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The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare

Jacek Mydla

All's Well that Ends Well
ove's Labour's Lost
Macbeth
As You Like It
Antony and Cleopatra
The Tempest
Othello

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego - Katowice 2002

The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare

To the memory of my mother, Helena

Prace Naukowe
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
w Katowicach
nr 2055

Jacek Mydla

The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego

Katowice 2002

Editor of the Series
Historia Literatur Obcych
Aleksander Abłamowicz

Reviewer
Andrzej Wicher

UNIWERSYTET ŚLĄSKI
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BG 311169

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Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my gratitude to my adviser, Professor Marta Gibińska-Marzec, to whom I remain deeply indebted for her gift of making Shakespeare's texts come alive.

I would like to thank my PhD dissertation reviewers, Professor Wojciech Kalaga, Professor Jerzy Limon, and Professor Andrzej Wicher; their comments have helped me give this work a much more consistent shape.

To David Schauffler, who kindly offered help with rereading and correcting the manuscript, this book owes much of what it can boast of clarity.

Preface

No study of Shakespeare can pretend to be ploughing untilled terrain. Like almost all other aspects of Shakespeare's works, that of time has undergone extensive critical treatment. The considerations I undertake may not add a new dimension to what has been the subject of many a fruitful investigation. My aim is to take apart the deck of conventionally placed emphases and, after giving them a reshuffle, to look forward to an increase of crops in a field that has already proved so fertile. It is indubitable that many essential features of time in Shakespeare's drama have been brought to light and successfully explored. Despite this, a unifying synthesis still lies ahead, and the aim of this study is to make this future seem less remote and the prospect of grasping it less forbidding.

All agree that Shakespeare's work appeared at a very specific historical juncture. One aspect of this specificity lies in the fact that the Renaissance revival of the past brought to the foreground a rich legacy of culturally blended concepts and images. In this respect, the 'emblem' is most illustrative. Combining moral instruction with its artistic if crude visualisation, the emblem evidently catered to the epoch's need to inject fresh wisdom into received forms. This phenomenon highlights the specificity of the Renaissance, its peculiar blending of the new with the old. Shakespeare's output is in no way exceptional, although its multifaceted dependence on the cultural legacy is too extensive to pinpoint in any single study. Shakespeare's debt to the great classics, such as Seneca, Ovid, Plutarch, and to many minor authors, whose works supplied him with a backbone of narrative and marrow of opinion, has been thoroughly studied. Shakespeare's theatre was a melting pot in which this tradition was reshaped, reused, and eventually relived. At the same time, any awareness of Shakespeare's indebtedness to the past, no matter how acute, ought not to be used to discredit his originality. On the contrary, a heightened sensitivity to his influences ought to help us redirect our view in order to grasp Shakespeare's dramatic genius.

A crude way of seeing the theatre as a place where showing collaborates with telling will help us adjust the basic emphases. Unlike dramatists who, like Seneca, had put telling before showing, Shakespeare seeks to balance both components. Shakespeare's dramatisation of his source narratives seems to have been driven by the intent to find a working compromise between these two discrete modes of representation. However, in favouring the mimetic component he did not go as far as his successors did. Saving as much as possible from the usually epic sources of his plays, Shakespeare's art was intent on reshaping them to convey a specific effect. The process involved moulding narrative time into dramatic time, a leap over a gap which is much wider than one is normally inclined to accept. Unlike the dramatist, a storyteller works under no specific temporal pressure. The former, on the other hand, has at least three clocks to co-ordinate: that of narration, that of performance, and that of reception. It is a platitude to say that dramatisation of a narrative involves selection of material with respect to its mimetic potential plus a great deal of temporal compression. This commonplace outer skin however conceals a much trickier core. Left unexplained are reasons for temporal compression. For Shakespeare did not compress narratives simply in order to conclude before floodlights went out. Had this been his purpose, no dramatic time could ever have emerged in his plays as an irreducible quality, rather than as a side effect of the storyteller's temporal restraint. Dramatic time is the joint action of mimetic and figurative-conceptual components of the dramatic language. On the stage, telling and showing relate to one another, or the playwright correlates them in order to comply with the demands of the temporal economy of live performance. What makes a successful dramatist is the ability to meet this demand constructively, which means to produce a unified, sustained artistic effect.

The criticism of time in Shakespeare has come a long way. Along this way, two things have become clear: One is Shakespeare's indebtedness to a rich cultural legacy. On its own this vein of Shakespeare criticism allows us to say that Shakespeare's plays are also plays about time, or treat about the essential human involvement with time as the condition of existence. The second insight concerns technique. Shakespeare has long been recognised as a time-conscious dramatist, i.e. one whose plays effectively use the running time allotted for performance. What has been left unexplored is how Shakespeare's plays succeed in simultaneously *representing and utilising* time. In other words, this question concerning the dramatic function of represented time opens a field where a late-coming researcher can still hope to find enough space to 'bustle in'. Our understanding of Shakespeare's dramatic clock, his technique of building up dramatic tension, has to tone with our knowledge concerning the clock built into the worlds of his plays, and with how the characters respond to it. In this way, time as the common subject matter unifies our efforts that aim at investigating its dramatic potential.

The design of the analysis

This analysis of dramatic time in Shakespeare consists of five main parts. The Introduction (Chapter 1) has two chief concerns. First, basic approaches to the time problem in Shakespeare are critically examined. Second, a glance at the broader problem of time in literature helps us to establish methodological priorities and to whet and prime interpretive tools.

Chapter 2 examines Shakespeare's poetry and poetic narratives with the purpose of exploring the rich repertoire of verbal representations of time. In the first section of this chapter, we shall discuss Shakespeare's rhetoric of time, the numerous tropes and images at work in his poetry, as well as their use by the lyric speaker and the epic narrators. This is a necessary stage inasmuch as poetry is the constitutive medium of Shakespearean drama. Moreover, the poem *Lucrece* raises the problem of the temporal value of rhetoric.

In Chapters 3 and 4, we shall explore segments of the action in a selection of plays (comedies and tragedies) with respect to how represented time builds up dramatic time. Summary sections at the end of both these chapters will lead us on to further problems.

Chapter 5 presents a meta-dramatic analysis of *The Tempest*. Here analysis is meant to substitute for a conventional listing of conclusions. It is my belief that transaction with yet another, albeit much bolder than the previous, dramatisation of temporality is the most fitting consummation to an investigation into the always living texture of dramatic time.

The Bibliography consists of two parts. The first lists Shakespeare's works and other primary sources. The second is ordered thematically and its main section contains publications concerned with time in Shakespeare.

This is just an overview of the contents. Explanations concerning the structure of the study will be given in the Conclusions section at the end of Chapter 1.

1. Introduction: Time and drama

1.1. The drama of time

1.1.1. Time in literary criticism

The way time defies systematic examination has an effect on many fields of scholarly interest. As G. F. Waller remarks, ' "Time", as so many treatments of the topic show, can become a category so unhelpfully vague, so much a conceptual imperialist, that it is extendable to include any matter of human concern in which the eager scholar chooses to be interested. All events occur, by definition, in time, and all may be defined in terms of time.'[1] This diagnosis does not inspire hope: In literary criticism, a scholar pursuing the problem of time ends up in a maze where alleys forever connect and disjoint as aspects of the tricky subject variegate and multiply. If one decides to pursue time in one of these aspects exclusively, one can hardly be sure that the favoured approach is relevant to any other dilemma that time poses. The devious nature of time, the intractable 'collective singular', as Ricoeur calls it, seriously affects the methodological premises and often jeopardises many a daring theoretical venture.[2] It seems that only interdisciplinary efforts may be capable of elucidating numerous intractable complexities. If this is the case, then literary studies can make their contribution to the common pursuit by exploring the sedimentation of the human experience of temporality in literary works over the centuries. This is of course exactly what critics have been doing. This too is our primary goal when embarking on another study of time in Shakespeare.

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[1] G. F. Waller, *The Strong Necessity of Time. The Philosophy of Time in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Literature* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1976), p. 2.

[2] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin & David Pellauer (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983-1988), vol. 3, p. 6.

That literary criticism is pivotal for the study of time is an idea that has a great number of advocates, and one that has now many commonplace formulations. Poulet's *Studies in Human Time*, based on rich literary material, is a very good case in point. 'The greatest works of literature — writes Waller — make intellectually penetrating demands upon us in that we are challenged to apprehend something about ourselves, encountered in the actual process of viewing or reading a play or poem.'[3] Although each literary genre can be regarded as an encryption of temporality, this view seems to be particularly relevant to drama, and especially to tragedy. As de Romilly put it in her book on Greek tragedy, 'There is no tragedy that does not deal with time.'[4] And Paul Ricoeur claims that 'the tragic *muthos* is set up as the poetic solution to the speculative paradox of time'[5].

However, the study of time in literature can mean different things, depending on the meaning of time. Not only is the literary work of art an intrinsically temporal object. The process of its cognition too is affected by time. Furthermore, the so-called represented or fictive world, being an illusion of reality, must also be an imitation of time as reality's basic, if invisible, constituent. 'Time' — wrote Kant — 'is a necessary representation, lying at the foundation of all our intuitions. With regard to phenomena in general, we cannot think away time from them, and represent them to ourselves as out of and unconnected with time. . . . Time is therefore given *a priori*. In it alone is all reality of phenomena possible.'[6] As an all-penetrating condition, time affects the entire mimetic process: composition, representation (creation), and reception.[7] Even Kantian generalisations can take on literary-critical flesh, as was the case with Bakhtin and his pursuits of chronotopicity, the intrinsic spatiotemporal organisation of any narrative representation of reality. According to Bakhtin, no 'entry into the sphere of meaning', let alone any form of literary mimesis, can be accomplished without the presupposition and use of some form of spatiotemporal representation, for which he coined the term chronotope.[8]

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[3] Waller, *The Strong Necessity*. . ., p. 171.

[4] Jaqueline de Romilly, *Time in Greek Tragedy* (Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 6-7.

[5] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 38.

[6] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. A 31 (reference to the original pagination).

[7] Cf. Ricoeur's distinction between three 'moments' of mimesis: mimesis$_1$, mimesis$_2$, and mimesis$_3$; *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 46. Since the process of experience becoming *muthos* involves transposition, mimesis$_1$ can be regarded as prefigured time, mimesis$_2$ as configured time, and mimesis$_3$ as refigured time; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 53 ff.

[8] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 85. Cf. also Sue Vice, 'The Chronotope: Fleshing out the Time', Chap. 5 in *idem*, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester & New York: Manchester UP, 1997), pp. 200 ff.

Time in Shakespeare has received extensive treatment in post-war criticism. A number of studies have been devoted to its various aspects. Apart from a great deal of articles, there have also appeared some major undertakings. As one might well expect, each of them presents a different approach. In addition, this diversity is reflected, on the most superficial level, in the astonishing variety of terminology. As several interests lead to different findings, scholars have pursued a wide range of 'times': dramatic, tragic, theatrical, natural, augmentative, organic, eschatological, sacramental, emulative, redemptive, even anachronistic. What causes this confusion of terms? Is any unifying insight to be hoped for? These problems seem as perplexing as the nature of time itself.

The basic question has to be repeated time and again, 'What is time in Shakespeare?' Is it feasible to heal the vagueness and polysemy of time? Hardly, if one is constantly at a loss at which port to lower anchor. 'It is easy enough — continues Waller — to accumulate a vast array of contrasting and contradictory references to Time, the destroyer, the fulfiller, the cannibal, the bountiful, the thief, in Renaissance literature. What matters more and is more difficult, is to pin down the subtleties of tenor, the discrete intellectual or emotional contexts into which such commonplaces are put by individual writers and artists.'[9] That attempts to remedy time's vagueness are rarely successful is shown in passages in F. M. Turner's book, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Time*. Setting out to study 'Shakespeare's ideas about time', Turner detects 'two great themes' in the sonnets: love and Time the Destroyer.[10] This suggests that either Shakespeare depicts only a single aspect of time or that the scholar has reasons to give one preference. Both assumptions are dubious. To make things worse, Turner borrows the term 'increase of entropy' from the jargon of contemporary science to forge his tools of interpretation.[11] The problem of course is that, however philosophic it may be, a sonnet or a tragedy uses time as a means to an artistic end. To forget this is to mistake a poem by Shakespeare for a student's essay in science.

It is almost routine among scholars — both literary critics and philosophers — to begin their investigations with *the* quote from Book XI of Augustine's *Confessions*: 'What then is tyme? If no man aske me the question, I know; but if I pretend to explicate it to any body, I know it not.'[12] This is commonly understood to be reason's white flag hoisted to signify its surrender after an assault on the perplexities of time. However, a positive meaning of this statement is rarely heeded. The inability to verbalise our intuitive knowledge *follows* our intimate familiarity with time. The mind may be bound to run into paradoxes when trying to get to grips with time, but this does not entail any incapacitating verbal inability. A reader of Shakespeare may soon conclude that the reverse is true, that perhaps man has too much to say about time. However, time may not have a single meaning at all. As Agnes Heller points out, the Renaissance did not produce a comprehensive, abstract notion of time.[13] Nor are we obliged to presuppose any such uniformity in Shakespeare.

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[9] Waller, *The Strong Necessity*..., p. 2.

[10] Frederick M. Turner, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Time* (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 7.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[12] In *ibid.*, p. 10.

1.1.2. Two main approaches to the problem of time in Shakespeare

A methodologically accountable investigation tends to specify a meaning of time. The critical legacy presents two main trends depending on how scholars meet this demand. Roughly distinguished, the two approaches are historical-philosophical, and literary-critical. The first tends to establish its meaning of time by recourse either to the history of ideas, to iconography, or to any borrowed concept that the critic finds pertinent. The other is concerned with the instruments used in conjuring up fictional realities, and especially the dramatic mimesis that builds up tension and sustains the rhythm intrinsic to drama. Rarely do these two approaches go hand in hand. Conceptual time-criticism is usually well pleased when a particular idea of time can be ascribed to the dramatist himself ('Shakespeare's idea of time'), the characters ('Othello's fatalism'), or the fictive world as such ('emulative time in *Troilus and Cressida*'). Criticism preoccupied with dramatic time (a species of the literary-critical approach) usually leaves off after establishing a 'time-scheme' of a given play or after exposing the elements that sustain the dramatic tension. The latter type of criticism pays little attention to non-referential (non-mimetic, non-deictic) uses of 'time' and words semantically related to it.

