou well. *Exit Ariel*

The present cases do not sound conspiratorial at all, so their being rich with “asides to” must depend on a different reason. This appears to be connected to the nature of the two speakers: one is a spirit, invisible to all but Prospero and the audience, the other is a magician availing himself of his interlocutor’s services. At this phase of the play, all characters (with the exceptions of Caliban and his new friends) are on the stage, and Ariel must be there too, ready to fulfil his master’s desires. But Prospero and Ariel belong to another

dimension, to a magical world imperceptible to the others, so that what they say to each other must necessarily happen – theatrically speaking – via “asides to” when in the presence of humans. The first two exchanges contain only two moves: at l. 228 Ariel draws Prospero into speaking by apostrophising him with the deferential vocative “Sir”, while Prospero answers with a vocative form and an endearing first-person singular possessive which highlights the close and positive relationship between the two, but he avoids using a verbal form. There is no follow-up here, neither is there in the second exchange. In the latter case, Ariel initiates the dialogue with a question (l. 243) the response to which once again has no verb. In his elliptical words, Prospero nonetheless cooperates in the conversation, by repeating the first-person possessive and by adding a promise which answers Ariel’s often repeated question about his own freedom.

The two other exchanges (ll. 254-56 and 317-22) are different in that they are not started by Ariel, but by Prospero, do not receive a verbal response (but the addressee answers by doing something), and are linguistically more complex. In the two previous cases, Ariel interrupts the ongoing speakers (Alonso and the Boatswain, respectively), or – rather – intervenes on another level of reality (the magical world) while the two men are speaking. Here Prospero inserts his own words to Ariel inside what he is saying to the shipwrecked, behaving more or less like his spirit, and speaking thus on two levels. The greater linguistic complexity of these two “asides to” includes the use of imperatives and vocatives once again, which serve to attract the attention of Prospero’s servant. Peculiar to the last aside is the use of second-person singular pronominal and possessive forms which show not only the master-servant relationship, but also the state of affection between the two (they are, simultaneously, terms of power *and* of solidarity)<sup>12</sup>.

The two examples discussed so far demonstrate how the “aside to” depends closely on the dramatic situation and how subtly Shakespeare manages to take advantage of the plot and vary the linguistic strategies through which he makes it clear to his public that onstage speakers are dialoguing in asides. If the first occurrence of an “aside to” in *The Tempest* (between Antonio and Sebastian) manifests its being ‘conspiratorial’, the second one reveals that the

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<sup>12</sup> See the seminal study by Brown and Gilman cited in note 2.

convention can also be used in other dramatic contexts which are not necessarily comical or frivolous.

#### 4. *The cases of "aside to" in Henry VI, Part 3*

In *Henry VI, Part 3* Richard of Gloucester and George of Clarence (of the House of York) can be seen as conspirators against King Henry VI (of the House of Lancaster), but the two occasions for multiple "asides to" in 3.2 according to Wells & Taylor do not present Richard and George conspiring against anyone, but simply commenting on Edward of York's courtship to Lady Gray (these two as well are on stage), in other words the former play a counter melody to the others' words and behaviour:

- 11 RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER (*aside to George*) Yea, is it so?  
 12 I see the lady hath a thing to grant  
 13 Before the King will grant her humble suit.  
 14 GEORGE OF CLARENCE. (*aside to Richard*) He knows the game;  
 how true he keeps the wind!  
 15 RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER. (*aside to George*) Silence.  
 16 KING EDWARD. (*to Lady Gray*) Widow, we will consider of your suit;  
 17 And come some other time to know our mind.  
 18 LADY GRAY. Right gracious lord, I cannot brook delay.  
 19 May it please your highness to resolve me now,  
 20 And what your pleasure is shall satisfy me.  
 21 RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER. (*aside to George*) Ay, widow? Then I'll  
 warrant you all your lands  
 22 And if what pleases him shall pleasure you.  
 23 Fight closer, or, good faith, you'll catch a blow.  
 24 GEORGE OF CLARENCE. (*aside to Richard*) I fear her not unless she  
 chance to fall.  
 25 RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER. (*aside to George*) God forbid that! For  
 he'll take vantages.  
 26 KING EDWARD. (*to Lady Gray*) How many children hast thou, widow?  
 Tell me.  
 27 GEORGE OF CLARENCE. (*aside to Richard*) I think he means to beg  
 a child of her.  
 28 RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER. (*aside to George*) Nay, whip me then  
 – he'll rather give her two.  
 29 LADY GRAY. (*to King Edward*) Three, my most gracious lord.  
 30 RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER. (*aside*) You shall have four, an you'll  
 be ruled by him.