Tibor Fabiny, a Hungarian scholar, proposes to treat these two approaches as equally legitimate in their limited scope of enquiry. In his work on the Wheel of Time as a system of imagery in Shakespeare's dramas, Fabiny recognises the merit of alternative approaches concerned with 'concrete time' and its functioning.[14] He makes a distinction between abstract time and concrete time. This draws on Tibor Szobotka's investigation of concrete time, conceived as a dramaturgical device. Szobotka was concerned with phenomena such as urgency and density, movement towards the future, the most frequent temporal designations ('tomorrow', 'dawn'), the age of protagonists, simultaneity of represented occurrences, etc.[15]

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[13] Agnes Heller, 'Time and space: past-orientedness and future orientedness,' Chapter VI of her book *Renaissance Man*, trans. Richard E. Allen (London, Henley & Boston: Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 172.

[14] Tibor Fabiny, ' "Ripeness is all". The Wheel of Time as a System of Imagery in Shakespeare's Dramas', in Baliant Rozsnyai, ed., Szeged: *Acta Universitas Szegediensis de Attila József Nominatae, Papers in English and American Studies*, vol. 2 (1982), p. 156.

While recognising the legitimacy and the merits of both approaches, one wonders how it is possible to venture such disparate inquiries without exploding their allegedly common subject, especially if one takes into account the self-reflexive representation of time in drama. Shakespeare's plays offer the audience insights into the nature of time, insights that are mediated, to be sure, by the dramatic situation in which they participate. This temporal self-reflexivity is one of the reasons that call for a comprehensive investigation into both aspects of time. The ghastly obstetrics of time in *Othello* ('There are many / events in the womb of time which will be delivered.') and the temporal orthopaedics in *Hamlet* ('The time is out of joint . . .'), thought-provoking in themselves as they are, appear *at specific moments* in the action, which makes them fraught with specific dynamics. The most sophisticated aphorisms and abstruse saws have patiently to await their cue, as the course of the action can only justify their use and lend them whatever existential import they seem to possess independently of the dramatic situation. In other words, ideas are harnessed by the temporal economy of drama. On the other hand, even a very mundane temporal reference is a part of the play's idiom, and thereby enmeshed into its poetic fabric. The problems of concrete time will be our concern in Part Two of this chapter.

1.1.3. Shakespeare and the history of time

The historical approach comes with two emphases: philosophical and emblematic. Representatives of the first approach (Quinones, Waller) address the problem of time by reviewing the history of the concept (Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, medieval theologians) or emphasising the uniqueness of Shakespeare's era in the history of man's consciousness of temporality (Renaissance literati and thinkers, the commercial time sense, Protestant doctrines). The latter aspect seems especially relevant, as the scholars are determined to grasp the Shakespeare phenomenon by setting it in the context of his unique epoch. Says Waller, 'In the writings of Bruno and Shakespeare in particular, we are at the fascinating point where a cultural revolution, involving the most sensitive minds of a generation, is gaining impetus and self-consciousness.'[16] And Quinones gives a similar idea the following formulation, 'Although individual notions would undergo noticeable shifts and turns, still the basic conception of time in the West was given primary impetus by the men and society of the Renaissance.'[17]

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[15] *Ibid.* Szobotka's study of concrete time in Shakespeare ('The Importance of Time in Shakespeare's Dramas') appeared in Hungary in 1965. Unfortunately, I have had no access to this work.

Quinones endeavours to blend 'the interests of comparative literature, thematics, and the history of ideas'.[18] For him time is 'a theme', or 'a fairly recognizable constellation of attitudes and ideas'.[19] Yet his determination to prove that time is 'a great discovery' of the Renaissance is not entirely convincing. It is not clear to what extent this discovery by the emerging new man is a re-invention rather than a reconstruction of time.

The Renaissance 'discovery of time' brings into play such features as fracturing, discontinuity, detachment from the processes of life, mechanisation of its measurement, fragmentation, spatialisation, and the splintering of reality into the objective and the subjective. Without getting entangled in a dispute over the novelty of these ideas we can repeat the previously drawn conclusion: It is necessary to secure their critical relevance by explicating the nature of their dramatic entanglement and potential. A much more daring species of the historical approach is found in Gisèle Venet's endeavour to study Renaissance drama as a concept in motion.[20] This seems to be the only workable attempt to fashion the category of the dramatic so that it fits the presupposed conception of the Renaissance ideological unrest conceived as movement of forms.

1.1.4. Shakespeare and the emblems of time

Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology* of 1939, and especially his essay on Father Time, gave rise to the emblematic approach. At least two Shakespearean critics, Soji Iwasaki and Tibor Fabiny, are representative. Without confining their work to the pursuit of influence, both scholars believe themselves to be investigating the dramatic fabric itself. According to Iwasaki, there are two levels of the theatre: realistic and allegorical. The theatre of icons coexists and interacts with theatre of dream. 'Symbolic tableaux are connected by the thread of narrative continuity with their meanings accumulated and fused into the ultimate meaning of the play, which is usually revealed in the central symbolic tableau of the main type-scene.'[21] The relation between the visual and the narrative takes us back to Lessing's *Laocoon* and his typology of art with respect to its relation to time. The prominence of the visual (the term 'tableau' is of moment) points to a peculiar temporal paralysis. The emblem freezes time.[22] It is, as Iwasaki sees it, meaning frozen in time, waiting to be revealed. Favouring the iconographic elements in drama can lead to ignoring the mimetic dynamics of the dramatic action, which cannot be reduced to a mere accumulation of meaning.

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[16] Waller, *The Strong Necessity*..., pp. 3-4.

[17] Richardo Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. x.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. xi.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Venet Gisèle, *Temps et vision tragique: Shakespeare et ses contemporains* (Universite de la Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III, 1985).

Fabiny, as we have seen above, recognises the merits of focusing on 'the categories of philosophical abstract time', yet himself chooses to enquire into the 'stuff or backcloth of history', which is to be gleaned from the context of the plays. Not satisfied with studies of time in Shakespeare that ignore its dramatic embedding, he seeks an organising principle that would illuminate time's condition and the system of imagery by which it is operated.[23] This methodological decision, however valuable in stressing the role of the dramatic context of abstract ideas, is unavoidably biased against dramatic time in that it favours images and ideas. Fabiny hopes to discover a unifying system of imagery, that of the Wheel of Time, and this is itself symptomatic. One can see such decisions as an oblique recognition of the disruptive action of concrete time, which seems to endanger that precarious stability which concepts and images promise.

1.1.5. Shakespeare and the philosophy of time

A separate category can be proposed for philosophy-inspired studies of the time-problem such as those embarked on by Turner, Sypher, and Kastan. They seek to establish the meaning of time independently of the tradition from which Shakespeare's work arises. The authors 'modernise' Shakespeare by pursuing affinities between 'his' ideas and our contemporary scientific and philosophical conceptions. Turner, as we have seen, discovers the idea of entropy in Shakespeare's sonnets, Sypher the Bergsonian durative time in the tragedies. Kastan applies a Heideggerian conception of the temporal finiteness of human existence.

It is not possible to cut philosophy out entirely when investigating dramatic time, especially if philosophy is understood in its broad meaning, encompassing a variety of generalisations gathered together rather than consistently conjoined. But a simple enumeration of the relevant temporal modes — transience, unpredictability, irreversibility, changeableness, retention, memory, anticipation — demonstrates the futility of any purely conceptual time analyses of drama. To detect in poems and plays ideas much more carefully, and usually much earlier, formulated by philosophers does not seem like a worthwhile occupation; by their very nature these pursuits are doomed to yield trivial or superfluous fruit. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between an utterance on time expressed by a character in drama and its dramatic function. This may be shown on Hamlet's 'definition' of man as 'looking before and after' or Macbeth's 'Tomorrow and tomorrow' soliloquy: Such utterances seem to have a solid meaning which may be lifted out of the dramatic context. This, however, may have little to do with Shakespeare's idea of time, or the idea whose meaning is cooked, so to say, in the oven of an entire play. The latter can only be construed by looking at the dynamic environment in which ideas and images operate and engage in live interaction.

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[21] Soji Iwasaki, *The Sword and the Word: Shakespeare's Tragic Sense of Time* (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1973), p. 6.

[22] Cf. David A. Roberts, 'Mystery to Mathematics Flown: Time and Reality in the Renaissance', *Centennial Review*, 19 (1975), p. 139.

[23] Fabiny, 'The Wheel...', p. 157.

Use and function define verbal meaning on the stage. Studies of time in Shakespeare are often explicitly concerned with meaning rather than the functional disposition and economy of lexical units. Criticism intent on digging up ideas runs the risk of petrifying them at the expense of whatever may be essential in the very succession. Contrary to this, the significance of time has to be derived from the course of the action. Apart from being a reality-imitating framework effected through temporal deixis and reference (see below), time functions as an idea which confers the totality of a message on the action. The relation of one to the other: time as mimesis and time as idea, will have to be clarified.

1.1.6. Anachronistic time

To emphasise that the significance of time transcends its role as a means of generating dramatic tension, scholars often resort to contemporary philosophical concepts. One such attempt has been to identify tragic time as 'anachronistic' and thus essentially opposed to the chronometric succession that is characteristic of the epic, or a chronologically patterned and causally ordered narrative. Wylie Sypher distinguishes four conceptions of time relevant for the drama: simple chronicle, the cycle of Fortune, Aeschylean time of retribution, and psychic duration.[24] Drawing on Bergson's distinctions, the author contrasts 'durative or psychic time' with 'serial or chronometric time', and juxtaposes lived or durative time with time that is fragmented, chronometric, Newtonian or serial.[25] Thus, in order to answer to its genuine calling which is the representation of the Bergsonian summation of existence, time in drama has to be anachronistic. Tragedy that is conscious of its nature, i.e. in sounding the depths of human existence, relates to the temporality of our consciousness rather than the sequential and causal order of external incidents. Sypher compares *Macbeth* with *Oedipus* and argues that both are static in the sense of positing a personal, existential identity whose gradual self-recognition makes up the action.

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[24] Cf. Wylie Sypher, *The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 4 ff.

> The tragic act is a summation of what we were, are, and will be; it is synoptic. The seemingly discontinuous intervals of the psychic life have antecedents and projections that testify to the endurance of the self. Oedipus was blind before he blinded himself. Macbeth was a bloody man before he murdered Duncan or performed the act that expressed his moral being. The tragic act has behind it, within it, a totality of existence, even if we drag our past behind us unaware. The moral life at its freest and fullest is anachronistic.[26]

In temporal condensation lies then the essence of tragic time; durative time characteristic of the tragic experience is a stasis.

However, even if regarded on an exclusively ontological basis, tragedy seems to presuppose more than accumulative duration. Horst Breuer, who himself investigates the disintegration of time in *Macbeth*, sees this very clearly. Time ideally conceived acts as a unifying principle:

> Time... is more than just a sequence of recognisable portions of duration following one another. Time means orientation, organisation, co-ordination, purpose, coherence, wholeness; one moment is meaningfully connected with other moments; there are causal relations and final intentions; the present is instructed by the past and encouraged by the future; and every instant, every 'syllable of recorded time' is governed by order, development, remembrance, progress, survey, expectation, confidence. The idea of time is the idea of control — the individual's control of his life, a nation's control of its history, the artist's control of his medium.[27]

This is a much-needed complementation of the idea of anachronistic time. Otherwise one would have to ignore huge portions of every play in which the tragic synopsis of existence does not come to shine through.

Furthermore, Sypher pays little attention to Shakespeare's actual working out of the tragic summation of existence, to time's role in generating dramatic

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 91. In a Bergsonian manner she distinguishes between 'lived time' and 'thought time'. Cf. *passim*.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[27] Horst Breuer, 'Disintegration of Time in Macbeth's Soliloquy: "To-morrow, and to-morrow and to-morrow" ', *The Modern Language Review*, 71 (April 76), pp. 257-8.

tension. It is disputable whether Shakespeare's technique works hand in hand with durative time. As we shall see, dramatic time, and Shakespearean dramatic time especially, *is* fragmented and segmented, and as such is closer to 'cinematography', which bore the brunt of Bergson's criticism as distortion of lived duration by the intellect.[28] One thinks here of what Max Bluestone calles 'adaptive manipulation of time' by drama. The suggestion that a tragedy, especially one based on historical sources, assumes a temporal stasis contradicts a view that many critics agree upon: Shakespeare stylised and manipulated time. 'The timelessness of the sources' — writes Bluestone — 'therefore elicits a profound reaction from Shakespeare and his contemporaries, whose adaptations regularly underscore the relevance of time and the reality of change. Progressively discovering himself through the scattered moments of the Elizabethan drama, the dramatic protagonist lives very much in time's flow.'[29] This view does not refute Sypher's assumption of the existential weight of the tragic experience, yet is a substantial addendum and a methodological caution.

Another problem concerns time dimensions. The conception of tragic anachronistic time places all moment in the past. This is in agreement with Bergson and his preoccupation with memory. Hence the famous metaphor of a snowball: 'My memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present. My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually *swelling* with the duration which it *accumulates*: it *goes on increasing* — rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow.'[30] Postponing a more in-depth discussion to the next part of this chapter, let us here merely point out the existence of an alternative view. A great number of critics argue that the future makes up the essence of the dramatic action, and treat time as a principle of change rather than as a stasis fraught with existential moment. Sypher's contention is all the more disputable in that *Macbeth* is a play where the primacy of the future in drama is worked into an imposing thematic concern. Dramatic time propels the action in a discernible direction, namely into that of the inevitable future; the dramatist stages human time, or time that is essentially goal-oriented, thus also future-oriented.

Conventionally, character is subjected to action rather than the other way round. According to Aristotle, in ethics the subject logically precedes action, but in poetics this order is reversed and action governs ethics.[31] If too much emphasis is placed on the character, time loses its direction altogether. The inevitable dramatic distortion of the living continuity of experience cannot simply be ignored for the sake of giving prominence to the critic's philosophical preferences. The future-orientedness of the human time in drama is of course yet another philosophical statement competing against others. It is however one which has advocates on both sides of the negotiating table, among philosophers as well as among theoreticians of the drama. Instead of Bergson's, one could adopt other contemporary philosophical perspectives which give preference to the future rather than the past. Martin Heidegger's existential hermeneutic of the human being is future-oriented and stresses the meaning of the anticipative resoluteness as the foundation of an authentic attitude to time.[32] Theories of drama on the whole univocally stress that goal-pursuing human actions are the ontological foundation of the represented reality in drama.[33]

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[28] Cf. Max Bluestone, *From Story to Stage. Dramatic Adaptation of Prose Fiction in the Period of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1974), pp. 213 ff.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

[30] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan & Co., 1911), p. 2.

[31] Cf. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 37. The relevant statement in Aristotle's *Poetics* is as follows: 'Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are

1.2. The time of drama

> *It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art — the limit of a single sitting . . . Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit. . . .*
>
> Edgar Allan Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*

1.2.1. Three aspects of time in drama

We have already made a rough division of the aspects of time relevant to a literary work. Let us now see how they particularly relate to a work of dramatic art. An exemplary division is found in Keir Elam's book *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. Elam distinguishes four 'temporal levels'

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happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all.'

[32] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 83.

[33] Cf. Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London & New York: Routledge, 1980), pp. 124 ff. Cf. also Hebeisen's definition of the human action (*Handlung*) as goal-oriented; Hans-Martin Hebeisen, *Versuch einer ontologischen Analyse der Zeit und der Handlung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ästhetik des Dramas* (Winnenden: Buchdruckerei Müllerschon, 1961), p. 56. A compromise between the past and the future is sought by the renowned critic of Shakespeare Wolfgang Clemen; cf. his 'Past and Future in Shakespeare's Drama', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 14 (1966), p. 240. Cf. also below, the section on dramatic time, 1.2.5.

in the drama.[34] Level one is discourse time, or the fictional *now*: the temporal deixis which actualises the dramatic world. Next, there is plot time, or 'the order in which events are shown or reported'. The third level is chronological time, or 'the actual ordering of events' including occurrences within the represented world of a play which are mental constructs of the audience or readers. The fourth level is historical time, or the temporal setting which a play makes ostensively actual.

Elam's plot time is the to-be-actualised, potential temporal structure of the work. Elam specifies that plot time is 'the structure of dramatic information within the performance time proper'. However, with the introduction of performance time temporal levels diversify even further. As we shall observe, the performance factor, and accordingly playing or performance time, cannot be ignored in a study of time in drama. Elam, however, includes this aspect in level one, no matter how infelicitous the term 'discourse time' might be. Still, that staging or reading actualises the dramatic work is one thing; that reception imposes temporal limitations on the length (Aristotle's 'magnitude') of a play is another. Both aspects have to be taken into account in considering the process-like constitution of theatrical perception.

As regards the fourth level, Elam's distinction between plot time on the one hand and chronological time on the other resembles the classic one between plot time and story time: 'The plot cuts a pattern in time. The story to which the play refers may have a different pattern.'[35] This consideration largely undermines the importance of historical time in the sense proposed by Elam. Emrys Jones, whose analysis of the first scenes of *Julius Caesar* can convince even a staunch opponent, supports this suggestion with the assertion that historical time is immaterial to an investigation of dramatic time. This is not to say that comparisons between history and its dramatic rendition ('chronological time') are illegitimate. History in the form in which it was available to Shakespeare, such as Plutarch's *Lives* for instance, cannot be regarded as a level or layer in a dramatic work. 'The historical events are rearranged into a highly stylized form in the interest of drama; there is not the slightest pretence that what we are watching is anything other than an evocation of historical realities.'[36] The very fact that one can single out chronology as a relatively separate level makes the addition of historical time superfluous. To put it another way, chronology is as close as dramatic time ever gets to history.

In this way one arrives at the following typology of time aspects: 1) the sequential constitution of the literary work as composed of parts or components on any level of magnitude (act, scene, sentence, word) following one another in linear succession; 2) the temporal constitution of the represented world and all *its* components, which themselves may differ widely as to their mode of existence in time (from the evanescent reality of a single event — say, a greeting — to the much more stable reality of this or that character); 3) performance and its perception as coextensive and coactive processes in which the sequential linearity of a work is actualised. In accord with these, we can distinguish at least the following two 'times' or clocks: playing or performance time and represented or fictional time. There is no clock to relate to the aspect listed as 1) in the above typology. The sequence of a play's composite parts in itself, like that of pages in a calendar, amounts to no actual succession as long as there are no wheels of live performance to set it in motion.

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[34] Elam, *The Semiotics*..., p. 117.

[35] T. Hodgson, *The Batsford Dictionary of Drama* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1988), p. 399.

[36] Emrys Jones, *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 45.

As to the two basic clocks, the unique relation between playing ('running') time and represented time brings to mind the famous thought experiment with twins, one of whom stays on Earth while the other travels through space at the speed of light. Yet this crude analogy fails: the audience in the Shakespeare theatre lives by these two clocks simultaneously. The time that is represented on stage undergoes various kinds of warping so that, first, it fits the time span of a single performance, and, second, it produces the required impressions in the mind of the recipient. Thus an analysis of dramatic time has to take into account two seemingly extraneous sets of factors: physical and psychological. Hence, Shakespeare criticism approaching the time problem should take into account the continuity of performance and the recipient's imagination respectively. These two aspects will be discussed later on.

Initially, interest in dramatic time meant that scholars were preoccupied with how Shakespeare handles time dramatically. To use Elam's terminology, the focus of critical attention was on the relation between plot and chronology, or aspect 2 distinguished above. This approach is found in a number of early studies, such as Buland's investigation of the so-called double time in his thesis *The Presentation of Time in the Elizabethan Drama* (1912). For Buland time is a dramatic tool and not a philosophical enigma. A playwright, he believes, makes time a means to his artistic ends instead of opening a philosophic debate over its nature and attributes (see also below, pp. 45 ff.). In this way, the theoretical exuberance unleashed by the problem of time is forestalled by focusing attention on the playwright's deployment of temporal mimesis or the ways in which time is represented, such as the distribution of time references. However, with the problem of time references we enter into another issue, that of the dramatic representation of time.

1.2.2. Modes of representing time: Showing and telling, or mimesis and reference

There are two basic modes of representation in drama: perceptual and verbal. As this crude distinction presupposes, one cannot interpret drama without referring to the performance counterpart of the text. To put it another way, the dramatic text is by definition performable.

Things perceptively or deictically presented on the stage perform the imitation (mimetic) function by virtue of their very presence. Speech performs the function of verbal representation or reference. This distinction between mimesis and reference allows us to differentiate modes of representing time. Let us begin by stating what seems basic: First, time can be represented by physical objects, which perform the imitation function, and especially by their movements, and the changes and modifications they undergo. Even here representation can be either direct or indirect. The simplest way of ascribing physical signifiers to time is of course by using clocks as well as other conventional time-measuring devices as stage props. Indirectly, simple facts such as that a ring or a handkerchief disappear and reappear, to give a common example, are enough to signal the passing of time. This is also true of the entrances and exits of characters and of changes of setting. Yet all this is neither the most conspicuous nor the most characteristic feature of the dramatic mimesis of time: time in drama is essentially related to human goal-seeking actions. Dramatic time is fundamentally human time, and whatever is represented relates to human agency. And *vice versa*, human actions are in their turn essentially related to time; hence certain features of human actions, such as goal-orientedness, characterise dramatic time. And the other way around, universal characteristics of time, such as irreversibility, directly affect dramatic action and even tend to become leading themes. In dramatic action, time — to paraphrase Bakhtin — takes on human flesh thanks to the totality of all the representational tools involved.[37]

The more indirect mode of representation is by verbal or linguistic reference, yet aside from this language can represent time in other ways, too. We have already mentioned the basic uses of verbal reference to time. An extended representation reaches far beyond the perceptibly given or the more or less directly intuited, and encompasses the so-called prehistory of the dramatised events and their possible extensions into the future, however only to the extent allowed by the contents of the play. Representation in any broader sense is thus delimited by dramatic mimesis in the strict sense of the word: by what is directly presented on stage. The verbal means of representation include temporal deixis, references to clock and calendar time, figurative expressions (visualisations) and conceptualisation.

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[37] Cf. Vice, 'The Chronotope...', p. 215. In her presentation, Vice applies Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope to contemporary film with total circumvention of drama, characteristic also of Bakhtin's own approach. Since I cannot discuss wholesale the applicability of the Bakhtinian categories to drama here, I would like to state that there is no reason why Vice's assertion of the intrinsically chronotopic nature of film ('film is chronotopicity', p. 214) should not in equal measure be true of the theatre.

Strictly speaking, verbal reference ought to be distinguished from the direct mimetic relation between units of speech and duration. Speaking is a temporal occurrence, and thus speech in drama always has a definite temporal value, both physical and psychic. First, there is a measurable minimum duration for any delivery of the text.[38] Second, the reception of any dramatic text creates a more or less vivid impression in the audience. The playwright can manipulate both aspects to generate specific effects, such as, for instance, the emotional colourings of 'brisk', 'tedious', etc. It is enough to compare a soliloquy, a dialogue, and a song to see how differently time can pass on stage although the medium, language, is the same. Various units of action can have different temporal values depending on the ways in which they affect dramatic duration. More of this will be said after the idea of dramatic time has been made sufficiently clear.

From what we have said it follows that utterances other than those incorporating time-references also contribute to the imitation of time. One can inquire, for instance, how the song-and-dance scene from *The Winter's Tale* adds to the play's representation of time. Some critics regard such scenes as crucial in that they visualise the nature of time as Shakespeare might have conceived it.[39] Before making a more detailed investigation we can say that various modes of representing time are intertwined and that, ideally, they should work in concert. What Elam calls 'the fictional *now*: the temporal deixis which actualises the dramatic world' pays due respect to the prevalence of the currentness that makes up the essence of the dramatic experience. Thus the very act of speaking acts as the basic and most powerful temporal deixis. The currentness and the indelible actuality of dramatic speech make up the primary mimesis, superior to any imaginative or conceptual representation. In order to be able to conjure up or represent worlds, words have to come into being as living speech. In that sense, verbal reference is based upon verbal mimesis. We shall return to this issue below when we discuss the idea of diegesis.

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[38] Cf. Hebeisen, *Versuch einer ontologischen...*, pp. 23-4.

[39] Stanton B. Garner in an article on *The Winter's Tale* seeks to define the mode of time thus visualised; cf. 'Time and Presence in *The Winter's Tale*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 46 (1985), pp. 347-67.

The physical properties of the spoken word, its duration and temporal value, the fundamental role of speaking — all these have many consequences. Live speech has at least three components, all of which have to be taken into consideration. First, speech is a real occurrence; as a word is spoken it enters the physical world and comes to share in the properties of other real phenomena, of which duration is perhaps the most important. Secondly, live speech is a carrier of meaning; from a particular viewpoint, the spoken word is an incarnation of the ideal or non-temporal and non-physical.[40] Thirdly, the actualisation of the ideal content, the act of speaking, is what makes reception possible. Now, while meaning, as the ideal or potential component, is not directly related to duration, and remains essentially extra-temporal, it has been the focus of critical attention at the expense of the two other aspects. This is objectionable. The temporal constraints of speech and indeed the temporal constraints of performance have an impact on the extra-temporal content in numerous ways.

Elam discusses an interesting example. In *The Comedy of Errors*, special effects are created by the relation which verbal visualisations of time bear to the mimetic visualisation enacted by the sheer vagaries of the plot helped by the abundantly supplied verbal deixis. Says Elam, quoting the Arden editor's notes, 'the repeated analysis and personification of time "[relate] to the constant mistiming"...The delays, missed appointments, untimely interventions and general out-of-phase non-co-ordination of the action result in the avowed anxiety...to restore the lost temporal decorum of the dramatic world.'[41] One must not separate direct mimesis and verbal deixis from other modes of representing time. Let us state as a corollary of what we have just looked at that no investigation into dramatic time can give short shrift to a play's temporal facticity; playing time, which is in direct relation to the actuality of speech, is essentially related to plot time. This relation makes them interdependent in the weaving of the complex fabric of dramatic time.

Before we begin to tackle this complex issue, however, let us first give due credit to language and the consequences that this basic constituent of drama has for the problem of dramatic time in Shakespeare.

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[40] This Kantian-Hegelian approach is developed in Hebeisen's *Versuch einer ontologischen*.... I find this approach justified at least to the extent to which it emphasises the temporal-physical value of the dramatic speech.

[41] Keir Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse. Language-Games in the Comedies* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 107.

1.2.3. Telling the time and telling about time, or time represented verbally

Buland represents an approach, now largely outdated, that rests on the once common conviction that to investigate dramatic time was to examine the deployment of concrete time. This approach is manifestly antagonistic to any attempt to philosophise the time problem. As common sense dictates, even without having a precise idea of what time is, upon hearing a time adverbial such as ‘tomorrow’ or ‘next Tuesday’, etc., we know that they fix specific occurrences ‘in time’ and that by evoking tension they precipitate action. This seems to be enough to make the subject of study sufficiently clear. Yet if one confines dramatic time to ‘concrete time’ (Szobotka, Fabiny), or even to time made deictically actual (Elam), then two other significant modes of representation will be ignored in a single-minded pursuit of a time-scheme.