Although it is clear from Richard and George's words that they are not plotting against their brother Edward, it nevertheless becomes known that they do not completely agree with Edward's behaviour, nor with Lady Gray's plea in favour of her children. For the 'asiders', therefore, this can be considered an unsafe topic, both on a political and familial level. The use of a series of "asides to", then, does not seem due to conspiratorial purposes on the speakers' side, but to non-agreement with, and to criticism of, the sovereign's attitudes. Actually both Richard and George are just commenting on the king's proposals rather than talking to each other, given that they refer to the protagonists of the dialogue they are overhearing with third-person singular pronouns (they are not eavesdropping, since Edward is well aware of their presence even though he cannot – by convention – hear what they are saying). Only on a couple of occasions does Richard apostrophise Lady Gray with "you" (ll. 21 and 30), but again as a distant criticism of which the woman cannot be aware. Richard and George do not really address each other, except for that "Silence" (l. 15) pronounced by Richard to stop George, so that they can hear what is said between Edward and Lady Gray, and, at l. 28, for the emphatic imperative "whip me then", which of course cannot have any literal meaning.

The first two asides are built on three 'regular' moves, Richard initiating and concluding both. The three of them take place soon after a dialogue or just an individual speech between the two other protagonists of the scene; in this way the audience sees and hears the royal encounter and its comment 'live', so to say, and can focus its own attention now on a speaking couple, then on the other, alternatively.

The dramaturgical strategy used by Shakespeare in this scene – i.e. presenting two commentators who do not speak to each other but contribute to the topic being dealt with by other speakers – is quite effective since it shows the contrast between the ongoing 'romantic' dialogue between Edward and Lady Gray on the one hand, and on the other the realistic and anticlimactic aspects of the situation. At the same time, given the structure of the aside exchange, a certain power relationship between Richard of Gloucester and George of Clarence is brought to the fore, with the former speaking longer (and as initiator of the exchange) than the latter, thus stressing the greater power Richard has over George, the same power ending in George's assassination in *Richard III*.

## 5. *Enobarbus-the-Commentator and others in Antony and Cleopatra*

*Antony and Cleopatra* is the play that contributes, with its 14 cases, to the highest average presence of “asides” in the subgenre of ‘tragedies’ in the Shakespearean canon (in Act 2, 3, and 4). All asides but one have Enobarbus as one of the interlocutors (with Agrippa in 3.2, with Thidias in 3.13 and with Cleopatra in 4.2)<sup>13</sup>. He is thus the character who most frequently falls back on “asides to”, being one of the interlocutors in 8 out of the 14 occurrences of this dialogical strategy. Enobarbus is mostly involved in comments on what is going on or is being said, in particular in 3.2.51-60 where he starts and ends the exchange with Agrippa about Caesar’s and Antony’s being inclined to weep. Only once does one of them call the other by name (“Why, Enobarbus”, says Agrippa, l. 54), and only once is there an imperative verb to stress the dialogism of the passage (“Believe ‘t”, says Enobarbus to Agrippa, l. 60), which otherwise remains a gloss on the scene:

51 ENOBARBUS (*aside to Agrippa*) Will Caesar weep?  
 52 AGRIPPA (*aside to Enobarbus*) He has a cloud in ‘s face.  
 53 ENOBARBUS (*aside to Agrippa*) He were the worse for that were he  
 a horse;  
 54 So is he, being a man.  
     AGRIPPA (*aside to Enobarbus*) Why, Enobarbus,  
 55 When Antony found Julius Caesar dead  
 56 He cried almost to roaring, and he wept  
 57 When at Philippi he found Brutus slain.  
 58 ENOBARBUS (*aside to Agrippa*) That year indeed he was troubled  
 with a rheum.  
 59 What willingly he did confound he wailed,  
 60 Believe ‘t, till I wept too.

The only “aside to” in act 4 (4.2.23-24) is between Enobarbus and Cleopatra. It is a very short one:

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<sup>13</sup> As for the lines addressed to Thidias in my reference edition, the Arden Shakespeare version of the play calls them only an “aside”, without defining an addressee (William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. M. R. Ridley, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen, 1981). In this particular situation Enobarbus’ lines “‘Tis better playing with a lion’s whelp / Than with an old one dying” (3.13.94-95) might indeed be considered as a speaker’s comment to himself, a brief ‘monological aside’, given that there is no answer from his supposed interlocutor.

- 23 CLEOPATRA. (*aside to Enobarbus*)           What does he [Antony] mean?  
 24 ENOBARBUS. (*aside to Cleopatra*) To make his followers weep.

It occurs while Antony is inviting his soldiers to spend some time with him on the last occasion before the definitive battle with Caesar. Cleopatra does not understand why Antony is speaking in that particular way and Enobarbus answers by interpreting the perlocutionary force of Antony's words.