There is more to the dramatic representation of time than concrete time references. At least two other modes of representation have to be taken into account. They can be crudely distinguished as 1) the imaginative mode, encompassing original poetic images as well as emblematic *tableaux*, and 2) the conceptual mode, including common wisdom, proverbs, philosophical borrowings, and more sophisticated or abstract statements about the nature of time. Whether these two modes are treated instrumentally (rather than ‘poetically’ or ‘conceptually’) by the dramatist is irrelevant since they may be as pivotal to the stage representation of time as the more mundane references. Critics with a more philosophical bent of mind are right to argue that there is more to time in drama than the succession of exists and entrances. However, there are sound reasons to assume that all modes of representation fulfil some type of instrumental function. As Emrys Jones remarks, clock and calendar references are given only when needed and hence if ‘concrete time’ were entirely dependent on them it could not be regarded as a mode superior to the others.[42]

Indications of clock or calendar time, so-called time references, can and do co-operate with imagery, thereby transcending deixis and the immediate mimesis of time. They can also aid characterisation, as in the case of Romeo, whose unrequited love for Rosaline lengthens the hours spent in solitude. This is a point made by Thomas Tanselle, who discusses the many non-ostensive functions of time references in *Romeo and Juliet*. This tragedy is a good case in point due to the wealth of different references. It also shows that a particular distribution and number of references to time can be a quality of its own. 'Time references' — argues the author — 'also contribute to the sense of foreboding which permeates the play, especially through figurative expressions involving day, night, and stars'.[43]

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[42] Jones, *Scenic Form...*, pp. 50 ff.

This leads us to the problem of the dramatic value of references to time, which will be discussed separately. For now we can conclude that the quantity and diversity of modes of representing time directly influences the type of fictive world which they help to constitute. Suggestions of subjective time and its features, such as the one about Romeo's dotage, can be regarded as a type of deixis in that they allow us a glimpse at more personal responses to the passing of time. Indeed, they denote inner time just as clock references denote physical time.[44]

The imaginative mode of representation is to be discussed further. In contrast to what was said above, it may be doubted whether a simple reference such as 'It is Tuesday' or 'It is now three o' the clock in the morning' could enrich the poetic qualities of a play. These in their turn can and indeed have to be analysed with regard to their dramatic potential or their ability to perform dramatic functions, which will be our concern later on. The relation between references and imagery is far from straightforward. Figurative language can perform the task of personalising time without alluding to 'real' (represented) time. Here the sonnets, lacking ostensive specifications, provide valuable evidence. Time in drama is lived time, experienced and fraught with emotional colouring and value. When characters 'speak poetry' about time, they enrich and deepen characterisation, yet in so doing they also celebrate the fact that the time represented in a play is what Poulet called *le temps humain*.

Time references by definition refer us directly to the fictive world of a play, and specifically to the duration of the action. Some of them, mostly temporal-deictic, find direct referents in the on-stage action; 'today', 'now', 'presently', etc. Some point to off-stage action (and to what 'happens' in intervals), and some to parts of the plot that are constitutive of the represented world but are not dramatised. Indications of the future such as 'tomorrow' or 'on Thursday morn' belong to either the first or the second group according to whether the ensuing on-stage action is taken to be happening at the time specified. The Nurse's tales of Juliet's childhood are instances of the third class of time references, relating to us the not-dramatised prehistory (back-story) of the action. The use of time references is often immediate and deictic, namely in the many instances where they directly refer to on-stage or off-stage occurrences and thus specify their temporal bearings against the extended mimesis. The extended mimesis of reality and time reaches far beyond what is perceptibly given or more or less directly intuited, and encompasses the so-called prehistory of the play and its possible extension into the future, but only to the extent allowed by the play's verbal content. Mimesis in any broader sense is delimited by dramatic mimesis in the strict sense of the word: by what is directly represented on stage.

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[43] Thomas G. Tanselle 'Time in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (Autumn 1964), p. 350.

[44] Ingarden distinguishes between representing and expressing. The expressive function consists in the fact that speech is capable of being 'expression of the experiences and the various psychic states and events of the persons speaking them'. (Ingarden, 'The Functions of Language in the Theatre', in *idem*, *The Literary Work of Art. An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature*, trans. George G. Grabowicz, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 381). But expression can also be regarded as a mode of representation, the object represented being the 'soul' of a dramatic character.

The most straightforward way to represent time verbally is by reference to clock or calendar time. Time-references are thus basic constituents of the verbal representation of time in that they help to put events in a sequential order, or encourage the recipient to pass from plot time to story time in the imaginative reconstruction of events as they 'really' happened. Besides deictic reference, the function of time references is also mimetic; they conjure up an imitation of the real, hence also of the temporal: A reference to the calendar virtually adds the calendar to the represented world in its entirety. A reference to clock time enacts clock time, even when no clock is 'physically' present on stage. This seems trivial only until one has to interpret a play in which, as is the case in *As You Like It*, two modes of representation jar with one another. (In the forest of Arden there are no clocks, yet the characters continue to "live by the clock".)

1.2.4. Time shown by telling, or temporal mimesis through speech

The role of speech in the representation of time must be examined further. It is universally recognised that dramatic action is verbal action. From this recognition flow important consequences for the problem of time. Even if it were to remain obscure how action springs from dramatic speech, it is nevertheless quite obvious that it can only move forward at the speed of words following one another in sentences and other higher-level units. This is certainly true about Shakespearean drama, where all that happens is reflected in language, or, from another point of view, happens through and in language. This particular point is repeatedly emphasised in *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse* by Keir Elam, who insists throughout that dramatic action consists in live speech and that the latter ought to be conceived as 'an activity, a form of life'. In one of the many formulations of the tenet, Elam states that 'any divorce within the scene between *discursive* and *dramatic* development is purely notional'.[45]

The problem of how speech relates to time calls in the distinction between showing (*mimesis*) and telling (*diegesis*) in dramatic action. To borrow definitions from a recent study by K. Kujawińska-Courtney, *mimesis* is 'the representation of action in the imitated voice of characters' whereas *diegesis* is action represented 'in the poet's own voice'.[46] Kujawińska-Courtney's postulate of a balance between showing and telling in drama contradicts Plato's original distinction. For Plato it was clear 'that poetry and mythology are, in some cases, wholly imitative — instances of this are supplied by tragedy and comedy; there is likewise the opposite style, in which the poet is the only speaker... ; and the combination of both is found in epic, and in several other styles of poetry'.[47] Another formulation of this point is provided by Ingarden in a passage which deserves a quote *in extenso*:

> [T]he entire main text is an element of the world represented in the stage play and ... the articulation of individual words or sentences is a process effected in the represented world and is part of the behaviour of the represented person ... [T]his does not at all exhaust the role of the statements expressed in the performed play since, at the same time, this role consists of performing the linguistic function of representation ... which must remain closely connected to the other means of representation that are active in the play, i.e. the concrete [e.g. visual — J. M.] aspects supplied by the actors.[48]

Criticism of certain passages in drama as 'stilted diegetic descriptions',[49] leaving aside the problem whether one can put diegesis and description in the same basket, rests on the assumption that dramatic action should not be decelerated by rhetorical intrusions. Clearly, priority is granted to the stage-mimetic element: action delimits the use of language. Yet when we adhere to the principal claim that language is the elementary medium of Shakespearean drama such criticism sounds problematic. In his classification of the functions of language in the theatre, Ingarden stresses this executive role of speech. He argues that 'words spoken in a play constitute a segment of dramatic action, i.e. that speaking is a process in the represented world. It is only from this viewpoint that one can understand that spoken words “advance the action”.’[50]

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[45] Elam, *Universe of Discourse* ..., p. 8; original emphasis retained.

[46] K. Kujawińska-Courtney, '*Th'Interpretation of the Time*'. *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1992), pp. 9-10.

[47] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (the Internet Classics Archive, available online at http://classics.mit.edu), Book III.

[48] Ingarden, 'The Functions of Language ...', p. 378.

[49] In advancing this criticism Kujawińska-Courtney seems to shun some important ramifications of her statement that in drama 'the act of narrating [is] presented mimetically'; cf. *The Dramaturgy* ..., pp. 9-10. One of those ramifications is that dramatic diegesis is part of mimetic representation.

If dramatic speech is equivalent to action, it is also directly related to temporal succession. The word = action formula amounts to another equation, word = time. To be able to determine the temporal value of a particular passage — ‘This passage is stilted and that one brisk’ — one has to identify the engines of the action. It is not enough to demand that a dramatist should balance diegesis and mimesis, or verbal representation and perceptive presentation. After all, it is not clear what mimetic action means if speech is *a priori* excluded. *Titus Andronicus* shocks the viewer, yet a mere display of ‘sensational’ incidents will never succeed in moving the action forward any more than will any simple narration devoid of tension-raising properties.

As to verbal mimesis, there remains an important aspect still to be explored, that of performance. What significance can the Elizabethan convention of continuous performance possibly have today? One answer is that the category of continuous performance is structural and not ‘merely theatrical’: Shakespeare’s plays were *designed* for unbroken performance. That in composing plays Shakespeare worked under very palpable constraints of time and space is as significant as the fact that he catered to specific tastes in the audience. The audience will ‘patiently attend for two or three hours the unfolding in a continuous manner...so much of [a dramatist’s] art depends on his ability to compel attention and to use the limited time available to him to maximum advantage’.[51]

To stress the importance of continuous performance at least a few words have to be said about the interesting conception of filler scenes, which Thomas Raysor came up with in the 1930s. Individual scenes, argued Raysor, should be assessed according to how they contribute to the effect of continuity: ‘certain scenes in Shakespeare should be recognised as determined largely or entirely by his theatrical technique of representing time’.[52] What is novel about this idea is the radical change of perspective it entails, and remarkable too is the boldness with which Raysor draws his conclusions. Since, according to him, continuity is the supreme value, certain passages are there to fill time rather than because of any intrinsic value they might have. A change of theatrical convention will make them redundant: 'such scenes will be omitted as unnecessary, whenever their dramatic values are limited entirely or almost entirely to indicating the passage of time'.[53]

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 382. Hebeisen’s cogent formulation of the same idea needs to be quoted in the German original, ‘Das Wort ist eine *lebendige* Verhaltung des Menschen’; Hebeisen’s *Versuch einer ontologischen...*, p. 41, original emphasis retained.

[51] Anthony Brennan, *Onstage and Offstage Worlds in Shakespeare’s Plays* (1989), pp. 6-7. Cf. also my article: ‘The Displeasure of Reading, a Brief Prolegomena to Tediology’, in Wojciech Kalaga & Tadeusz Rachwał, eds., *(Aesth)etics of Interpretation. Essays in Cultural Practice* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2000), pp. 40-9.

[52] Thomas M. Raysor, ‘Intervals of Time and their Effect upon Dramatic Values in Shakespeare’s Tragedies’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 37 (1938), p. 21.

The filler function is twofold. Filler scenes ensure that the action flow is unbroken, but even more important is their purely mimetic role: they imitate the passing of time. In providing dramatic padding, as Raysor calls it, filler scenes allow time to pass on the stage so that an off-stage action can simultaneously take place. Raysor discusses many examples, among them the controversial porter scene in *Macbeth.* For some, and most notably for De Quincey, this is a deeply symbolic moment: Macbeth's crime has brought time to a standstill, and the knocking awakens nature and allows it to resume its course. For Raysor, the only justification for it is that 'Macbeth must be got off the stage' and 'Shakespeare has no dramatic action to provide'. Thus, he fills the gap, as he customarily does, 'with jests from low-life'.[54]

Raysor's full recognition of the temporal-mimetic potential of dramatic speech is an interesting contribution to the problem of representation. We will abstain from a further discussion of the filler conception here, as the ensuing analyses will provide many opportunities.

1.2.5. Showing time: Dramatic time

> *Creatures of an inferior nature are possest with the* present; man *is a* future Creature.
>
> John Donne

1.2.5.1. Duration and the dramatic future

Dramatic time is a tricky issue. To paraphrase Ricoeur's paraphrase of Kant's conception, dramatic time does not appear; it is a condition of appearing. To be able to glean elements of dramatic time from both a play's content and its structure we have to clarify the notion of dramatic action. In this way we come upon dramatic time with its strongly evaluative connotations. Only this will enable us to tackle the central issue of the dramatic potential of time.

In dramatic time, duration must give way to other concerns, 'for' — to quote Jones — 'it is not possible to make any simple quantitative conversion into the units of real-life clock-time'.[55] Dramatic time is not a measurable entity subsisting independently of the stream of things as they dynamically evolve. 'Time in that measurable sense' — argues Jones, thus defining for us a meaning of duration — 'does not enter into the matter'.[56] This is another way of saying that things presented dramatically follow their own internal rhythms, to which all other regards are subordinate.

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[53] *Ibid.*

[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.

[55] Jones, *Scenic Form...*, p. 49.

Of the many building blocks of dramatic dynamics, time references, or clock-time and calendar-time references, seem to be the basic one. Usually, the density of temporal references can be set down as a criterion to determine the tempo of the action; the more frequent the references to the passing of time, the more dynamic the action. However, they are not fundamental inasmuch as one can imagine a brisk dramatic sequence with no time references whatsoever. Dramatic action successfully constructed simply does not have to be naturalistic nor does it have to involve the common representation of time through references to the clock or the calendar. Here, again, Emrys Jones clearly establishes the priorities: 'as a dramatist Shakespeare is primarily interested in the immediate future and the immediate past, for only those parts of time which are contiguous to the present moment can have much imaginative reality for the theatre audience.... During a performance of a play, however, what most concerns us is the immediate future, what is going to develop out of the present moment.'[57] What is the immediate future? In other words, what determines the context to be taken into account when discussing the dynamics of the action? The question of the basic unit of action re-emerges.

1.2.5.2. Units of action, the sequence

Units of action — scenes, sequences, episodes — are pivotal inasmuch as they provide the required backdrop against which it is only possible to determine and assess the tempo of the action at any particular moment or ascribe to an event represented a specific dramatic-temporal value. To put it differently, in evaluating any single element of the dramatic fabric, one has to take into account the casing which envelops it and gives it a role to perform. Due to this shift of emphasis, we have to reconsider the modes of time discussed in the previous subsections in order to find their dramatic or operative potential. Indeed, the use of time references could itself turn out to be dramatically counterproductive as one can easily imagine an action where characters busy themselves reading their wristwatches instead of making something happen.

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[56] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

Conventionally, the scene is regarded as the basic unit of action or the nearest *dramatic* context to be taken into account. Again one is tempted to stick to the quantitative criterion: 'The more time covered by a single scene, the more dynamic the scene, and consequently the more intensive the impression of time passing fast.' One is tempted to say that any change on stage is enough to press the action forward. Yet this does nothing to explain the specific urgency of dramatic time. Certainly, it is not enough for an action to break into violent chaos to become dynamic. What we mean when we speak of scenes as units of action is that in them the action goes through certain phases, that time is patterned into a rhythmical whole. To use Jones's exquisite formulation, a unit of action in its proper sense is material or events 'worked up into a single splendidly purposeful and climaxed scene'.[58]

In Shakespearean dramaturgy, the virtually complete lack of scenic designations has always given rise to problems and discussions. The accepted division into acts and scenes go back Nicholas Rowe's edition of Shakespeare's works in 1709. However, it is often claimed that scenic divisions might 'convey an entirely false impression of the *continuity and speed of performance* which was possible in the theatre of Shakespeare's time'.[59] This criticism suggests that the action as a whole ought to be regarded as the ultimate unit or the appropriate dramaturgical context for the valorisation of any single element it contains (the 'broad' view). However, such a conclusion would be hasty. Any questioning of the received division as post-Shakespearean cannot go as far as to deny the existence of elemental units which naturally split the action into portions (the 'narrow' view). Both views, the broad and the narrow, have to act in unison in search of a play's meaning.

The editorial deficiency (lack of scenic designations) stimulated investigations and critical disputes. The problem of units was handled masterfully by Emrys Jones in the book already quoted. His *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* deserves credit chiefly for its very accurate placement of emphases: the refutation of naturalism, the stress on the secondary and often non-literal meaning of time references, the relegation of duration and 'time-schemes' to a secondary position, and the observation of basic distinguishing features which make historical and narrative accounts so distinct from the dramatic treatment of similar material. Jones never tires of stressing that a dramatist's chief interest is in what 'makes a compelling dramatic sequence, with its own internal system of anticipation, long-drawn-out suspense, and finally a sustained climactic movement. . . .'[60] Jones proposes to regard a Shakespeare play as being made up of two basic structural units or 'movements', corresponding 'roughly' to Acts I — III and Acts IV — V of the conventional designations.[61] Jones refers to A. C. Bradley's description of the characteristically Shakespearean pattern according to which the first part of an action displays a rising movement and the second part a falling one. What Jones points out is that a play's 'larger imaginative movement' of the action as a whole does not preclude the existence of 'lesser unities' with their own internal temporal devices. Jones even concedes that the five-act structure may have been used, at least in some cases, as a clock of sorts 'so that the allocation of time to the various parts of [Shakespeare's] material would be proportionate'.[62]

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[58] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[59] John Wilders, 'Introduction', in *Antony and Cleopatra*, The Arden Shakespeare (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 5; emphasis added. Jones makes an important addition to this point, arguing that in some cases 'the act-divisions are so placed as to obscure the structural lines of the play. In such cases the loss of the play's real structure can entail failure to see where Shakespeare is stressing meaning' (Jones, *Scenic Form...*, p. 68).

However, a careful search after the constitutive elements of action can hardly content itself with these very general categories. More recently, the Hallets came up with a suggestion that the sequence — understood in a specific technical sense — rather than the scene should be regarded as the basic unit of action.[63] The Hallets start by questioning the received understanding of the scene, according to which it seems to have two meanings. On the one hand, the scene is 'a unit of action in which tensions build toward a significant moment and then taper off'.[64] But apart from this 'structural' definition there seems always to have been an 'editorial' one at work: clearing of the stage (signalling the change of setting) demarcates the scene and has traditionally served as a basis for the numerical designations.[65] The Hallets raise a basic question: When I analyse a scene of the conventional designation does that mean that I analyse *action*? Now they argue that the answer is not always in the affirmative due to a disparity between action and scene. This incongruity triggered their efforts to identify an elementary segment of action. Thus they came up with the sequence. 'The sequence is always an action, propelled in a discernible direction by the desires, goals, and objectives of its characters.'[66] Sequences are 'pregnant with change' and characterised by a goal-seeking movement. What makes the sequence a *unit* is a single dramatic question and to answer it is the *raison d'être* of the corresponding portion of action.[67] Thus, direction or a vector marks sequences; time and action are essentially related: 'Any progression from present to future always implies a question about what the future holds.'[68] Dramatic time is essentially future-oriented. Pütz, who specifies that leaning into the future is tantamount to a leap into the unexpected, also stresses this characteristic.[69] Dramatic tension builds up whenever our attention is directed towards the approaching future no matter whether we know what to expect or not.[70] The way in which Pütz defines the structure responsible for evoking dramatic tension, namely the doubleness of anticipation and completion, entails insistence that the future should be anticipated.[71] We shall return to this.

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[60] Jones, *Scenic Form*..., p. 45.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Ch. A. Hallet & E. S. Hallet, *Analysing Shakespeare's Action. Scene Versus Sequence* (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 5. The idea of the essential future-orientedness of the dramatic action has a number of proponents; one of its most loyal and consistent advocates is Pütz in his book *Die Zeit im Drama. Zur Technik dramatischer Spannung* (Göttingen: Vanderoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).

1.2.5.3. The dramatic question, reporting, onstage and offstage worlds

From this definition of the sequence re-emerges the fundamental role of language. Goal seeking, as the Hallets see it, consists in answer seeking. This is in accordance with the fundamental role of language in Shakespearean drama, where whatever happens, happens in and through language. However, the dramatic question can also have a more sophisticated meaning with respect to the dramatic structure. Characters pursue their goals, and in so doing clash with the motives and strivings of other characters. This gives rise to a dramatic question: 'Will the ghost persuade Hamlet to take revenge on Claudius?' Or, in another play and sequence, 'Will Iago manage to convince Othello that Desdemona has been unfaithful?' And, after he has succeeded, 'Will Othello smother his wife before he learns of his mistake?' Whatever happens, the medium is language. Thus the dramatic question, rather than expressing the thoughts and desires of a particular character, usually arises from the complex web of many particular interests, motives, and circumstances spun by dialogue. Not always is the question overtly stated by the sequence's dominant character; more often than not, it is the audience's job to extract and answer it.

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[67] Hallet & Hallet, *Analysing...*, Chap. VII, pp. 109 ff.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[69] Cf. Pütz, *Die Zeit...*, p. 12, where the author discusses 'den Vorrang der Zukunft' or the priority of the future with reference to Goethe and Schiller, who emphasised the essential relation which any single part of a play bears to the ending. Jones in discussing the futureward orientation quotes Susanne Langer on the 'virtual future'. The theatre creates a present that is 'filled with its own future'; cf. Jones, *Scenic Form...*, p. 206. From an ontological viewpoint, this means cancelling the so-called primacy of the present. Dramatic time is naturally opposed to the 'illusions of self-presence'. This brings our approach close to some contemporary philosophic conceptions. According to Pütz, dramatic tension depends on partial obscurity or ignorance; cf. Pütz, *Die Zeit...*, pp. 14 ff. On Derrida's critique of the idea of an untroubled translucent presence, applicable here, cf. Genevieve Lloyd, *Being and Time. Selves and Narrators in Philosophy and Literature* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 162 ff.

[70] Pütz, *Die Zeit...*, p. 14.

[71] Pütz speaks of 'Doppelheit von Vorgriff und Verwirklichung' and terms used to translate this phrase may differ; it can be also translated as 'coupling or duplication of anticipation and completion'. What counts is the definition or the basic idea that things in a play happen twice: 'Apart from the stage-technical, there is a deeper reason for the doubleness of anticipation and realisation; the reason lies in the principle of dramatic tension. The precipitating action calls for a repeated representation of one thing' (*ibid.*, p. 40). I have found a parallel concept of the dramatic tension in Charles Morgan's essay 'The Nature of Dramatic Illusion' (in Susanne Langer, ed., *Reflections on Art*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 91 ff.). Morgan speaks, rather vaguely, of intensity and the impregnating power of the dramatic representation, yet he comes very near Pütz's conception when he suggests the concept of 'suspense of form' or 'the incompleteness of a known completion' as different from the suspense of plot or 'the ignorance of what will happen' (*ibid.*, p. 98).

The Hallets' idea of the dramatic question finds independent support in Pütz, who points to the 'logical movement from question to answer' (*logische Bewegung von der Frage zur Antwort*). This answer-seeking movement is, as Pütz says, an *in nuce* model of dramatic tension.[72] Besides this, however, one can regard this model at different levels of literalness. Dramatic speech as such *is* progression; and whatever forms it has in a specific situation, the answer-seeking thrust should remain unabated. Alternation between questions and answers carries a dialogue forward, yet even a single sentence is a mode of progression. Moreover, this model can be applied to smaller units, even to single utterances: 'Wordplay opens perspectives on the future, and accentuates the progression of dramatic speech.'[73] The answer-seeking thrust clearly harbours the time-factor.

Does the idea of the sequence enrich our understanding of action as a dynamic, future-oriented succession of events? When discussing time in drama we have to talk units, but do we have to talk sequences? The Hallets' very definition of the sequence is rather disquieting: 'a unit of action in which tensions build toward a significant moment and then taper off'. Whatever new elements the Hallets might bring in, their approach is principally constructed on premises laid down by Jones. Action, as the authors see it, 'once introduced, advances toward a climax, then enters a stage of decrescence that brings it rapidly to a conclusion'.[74] This of course refers not to action as a whole but to any single sequence.

However, a broader regard for the entire action ought not to be sidestepped. If the dramatic tension building up within a sequence inevitably dies away once the overriding dramatic question has been answered, one has to ask why the action does not come to a standstill at each such juncture. Presumably, what keeps it going are some remaining dramatic questions, asked but left unanswered for the time being. This time, however, they have to be inter-sequential, for otherwise, instead of being phases of an ongoing action, sequences would turn into tiny dramas entire of themselves. Whenever a critic does come across such a sequence, he will inevitably deliver a condemning verdict: sequences that do nothing to move the entire action onwards have to face the axe. This is not to say that such censure is valid in every instance. As we shall see very soon, there are reasons to suspect that there is room for slackening the dramatic tension. This, however, has little to do with the Hallets' conception of the sequence.

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[72] Pütz, *Die Zeit*..., pp. 34-5.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[74] Hallet & Hallet, *Analysing*..., p. 5.

When discussing units of action, reporting claims special attention. The Hallets mark off reporting sequences as a separate category. And it is precisely in so doing that their approach reveals a weak spot. First, let us note that the conventional broad-view designations of parts or phases of action (exposition, climax, denouement, etc.) have an inter-sequential meaning. When we determine the meaning of any 'sequence' (in the broadest sense of a large chunk of action) as the exposition or the climax, we simultaneously impart a specific function to the unit. To identify a sequence as a reporting one does nothing of this sort. This is clearly a failure, especially in view of the assertion that reporting, as the Hallets themselves put it, is 'the essential activity of the drama'. Examined closely, reporting will be recognised as one of the basic engines of dramatic dynamics. No wonder then that, as Brennan puts it, 'The messenger delivering his report... is a principal structural device in Greek drama.'[75]

What is the dramatic report? Does it consist in mere 'downloading' of information? If so then one can speak of reporting sequences. However, reporting is always more than this: it has a complex structure involving at least two characters, a message, and a distance that has to be covered *before* the message is delivered. Reporting involves spatial extension transcending the limitation of the onstage world.[76] Furthermore, it always has a certain temporal extension. Not all elements of the structure have to be dramatised or deictically represented. If, for instance, the dramatist chooses to present the sending of a message, it does not mean that the other two elements disappear. They may recede into the background; nevertheless, they are there. In *Romeo*

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[75] Brennan, *Onstage and Offstage Worlds*..., p. 7. Cf. Gary J. Scrimgeour, 'The Messenger as a Dramatic Device in Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19 (1968), pp. 41-54.

[76] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 6 ff., as well as our remarks below. The analysis of reporting by the Hallets is typically a-temporal. As major elements they propose to regard the messenger, the report, the auditor; cf. Hallet & Hallet, *Analysing*..., pp. 135 ff.

and Juliet, the message from Friar Laurent to Romeo becomes the focus of attention in many ways. Moreover, efforts to deliver the message misfire, and the carrying of the letter itself becomes the subject of reports. Reporting is thus indeed an essential dramatic device in that it serves to weave the dramatic fabric more tightly and in adhering to, indeed, in establishing and enhancing, the spatio-temporal dimensions of the represented world. This is precisely why there can be no 'reporting sequences', despite what the Hallets assert. Such a sequence would be a dramatic failure: to show in an uninterrupted succession the dispatch, the carrying and the delivery of a message would be ludicrous.[77] Instead, reporting bursts the limits of a single scene or sequence just as effectively as it bursts the restraints of the onstage world and extends it onto offstage areas more or less removed from it. Both functions go together and this is why reporting is so dramaturgically attractive and indispensable.

In order to look into dramatic time one has to look away from any single scene-like unit. In *Macbeth*, Duncan sends the news of promotion to Macbeth a considerable number of 'lines' before the news is delivered, whereby the totality of reporting comes into view, namely its being hooked-up in neighbouring scenes which are more or less detached from one another.[78] The distance and the off-stage action it necessitates are as important as the dramatised delivery of the message which is its spectacular climax.

Here is the place to mention the relation between onstage and offstage worlds, a differentiation without which no treatment of the Shakespeare action, or any dramatic action for that matter, can be complete. In his valuable study, Brennan makes explicit the connection between the handling of the onstage — offstage relationship and the principal value attached to continuity. It is not enough to state that time inevitably flows *on the stage* and that consequently the action inevitably relates to this fact; time flows in both the onstage and the offstage worlds, and more often than not does so at different paces. Taking into account the usually complex geography of a play, in each of the offstage areas time may be flowing at different velocities according as the dramatist disposes of the narrative material. All the possible combinations and solutions affect a play's mimesis of real time, or the manner in which the action imitates the flow of events as they would take place in the real world. How the playwright decides to co-ordinate

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[77] I can think of only one incident where Shakespeare comes close to a fully dramatised act of reporting. It is at the beginning of *Othello* III.iii, where Iago reports to Othello, newly arrived on the stage, what the audience has seen.