More interesting is the series of "asides to" occurring earlier in the play, between Menas and Pompey (2.7.36-38, 52-55):

- 36 MENAS. (*aside to Pompey*) Pompey, a word.  
       POMPEY. (*aside to Menas*)                Say in mine ear; what is 't?  
 37 MENAS (*aside to Pompey*) Forsake thy seat, I do beseech thee, captain,  
 38 And hear me speak a word.  
 39 POMPEY (*aside to Menas*)            Forbear me till anon.  
 [...]
 52 POMPEY. (*aside to Menas*) Go hang, sir, hang! Tell me of that? Away,  
 53 Do as I bid you. (*Aloud*) Where's this cup I called for?  
 54 MENAS. (*aside to Pompey*) If for the sake of merit thou wilt hear me,  
 55 Rise from thy stool.  
       POMPEY. [*rising*] I think thou'rt mad. The matter?  
 [*Menas and Pompey stand apart*]

In comparison with the other cases discussed so far, this contains all the clear signs of an interaction specifically between the two "asiders": Menas' interlocutor is called into the aside by the use of his name ("Pompey", l. 36), later followed by another vocative ("captain", l. 37), soon succeeded by a series of orders on both sides. This dialogue is not a 'conspiratorial aside', even if its topic, in its successive development, reveals itself to be just that: a possible conspiracy. The speakers employ the second-person singular pronoun and its derivative forms (apart from a plural pronoun – "you" – by Pompey at l. 53) throughout. Menas and Pompey are in Rome taking part in a celebration and the former asks the latter to pay attention to him and therefore to leave the on-going multiparty talk. The first speaker requires his addressee's attention, which he obtains for a while, then he is kept waiting until Pompey resumes the private dialogue but actually dismisses him. Menas renews his plea once again and succeeds in making Pompey leave his seat, in spite of Pompey's own words "I think thou'rt mad" (l. 55). At that point Pompey stands

up and the two form a talking unit that is separate, dialogically and proxemically, from the rest<sup>14</sup>. This is certainly a “dialogical aside” as it makes use of interactive strategies to start the ‘aside encounter’, to carry it on and to bring it to a functional conclusion (the perlocutionary force of the orders “Forsake thy seat”, l. 37, and “Rise from thy stool”, l. 55, is such that Pompey rises to his feet and the two speakers, as mentioned, stand, and not only talk to each other, in aside).

## 6. *Tentative conclusions*

The peculiarity of the asides between Menas and Pompey is that the speakers are neither conspirators (like Sebastian and Antonio in *The Tempest*), nor people who happen to overhear an intimate dialogue and comment on it (as Richard of Gloucester and George of Clarence do in *Henry VI, Part 3*). Likewise, they are not compelled to act and speak on a magical level impenetrable by the bystanders (like Ariel and Prospero, again in *The Tempest*). This series of “asides to” imitates what happens in a natural conversation when a multiparty talk breaks into its possible various components, especially when a speaker is urged to tell something to an interlocutor chosen among others and therefore uses direct address formulae (first names, vocatives, and orders), endearing pronouns and/or politeness strategies to hedge imperatives and the pressure of asking (such as “I do beseech thee”, l. 37). The importuned interlocutor may react bluntly and with a dismissive attitude: Pompey, in this case, is engaged with other participants in delicate political matters, and actually goes briefly back to them (“Where’s this cup I called for?”, l. 53), but in the end, in spite of his reproaching Menas for the interruption, he gives in and accepts to listen to his friend’s words.

Of course a deeper analysis would require the examination of many more occurrences of “asides to” in Shakespeare, but hopefully the selected examples and their discussion – with no pretension to

<sup>14</sup> In William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.7.55, the stage direction is “[Pompey] Rises and walks aside”, an addition first introduced by Samuel Johnson in his edition of Shakespeare’s plays (*The plays of William Shakespeare, in eight volumes, with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators; to which are added notes by Sam. Johnson*, London, 1765). Johnson, as the Arden Edition states, was also the first to mark the exchange discussed here as taking place in aside.

systematicity – have shown how flexible the convention is<sup>15</sup>. While not all Shakespearean editors agree on what type of aside a character uses, all of them are reconciled when facing the texts since, because the playwright was so extremely good at marking these encounters with unmistakable linguistic and contextual features, it is (relatively) simple to add stage directions to help the reader and the performer alike read the texts as theatre<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> This article is part of a wider work in progress on the topic of Shakespearean asides, which hopefully will take into account also the monological and the *ad spectatores* asides.

<sup>16</sup> On the dialectics between editors and readers, the latter being offered tools to visualise a virtual performance, see Margaret Jane Kidnie, "Text, Performance, and the Editors: Staging Shakespeare's Drama", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51:4, 2000, pp. 456-73.