[78] Although the 'hook-up' is my coinage, the idea of extra-scenic, or extra-sequential, connections is by no means new. Hebeisen, to give an example, uses terms such as 'Bogen' ('arch of a bridge') and 'Überbrückung' ('bridging'). The Hallets speak of 'beats' which perform the joining and foreshadowing functions; cf. Hallet & Hallet, *Analysing* . . ., pp. 39-42.

showing (the onstage world) and telling (the offstage world) is reflected in the dynamics of the action and affects its tempo. Says Brennan, 'The technique of determining the relation between onstage and offstage events is central to the organization of dramatic rhythm in a play.'[79] The messengerial connections between the various areas of a play's topography are of special importance. The messenger or the letter he bears act as connectors between the onstage and the offstage worlds. Thus messengers generate and consolidate extra-scenic segments of action in that they occasionally ensure the continuous sustaining of dramatic tension over larger sequences. Occasionally a single report fulfils both functions and its time-imitating action (a motif that will find ample exemplification in our concrete analyses) can be enhanced by specific intricacies of plotting, by figurative language or/and by a wide range of emotional responses of the characters.

1.2.5.4. The dramatic hook-up

The conclusion which flows from the above is that the sequence, in the technical meaning proposed by the Hallets, has only a relative importance and value. The suggested division of the entire action into sequences, valuable as it is in some respects, does little for a better understanding of the dramatic economy of time. One may criticise the conventional concept according to which the emptied stage delimits a unit of action. Yet until the very last line of a play the clearing of the stage can never let tension peter out. Our criticism has shown that events have detectable dramatic potential due to some linkage or arching between them. The entrances and exits of characters are merely one of the many means to increase tension. To give an easy example: in III.iii of *Othello* tension mounts to extraordinary heights partly because the main figures come and go so many times. Each re-entrance signals that a length of time has elapsed and that a considerable change in the psyche of the protagonists has taken place. As a whole, time races through this scene. It is extremely long and could be broken down into a number of sequences, their divisions marked by the exits of Desdemona, Othello, and Iago. At each of these, a dramatic question has been resolved. The entire scene, however, shows that continuity is a valuable means to produce mounting tension. This is why the scene as a whole makes a unit and why the stage is never emptied. One could even suggest that the resolution of this scene comes as late as Act V, when all the main characters from III.iii meet and the intrigue comes to light.

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[79] Brennan, *Onstage and Offstage Worlds...*, p. 8.

In addition to the above, within a single scene there are steps for the tension to climb. As we have observed earlier, they can comprise as little as a dialogue driven by a single motif, as in Othello's demand that Iago speak his mind. Othello keeps pressing and Iago keeps dodging for a while and then gives in. Other examples abound.

Scene III.iii in *Othello* shows another important means of producing and sustaining tension by means of inter-scenic linkage. Shakespeare comes up with the handkerchief and weaves it into this and the following scenes to ensure the continuity of the action as well as its unabated tension. Embellished with strawberries, the napkin itself knits a neat pattern of dramatic time as it travels from scene to scene until the last moments. The number of times it is mentioned or referred to is remarkable, which makes us realise that mimetic presence and speech sustain one another: verbal reference can successfully replace the physical presence of its object. This also allows us to see that an extra-scenic sequence (one that transcends the confines of a single designated scene) can extend over several acts; the napkin-sequence in *Othello* extends over Acts III through V.

In order to detect dramatic time, one has to be on the lookout for higher-level elements that are capable of establishing inter-scenic connections or hook-ups and that ward off the ever-present threat of inertia. To return to Pütz's conception of dramatic tension, the principle of the doubleness of anticipation and realisation leads us to the problem of the dramatic tempo. The rule of *Doppleheit* states that events in drama need to be represented at least twice, first to evoke and then to release tension: first they are anticipated, then they take place.[80] How they are represented is another matter. What sets the tempo is the time-space that separates anticipation from completion. When the time-span is small, when consummation follows immediately upon announcement, the tempo is brisk, yet tension is soon released. When the forecast event is too long in coming, the tempo slackens. But even in cases of postponed completion, tension can build up steadily, provided that expectation is carefully sustained. How is that possible? The answer lies in the definition: expectation can only be sustained by repeated anticipation. A repeated indication of the coming events feeds expectation and builds up tension.

These considerations call for retention of the conventional meaning of the sequence as found in Jones, who seems to be applying the term to any number of scenes joined by one movement. The movement element can be methodologically fine-tuned by means of Pütz's theory of the construction of dramatic tension just presented. To illustrate the point, let us compare the rendition in two different plays of an event that conventionally functions as a great tension-arouser: the premonition of death. The death of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* and that of Desdemona in *Othello* are two very different treatments of the same motif. Both deaths are violent and both come towards the end of the play. In *Titus*, the tempo is brisk: Titus kills his daughter 10 lines after the audience has been allowed to anticipate his design (V.iii.36-45). Desdemona's death is forecast in Act III but the realisation of the threat is put off until late in Act V. Despite this the latter part of *Othello* is regarded as the epitome of racing action. Tempo is easily mistaken for tension, and what is murderous about *Othello* is perhaps not the dynamics of the action but the excruciating, repeatedly evoked anticipation of the inevitable.

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[80] Pütz, *Die Zeit . . .*, p. 39. 'The dramatic tempo is regulated through the temporal distance (*Zeitspanne*) between anticipation (*Vorgriff*) and completion (*Verwirklichung*). . . . [T]he tempo slows down when the tension between anticipation and completion is held off for a long time.' *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5).

1.2.6. 'Diverse paces with diverse persons', or double time

> *The mind of man...works with...strangeness upon the body of time.... This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation.*
>
> Virginia Woolf

The fact that dramatic time is sculpted in language makes room for manipulation or stylisation. Dr. Johnson was one of the first critics to observe that the imagination is easily fooled about time.[81] Time naturally lends itself to dramatic compression or telescoping ('stylisation') — both of which are rife in Shakespeare, who customarily shortens the time-span of source narratives. To resort to Emrys Jones once more, what makes time susceptible of stylisation is the fact that in drama measurable duration is subordinate to the production of distinctive effects, peculiar to this type of artistic endeavour.

In many cases it is difficult to differentiate between referential-deictic, dramatic (operative, tension building), and figurative (poetic, imaginative, non-mimetic) uses of the word 'time' and its cognates. In other words, it is not always clear whether this or that particular expression, phrase, or image has been used to alter the pace of the action or to perform the function of representation. From the point of view of dramatic economy, both functions, representation and dramatisation, ought to be performed simultaneously. In reality, problems are caused even by simple references. *Othello* is notorious for many such ambiguities: 'What, keep a week away? Seven days and nights? / Eight score eight hours? and lovers' absent hours, / More tedious than the dial eight score times? / O weary reckoning!' — is Bianca's complaint to Cassio, and the trouble of course is that this elaborate reference to the past cannot be taken as representation. We are well aware that Cassio's sojourn at Cyprus does not exceed two days! Because 'a week' is at odds with other references, it awakens suspicion that Bianca's reproach enriches characterisation rather than temporal representation in the strict sense of the word (see also below, pp. 51-2). Another hypothesis, however, is the well-known double-time theory, which sees this as an instance of Shakespeare's use of two clocks to construct the action of most of his plays.

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[81] The well-known statement is found in 'The Preface to Shakespeare', where Johnson writes: 'Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract time of real actions and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.' Although Johnson explicitly speaks here of the audience willingly lending itself to manipulation by the playwright, it seems obvious that in order to leave the dramatic illusion intact the gimmicks of time manipulation have to be hidden from the gaze of the spectators.

Why we stop at this point to discuss double time is not only because one cannot analyse time in Shakespeare without alluding to this problem or without taking sides in the dispute that it has long provoked.[82] It is of interest for us also because of the methodological presuppositions it brings into play. Although I am not going to come up with a remedy for the crux concerning double time, which some dismiss as purely academic, the analysis of double time will lead us to a refreshing change of outlook on dramatic time. The sub-section on the unity of time will yield some hope of mitigating this particular critical worry.

The problem of double time has been the focus of time analyses in Shakespearean criticism since the 19th century. An extensive treatment can be found in Mable Buland's thesis *The Presentation of Time in the Elizabethan Drama* (1912).[83] Buland gives a classic formulation of the double time hypothesis:

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[82] It is not possible to give here an account of the double time controversy. I addressed it at more length in an article discussing the problem of time in *Othello*, where the reader can also find references to the most significant voices in the dispute. Cf. Jacek Mydla, 'The Idea of Time in *Othello*', *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, 44 (4/1997), pp. 231-3.

[83] 'The Presentation of Time in the Elizabethan Drama', *Yale Studies in English*, ed. Albert S. Cook, XLIV (1912), pp. 1-354. The type of time analysis that is the focus of Buland's interest has its precedent in Halpin's analysis of *The Merchant of Venice*. N. J. Halpin, *The Dramatic Unities of Shakespeare. In a Letter Addressed to the Editor of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Dublin: Hodges & Smith, Grafton-Street, 1849). J. Wilson dealt with the problem of 'two clocks' in *Macbeth* and *Othello* (Trans. New Shakespeare Society for 1877-9).

> The double-time scheme is a method of dealing with the dramatic content of time whereby two impressions are given simultaneously — one of swiftness and one of slowness; by one series of allusions the action seems to drive ahead furiously, while by another series the lapse of weeks and months is expressed. Such a device involves a presentation of events under two aspects, one hastening the action to produce excitement and tension, the other prolonging the action, sometimes to the extent of portraying within the limits of the drama the changes in emotions and motives belonging to a lifetime.[84]

There are several methodological concepts used in this definition that deserve consideration.

Double time, or double clock, is believed to enhance verisimilitude. Events represented in a play seem more probable and realistic if they are displayed in an extended, often historical, perspective. Thus, to heighten life-likeness, Shakespeare alludes to the passage of weeks and months, which is usually out of keeping with a number of short-time references occurring in the same play. Though effective in evoking the impression of haste and compression, short time is expected to work in unison with references of the former type, and this harmony is chiefly what helps the dramatist bring the conflict to resolution within the duration of a single continuous performance.

Buland makes it clear that the mimetic function of the short time is of secondary importance and subordinated to the operative demand of 'producing excitement and tension'. From this perspective, the classicised rule of 24 hours at most set for the duration of the dramatic plot is unintelligible. In its most radical formulation, as when Castelvetro demands that story time should be coextensive with playing time, the entire issue is misrepresented. The actual, measurable duration of the performance is of secondary importance, as we have already observed. Even in *The Tempest*, where the unity rule is observed with utmost precision, no one can tell what the real duration of the action is. We take for granted that it lasts three hours because the characters keep on telling us so. At best, this is only an approximation to the ideal of coextension of plot time, performance time, and reception time. According to this ideal, a well-executed play is one in which the on-stage action is concurrent with the events represented. In a word, double time strongly affects verisimilitude, which makes some scholars suggest sophisticated explanations of and even justifications for its use. Double clock, says Buland, is 'no trick illegitimate to the artist, for the stage illusion created by dramatic condensation is a means of presenting to the mind a truthful picture of life'.[85] Thus the dispute concerning dramatic time comes to touch upon the larger issue of 'a defence of poesie'. 'The object of art' — says Buland — 'is to produce an idealized picture of nature'.[86] It is assumed that nothing crucial happens in 'nature' within minutes or hours. Truthful time then is extended time. And the justification, on psychological grounds, of the artifice of condensed time comes from assumptions concerning the receptive and retentive capacities of the audience.

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[84] Buland, 'The Presentation...', p. 4.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

> The acceptance of a certain sort of disparity between what the audience really see and what they admit as having seen, is fundamental to the dramatic presentation of time.... At each moment the mind experiences only the 'now' and the 'just then'; if, then, there is no inconsistency in the things *immediately following each other*, the mind will perceive no lack of harmony. It is only in case the memory is summoned to hold up against the present the content of some past moment that discrepancies in time are felt.[87]

Roman Ingarden, in *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, discussed the problem of the recipient's retention.[88] There he introduced the term 'active memory' (fashioned on Husserl's 'retention') to describe the function of retaining in the mind of the reader (audience) the already-gone-through parts of the literary work. This content of the memory interacts with new experiences in the complex process of a temporal cognitive response to a drama, itself an inherently temporal object. Retention seems to be a 'psychic' counterpart of the structural principles of the dramatic tension, set forth by Pütz and analysed in the previous subsection. The concept of retention ought to be fused with that of refiguration, yet Ricoeur seems to shun the prospect of any direct connection. Buland's argument that in the process of reception we engage with what is immediately given, what has just passed and what is anticipated places emphasis on two discreet modes of consciousness in the audience: the short-term anticipation and the retention of the just-passed. Buland comes up with a further conclusion concerning the double clock: the trick demands sufficient textual distance (between discrepant time references) which ensures that the inconsistencies will remain unnoticed.[89] This, in turn, allows a renewed, constructive, attack on the ancient problem of the unity of time.

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[86] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-7; emphasis added.

[88] Roman Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, trans. Ruth Ann Crowley & Kenneth R. Olson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); 'Temporal Perspectives in the Concretization of the Literary Work of Art', p. 97. Cf. also Ricoeur's analysis of Husserl's 'retention' in *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, pp. 23 ff.

[89] Buland, 'The Presentation...', pp. 17-8.

1.2.7. 'Tomorrow? Oh, that's sudden!', or of the relative unity of time

The dispute over double time ignores an important element in the problem of time in Shakespeare: the non-mimetic, or at least superficially regarded, level of the 'idea' of time. *Othello*, which is notorious for its temporal inconsistencies, can serve here as an example demonstrating that not only time references but also concepts and images enhance verisimilitude and amplify artistic illusion. Many individual plays, as we shall see, are very effective in how they deploy their temporal mimesis, or how they imitate real time. Moreover, a closer analysis makes it clear that Shakespeare did strive to follow the rule of the unity of time with its 24-hour period prescribed for the entire action. At present we need to combine the rather disparate considerations and we shall do so in an attempt to address the nearly anachronistic problem of the unity in Shakespearean drama.

The rule seems to date back to a time before Shakespeare and the Italian theorists of drama, who apparently misinterpreted Aristotle's *Poetics*. However, the particular ideas in their works are far from consistent. Castelvetro's famous restriction states that 'The time of action ought not to exceed the limit of twelve hours'. The reason is verisimilitude: the audience 'refuse to be deceived'.[90] This rejection of artifice jars with other ideas, both his and other authors'. Scaliger argues that 'a few verses would not satisfy the expectant public, who are prepared to atone for the disgusting prosiness of the many a day by the enjoyment of a few hours'.[91] Castelvetro himself subordinates verisimilitude to operativeness by admitting that a *quick* change from fortune to misfortune — that is, one which does not upend the rule that 'the time of representation and that of the action represented must be exactly coincident' — 'is more *marvellous*'.[92]

The rule of unity naturally refers us to the double clock. It is assumed that Shakespeare uses shorter or 'concrete' time to build up dramatic tension, or more specifically, to speed up the tempo of the action. To do this, short time has to involve more time references on a smaller space of the action. In other words, the audience has to be repeatedly reminded that the clock is ticking away. One expects that the action will be completed in a day's time and that temporal specifications will not to exceed the prescribed number of hours. No sooner does Othello become convinced of Desdemona's unfaithfulness than he resolves to strangle her 'tonight'.

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[90] Lodovico Castelvetro (1505-71), *Poetics*, in Barret H. Clark, ed., *The European Theories of the Drama* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1965), p. 49.

[91] Julius Caesar Scaliger (1481-1558), *Poetics* (1561), in *ibid.*, p. 46.

[92] Castelvetro, *Poetics*, p. 49. Emphasis added.

As we have seen, the controversy over double time involves assumptions concerning the audience reception. So does the dispute over temporal unity. The imagination is not able to correlate references separated by hundreds of lines of the dramatic text, a distance which corresponds to so much performance time. Time references have to be spaced in a way that ensures their connection and relative coherence throughout the play. Although it is theoretically possible coherently to use references spanning a year, it is more effective to restrict them to a shorter length of time, which is what Shakespeare usually does.[93] Assuming, as some Renaissance theoreticians did, that the audience is unable to live imaginatively through an expanse of weeks or months flitting across the stage, Shakespeare uses 'tomorrow' as the most frequent time specification. Often, this is also the extremity of the anticipative forward-flashing of the plot.

We have constantly to bear in mind that what is crucial to the simulation of rapid action is not time references or their frequency. We have already observed that tempo is set by double representation of occurrences or, more specifically, by the fact that occurrences are anticipated (announced, foreshadowed, etc.) before they occur. What counts is 'an internal system of anticipation', to recall Jones' phrase, rather than the disposition of time references. The so-called 'time-scheme' or the duration of the represented action based on the computation of time references is of secondary importance. 'If the story [Shakespeare] is dramatising — argues Jones — turns on matters of time and timing, he brings the fact clearly to our attention beforehand.'[94] However, as there is hardly a time reference without a mimetic function as well as an emotional charge, certain time adverbials are used infinitely more often than any references to clock and calendar. Jones calls them 'extremely common terms', and mentions 'tonight', 'tomorrow', 'last night' and 'yesterday'. Jones's belief is, as we have already seen, that Shakespeare's primary interest as dramatist is in the immediate future and the immediate past, i.e. the dimensions of time which being contiguous to the present have much imaginative reality for the audience.[95]

Due to the dramatic priority of the future, short-term references to the future are of utmost dramaturgical significance. 'During a performance of a play,...what most concerns us is the immediate future, what is going to develop out of the present moment....Indeed, words like "tonight" and

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[93] The 'wide gap of time' in *The Winter's Tale* is not an exception to the rule. As I see it, Shakespeare winds down the anticipation before Time as Chorus comes on to announce the big leap that fast-forwards the action by fifteen years. This effects a *radical breakdown* of the tension, and in consequence all that happens after the break is undiluted surprise.

[94] Jones, *Scenic Form...*, p. 53.

[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

"tomorrow" — far more than their corresponding terms, "last night" and "yesterday" — become valuable structural devices, serving to throw our expectation forward to the next phase of action.'[96] Two remarks have to complete Jones's observations. First, 'tonight' and 'tomorrow' have an intrinsic value, which makes them distinct from other references to the future. The suggestion of immediacy coupled with the emotional charge is what makes them indispensable. Second, they need to be sharply distinguished from one another. Although both throw the action forward, as Jones put it, 'tomorrow' can effect a bridge to the next unit or episode. To put it another way, 'tonight' exercises a strong unifying pull while 'tomorrow' causes the action to leap over to another phase.

The above is a working hypothesis, which will have to be tested on concrete dramatic material. The opening of *Much Ado* provides a good illustration and fuels the argument. According to Buland, 'the entire action [of *Much Ado*] seems to be comprised in four consecutive days'.[97] If this is so, then there are also four short-time episodes to be distinguished. The very first line, containing the announcement of Don Pedro's arrival 'tonight', already shows the unifying effect of this reference. Since that same night the marriage date is set for the next week, the episode that follows remains temporally unspecified. The next reference is given at the beginning of Act III: Hero anticipates her wedding which is to take place 'tomorrow', yet there is a long way to go before the next day materialises. Moreover, there is a tragic twist in the offing: the plotters, led by Don John, are cooking up a scheme to disgrace the would-be bride, and they are going to pull it off 'tonight' at around midnight. All the way through to the end of the play, 'tonight' consolidates episodes and 'tomorrow' connects one with another.

This connecting role of 'tomorrow' brings us back to the problem of the unity of time. Proponents of the unity rule do not insist that the entire action should climax within a single day. Rather, they express concern about the audience attention, and credulity, strained by action covering extensive periods. At its sensible core, the rule has unquestionable value for any dramatist. Diverging in most plays from strict orthodoxy, Shakespeare did however observe what I propose to call a rule of the relative unity of time.

This proposal to reformulate the classical principle, and re-approach the problem, which gave rise to its formulation, owes inspiration to Emrys Jones. Jones is convinced that, principally, 'Shakespeare was thinking in terms of a single day' even when composing so a play so haphazard in its use of time references as *Othello*.[98] Thus, any forceful refutation of the unity of time as alien to Shakespearean dramaturgy would be exaggerated. This is where the postulate of dramatic intensity and that of imaginative coherence logically unite in the principal one, that of scenic continuity. Connections between scenes have to be tight enough to produce the desired effect of smooth continuity without straining the imagination of the viewer. This is of course very close to the neoclassical insistence on tightly woven dramatic action. In this way Jones arrives at the only logical ramification: 'Shakespeare evolved his own freer version of what French neoclassical theorists were to call *liaison des scenes*....His care to maintain continuity, which is to be observed especially in the arrival and departure of characters, is a sign of the same desire for unity and coherence of design.'[99]

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[96] *Ibid.*, p. 52. Having said this, Jones goes on to enumerate a number of passages from *Macbeth.*

[97] Buland, 'The Presentation...', p. 112.

The next-day reference joins episodes governed by a captivating short-time anticipation, which seems to be in keeping with the unity rule. Relativity consists in that its operation is restricted to only a number of neighbouring sequences (short-time units) instead of the entire play. Commitment to the unity of time in particular episodes amounts to observing the rule of the unity of time in its pragmatic formulation. Priority is given to the span of audience perception (imagination) in which a unity between announcement (anticipation) and fulfilment (realisation) is successfully established. The relative isolation or temporal self-containedness of episodes requires then another means of linkage. Some such means are the messenger and the letter, but as we shall see, stage props other than these mercurial vehicles are also well adapted to perform the role of inter-scenic hook-ups.

To buttress the imaginative temporal unity within an episode as well as to hook up consecutive episodes to one another, Shakespeare employs short-time references (most commonly, as has been remarked, 'today', 'tonight', and 'tomorrow'). His technique subverts certain cherished opinions about the double clock. First of all the role of long-time references has to be seen in a different light. Such specifications can never produce the desired cohesion between short-time units or episodes as they are not capable of sustaining the dramatic tension needed to carry the audience attention from one unit to another. Long-time specifications (including narrative flashbacks and elaborate flash-forwards) would misfire because their relevance for building up the required dramatic tempo is limited. They have other tasks to perform. Bianca's complaint to Cassio ('What, keep a week away? seven days and nights? / Eight score eight hours, and lovers' absent hours, / More tedious than the dial, eight score times?'; *Othello*, III.iv.171) could supply a pertinent example. Elaborate, yet utterly misleading as a reference, it serves the need of the moment. To try to match it with a reference from another episode would be futile. By the same token, a promise from *All's Well*, ' 'Twill be two days ere I shall see you,' made by Bertram to his newly wedded wife, does not ring true for the simple reason that the reference suggests a duration exceeding one day.

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[98] Jones, *Scenic Form*..., p. 60.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 65. The above is a recap of the main points Jones has made on the preceding pages, 62-4.

Besides characterisation, long-time schemes and references perform the function of spreading a conceptual illusion of temporal extension beyond the confines of the dramatised action. Thus, paradoxically, they enhance the cohesion and dynamics of their native episode-unit, sometimes to the detriment of the plot-time cohesion, which consequently often suffers from baffling incongruities.

Conclusions

After what has been said in the previous sections, the dramatic potential of time as a subject of analysis looks more complicated than it did at the outset of this introduction. Yet this complexity is in part only apparent, and now it is time to reestablish the priorities.

The main difficulty is the bifurcation caused by the mimetic and referential manners of representation. First, drama is a temporal work of art (every dramatic action represents time mimetically) and any study of dramatic action as such examines the engines of dramatic action and thus inevitably becomes concerned with time. Second, time is an object of various modes of verbal representation. These, as we have seen, are subordinate to mimesis, which is to say that they have to be dramatically operative. Within a play's idiom, time's conceptual implicature and imaginative colouring act in concert with the deixis-based narrative construction. Plot and the poetry which envelops it depend upon one another. This is what constitutes the subject of our analysis of Shakespeare's plays, namely the joint action of representation and propulsion, or the dramatically operative function of the representation of time.

We shall begin with an analysis of the Sonnets. This may seem futile inasmuch as by definition no dramatic potential is to be assumed in non-dramatic works. Yet, although attempts have been made to read a romantic story or a personal drama into the Sonnets, their dramatic potential lies elsewhere. In extant studies of the time-problem in Shakespeare the fact that plays, poems and sonnets have a single author has encouraged some to string 'similar' motifs and themes onto one thread, which is the author's allegedly consistent expression of his experience. Whether there are motifs common to poems and plays is open to question. Even if there are such motifs, they do not compare easily. The artistic value and function, indeed the very meaning of an utterance varies depending on whether it is spoken by the lyric 'I' of a sonnet or occurs in a dramatic, multipersonal situation. This is certainly true of references to time.

We have chosen as our point of departure the Sonnets and *Lucrece* not in order to see how, in the long run, the dramatic treatment of time differs from its poetic and narrative embodiments. Both have an intrinsic value for a historian of ideas interested in literary engagements with time. Both certainly attest to Shakespeare's acute sensitivity to the baffling mystery of time and its artistic potential. Yet our interests here are limited. To pave the way for a thoroughgoing study of the plays, it seems necessary first to see how Shakespeare represents time and how he harnesses it to serve the particular goals which he is out to achieve. If certain ideas and tropes, for example Time the Destroyer, serve both to write a sonnet argument and to construct a dramatic sequence, the literary employment of such motifs itself deserves looking into.

Since our general interest is Shakespeare's employment of time in drama, the material to choose from is vast. Two aspects have been given priority in short-listing plays for close inspection. The material has to be diverse enough to reflect the variety of Shakespeare's technique. The popularity of certain plays among critics also has to be taken into account. Thus, although it may seem difficult to find a play whose presentation of time has not undergone individual study, there still is wide expanse of yet unclaimed territory for new research to explore. Hence a choice of plays which have so far enjoyed meagre critical attention with respect to the time problem. However, I am not going to pretend that my choice was not based on any personal preference. The liberty I took in selecting plays for analysis had a basic determinant impediment. My choice reflects the conventional divisions of Shakespearean drama: romantic comedy, problem comedy, tragedy of power, tragedy of desire, and romance.

Since time operates dramatically within units of action, analysis has to be limited in the amount of action studied. To analyse plays as a whole is a beguiling temptation which has to be resisted. Following that path, one could end up riding along on a train of generalisations. Instead, I have had recourse to Emrys Jones's idea of a double movement: that the action in Shakespeare naturally breaks into two relatively separate parts. Hence, expository or climactic portions of action will be examined, distinguished by their rising and falling tension. Here, the choice, too, has been to some extent arbitrary, yet care has been taken that in each case a well-defined sequence is under scrutiny.

I believe, and shall endeavour to demonstrate, that there is more to the study of dramatic time than the establishing of a more or less coherent time-scheme of the plot.

This Introduction may have created the impression that the subject is cut and dried, and that indeed there is nothing left to enquire, but our very first steps will prove this impression false. If things have been made explicit, perhaps excessively so, this has been in order to open up a field of discovery, not to foreclose it.

2. Time as poetic subject and epic hero

2.1. The rhetoric of time

> Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are your sonnets.
>
> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

2.1.1. Time's office

Shakespeare's poetry might have overwhelmed St. Augustine. Unlike the philosopher, the speaker of the Sonnets and the heroine of *The Rape of Lucrece* are never lost for words when it comes to speaking about time. Not only do they seem to know very well what time is, but they are expert in conveying that knowledge in very elaborate language. Indeed, a great deal of the ideas on this subject known from the plays can also be found in the Sonnets and the longer poems, among which *Lucrece* ranks pre-eminent with regard to the representation of time. This fact creates an opportunity for a study of non-dramatic time.

Critics customarily lift images and ideas from their indigenous embedding, which is a dynamic totality of interacting components held together by an overriding artistic purpose. Such transplantation, from poem to analysis, is not without consequences. To what extent it entails modifying and disfiguring the content of the donor-work is too broad a problem to go into here, but clearly initial bias will affect the subject under investigation. For instance, in Turner's study, time figures as a Destroyer. Shakespeare allegedly 'identifies the *process* of time with death'.[100] With this interpretive tool in hand, the scholar rips through the delicate fabric of Shakespeare's poetry, in which 'time' actually makes an enticingly ambiguous pattern. 'The passing of the minutes [time? — J. M.] is part of the whole system of entropy in which time involves us,' writes Turner, and goes on to quote a passage from Sonnet 60. Little respect is paid to the different senses of 'time' in the poem, where time as the Destroyer appears twice, but its different meaning is found in the couplet: 'And yet to *times* in hope my verse shall stand....'[101] Shakespeare's spelling or lexical distinctions may not be totally consistent, yet a watchful reader runs into a sometimes baffling polysemy of 'time'. That Shakespeare made copious use of common ideas about and representations of time, and that he himself was father to many more, is obvious. Yet he also gave them a concrete context which made the general become specific.

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[100] Turner, *Shakespeare and the Nature*..., p. 8.

Keeping in mind our dominant perspective, we shall now look at how the idea of time spawns a multitude of images and motifs, and how these are exploited to nourish and uphold rhetorical arguments and a narrative sequence. These intricate clusters of notions and images need an exegesis which will explore their internal dialectic or potential for imaginative expansion, such as the relation between Father Time and his metonymic progeny: time units such as hours and minutes, etc. A further question will be: What is added to poetic tropes to generate dramatic time? Can one detect any dramatic potential in poetry? Since the Sonnets and *Lucrece* give us an opportunity to compare lyrical poetry and poetic epic, to study them seems to be a natural step on the way to explore the dramatic potential of time.

Another working assumption is that the form is as important as the content with respect to the motif of time. Part of this formal aspect is that works of literature prefigure and refigure time, to use Ricoeur's terminology. In other words, poems as well as dramatic plays imitate time's progress in a more direct way than mere verbal representation. The desire to refigure time is a presupposition of the so-called claim to immortality. If poetic immortality depends on a poet's shuffling of commonplace signifiers of time then it is time itself that validates the claim. Shakespeare is explicit about this double-bind relationship between poetry and time: 'And all in war with Time for love of you, / As he takes from you, I engraft you new' (Sonnet 15). This explains the peculiar two-sidedness of Shakespeare's endeavour: war against time is fought in alliance *with* time: representation presupposes mimetic prefiguration-refiguration. For the verbal challenge to succeed, time has to be intuited and imitated. In Sonnet 19, the speaker's 'yet I forbid' is obviously an anxious protestation against the ravages of time, yet again the metaphor of 'living young' in verse is the counterpoint on which the argument builds its precarious balance. Clearly, destructive Time is to provide the background for the immortality claim.[102] In the process, an important shift takes place: the poet emulates Time the beauty-obliterating Artist: 'O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow, / Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen.' Time's destructive action dramatically collides with the creative process. This double bind is reflected in the way the immortality sonnets remain indebted to the received idiom that prompts comparisons between poetic art and natural time. 'Engraft' provides a perfect illustration: the pun consists in the word's referring us back to its Greek root, *graphein* ('to write') and to its other meaning: 'scion', which evokes associations with procreation.[103] Thus there is yet to be discovered a non-destructive facet of time in the meta-poetic undercurrent in Shakespeare's lyric. Poetic rhetoric may be an existential response to the pressures of time, yet in its inner dynamics it describes the elusive contours of human temporality. This is an aspect that we will address later in this chapter.

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[101] Shakespeare's sonnets, both in the modern and in the original spelling, are quoted from Stephen Booth's edition: *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977).

Inge Leimberg undertook a systematic analysis of Shakespeare's time imagery.[104] The motifs she enumerates are listed with exemplary references to reflect their occurrence in the poems:

1. Servitude and sovereignty: Time as King, Tyrant (cf. Sonnet 116, *Lucrece*, 967, 925 ff.);
2. Destruction and ravages: Time as Destroyer (Sonnets 12, 55, 100; *Lucrece*, 939 ff.); Time as scythe-bearer (Time's hand in Sonnets 60, 63, 64), Eater-Up of things (Sonnets 19, 60);
3. Movement and fleetingness; swift-footed Time: Sonnet 19;
4. Changeableness: Time as Thief ('thievish progress' in Sonnets 60, 77); Time as Giver and Taker;
5. Unmasking of falsehood: Time as Revealer and Judge (*Lucrece*, 940).

This near-complete albeit cursory overview makes manifest the presence of many time-personifying motifs in both the Sonnets and *Lucrece*. What is missing here is organic (or natural) time, which Leimberg treats as an exception, and gives no reference to the poems. Yet natural time does occur in the Sonnets, as the immortality couplet just quoted demonstrates, and as indeed does the so-called procreation sequence (Sonnets 1-17). On the other hand, images of the organic, of ripening, seeds, and procreation (cf. the

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[102] I have looked more closely at the immortality claim in Shakespeare's sonnets in my article 'Poor Retention and the Rehearsing of Being: the Claim to Poetical Immortality in Shakespeare's Sonnets', in Wojciech H. Kalaga & Tadeusz Rachwał (eds.), *Memory — Remembering — Forgetting* (Peter Lang Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1999), pp. 145-61.

[103] For a pertinent gloss cf. Booth, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 158.

[104] Inge Leimberg, *Untersuchungen zu Shakespeares Zeitvorstellung als ein Beitrag zur Interpretation der Tragödien* (Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Köln, Köln, 1961).

'womb of time' in *Othello*) seem to have a specific meaning and function in Shakespearean drama.[105] Characteristically, the Sonnets oppose creative forces to Time's destructive impact rather than combine the two as is the case in the idiom of many plays. Far from being absent from the poems, organic time occurs repeatedly and undergoes many a rhetorical transubstantiation.

Interestingly, all the enumerated motifs can be subsumed under one heading, that of Father Time. A cursory glance at Panofsky's famous essay on the iconography of Time shows that all the images and ideas have a common source. This does not mean that any conceptual unity will be established: Father Time as it came down to Shakespeare was already 'a visual and emotional synthesis'.[106] What is important to see is that this synthesis defies logical coherence. Motifs involving the personification of time diverge according to erratic laws of imaginative dynamic expansion which call for some sort of hermeneutic to uncover and disentangle. Thus the royalty of Shakespeare's Time (motif 1) stems from the descent of 'chronos' from Kronos or the Roman Saturn, 'the oldest and the most formidable of the gods'.[107] The proverbial destructiveness of time (motif 2) has two aspects. One aspect has its roots in the representation of Time equipped with a sickle, subsequently replaced by a scythe. The other aspect, voraciousness and savageness in general, dates back to Ovid's *edax rerum*,[108] and then to the beginning of the second millennium AD, when depictions began to involve castration and cannibalism. Petrarch's *Trionfi* is a landmark in that respect: editions of this work include illustrations featuring barren landscapes and ruinous architecture. Chiefly, however, the iconography of time evokes transience and irreversible change (motifs 3 and 4). The hourglass and the wings (at the shoulders and heels) are the most often used appurtenances; the forelock on the front of the head and the bald nape suggest the fleetingness of Opportunity or Kairos. Finally, there is the attribute of a pair of scales and the classical phrase '*veritas filia temporis*' (motif 5). All these motifs made their way into Shakespeare's poetry. This explains Panofsky's comment: 'Shakespeare alone, leaving all the other Elizabethans apart, has implored, challenged, berated, and conquered Time in more than a dozen sonnets and no less than eleven stanzas of his *Rape of Lucrece*. He *condenses and surpasses* the speculations and emotions of many centuries.'[109]

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[105] On organic time cf. Fabiny, 'The Wheel...', pp. 157 ff. 'Organic time' is now nearly a commonplace of Shakespeare criticism. Spurgeon stressed the recurrence organic imagery in certain contexts; cf. Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 172 ff. Cf. the idea of 'augmentative time' in Ricardo Quinones, 'Views of Time in Shakespeare', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26 (1965); and *idem*, '"Lineal honour" and Augmentative Time in Shakespeare's Treatment of the Bolingbroke Line', *Topic* (April, 1964).

[106] Erwin Panofsky, 'Father Time', in *idem*, *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford Uniwersity Press, 1939), p. 69.

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[108] 'Thou tyme, the eater up of things, and age of spyghtfull teene, / Destroy all things' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Arthur Golding's trans., Book XV, in Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Appendix II).

To see how all the motifs operate in a concrete poetic argument let us look at the representation of time in Sonnet 63.

> Against my love shall be as I am now,
> With time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn,
> When hours have drained his blood and filled his brow
> With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn
> Hath traveled on to age's steepy night,
> And all those beauties whereof now he's king
> Are vanishing, or vanished out of sight,
> Stealing away the treasure of his spring
> For such a time do I now fortify
> Against confounding age's cruel knife,
> That he shall never cut from memory
> My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life.
> His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
> And they shall live, and he in them still green.

The representation of time in this poem is complex and comprehensive. Two 'times' are evoked here: the physical and measurable, and the destructive ruinating Time. The argument uses most of the available motifs of personification: 'time's injurious hand' directly introduces motifs 1 and 2, the latter picked up by 'the age's cruel knife' at the end of the second quatrain. Movement (motif 3) is evoked by the image of morning travelling to night, with a further admixture of the representation of diurnal changes and of natural time (the process of ageing). Further on, time, extended syntactically and semantically onto units such as 'hours', provokes the action of stealing (motif 4). The personification of time is further strengthened by 'confounding (i.e. destructive) age', evocative of the emblematic 'old Time' known from Sonnet 19, and held up by the images of 'lines' and 'wrinkles'. Yet this is not all: natural cycles sustain the argument: an apprehensive anticipation of the day's frightful decline into night and of the blossoming spring threatened by wintry expiration. These natural rhythms represent the inexorable order of natural cyclicity. Here subjective time comes to the rescue: memory capable of sustaining beauty. Finally, this subjective side assumes those natural characteristics of continual revival. Artistic immortality is about keeping beauty 'still green'.

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[109] Panofsky, 'Father Time', p. 92. Emphasis added.

This rich representation is overwhelming. What is of prime importance is the relative interchangeability, semantic and syntactic, of the particular segments which make up the intricate web of this and other poetic arguments. Limitations on an exchange of signifiers are of course to be sought in the dominant motif of Father Time or the inexorable Tyrant.[110] Thus, as we shall see, the personified Time holds sway over many subordinate motifs, although one can easily think of ways to contravene this sovereignty, and Shakespeare's immortality claim is an attempt of this kind. Others will be found when we examine the idiom of the plays.

Alongside the unquestionable presence of so many images drawing their origin from the iconographic tradition, the poems contain a wider range of time-related experiences and notions. Moreover, the listed motifs of personification can be extended even further. A more comprehensive division of the principal facets of time can be as follows:

1. physical or abstract time, the linear continuum divisible into the time-spans of minutes, hours etc.;
2. cyclical time, discernible in seasonal and diurnal cycles;
3. emblematic or iconographic time, personalised Time; here to the enumerated motifs have to be added the further possible personifications of Occasion and Fortune;
4. organic or natural time (augmentative, restorative time);
5. emotive or subjective time, manifested through memory, through emotional rhythms and fluctuations;
6. artistic or ideal time, stemming from the experience of how beauty transcends the corporeal and transient and extends into the spiritual and enduring;
7. salvational, redemptive or eschatological time: the incarnation of perfectness (*kairos*-fulfilment cf. Sonnets 14 and 15): in some of the Sonnets (cf. 59, 106) the subject becomes the semi-christian Adonis, a messiah, a divinity who bestows meaning upon things and upon time itself.[111]

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[110] Cf. Leimberg, *Untersuchungen zu Shakespeares* . . ., pp. 21 ff.

[111] We shall not enlarge on this point. It would not be poetically feasible without the Christian theology of salvation according to which time and history gravitate towards the advent of the Saviour. The earthly sojourn of perfection-become-flesh is one extraordinary event in the chronicle of recorded time. Concerning the Greek notions of *kairos* and *aion* Waller writes the following: 'The New Testament writers transform the Jewish concept of *a* time of opportunity to *the* time, the *kairos*, the advent of Jesus of Nazareth in whom the time is fulfilled. The commencement of a new *aion* or era was proclaimed, in which men were called to live eschatologically, in a new pattern of living in which the quality of eternal life is revealed in time. Time was thus given a positive meaning, centred on the Incarnation and looking towards the *parousia*, which was to be prepared for not by escaping from time but by transforming it.' (*The Strong Necessity* . . ., p. 17). A more or less secular interpretation of both the Greek terms is found in Panofsky: *kairos* as 'fleeting Opportunity', and *aion* as 'creative Eternity' ('Father Time', p. 93).

Let us enlarge upon some of the items of this classification. The goal is to see how these numerous and diverse motifs contribute to the dynamics of both a rhetorical argument and a narrative succession, two aspects that are of utmost significance for our subsequent analysis of the plays.

2.1.2. Time, copesmate of ugly Night

The most commonly portrayed aspect of Time is destructiveness. The drawn-out tirade against Time in *Lucrece* is perhaps the most extensive poetic exploitation of this emblematic representation. Several of Shakespeare's sonnets employ the figure of personified Time.[112] In Sonnet 19 ('Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws') we can read about the monster Time whom the poet heroically challenges. The iconographic Devourer occupies here (as in *Lucrece*) a supreme position, making his presence tangible by carving 'hours' in the brow of the beloved, stamping it through what has come to be known as entropy.[113] The relevant diction, indicative of devastation, seems to make possible an almost limitless if tedious lexical sequence: blunt, devour, pluck, burn, fade, taint, etc. (all in Sonnet 19). In *Lucrece*, such enumeration is even more protracted. Time's office is

> 'To *stamp the seal of time* in aged things...
> 'To *ruinate* proud buildings with thy hours,
> And *smear* with dust their glittering golden towers...
> 'To *fill with worm-holes* stately monuments,
> To *feed oblivion with decay* of things,
> To *blot* old books and *alter* their contents,
> To *pluck* the quills from ancient ravens' wings...
> 'To *spoil* antiquities of hammer'd steel...
> 'To *slay* the tiger that doth live by slaughter...
> 'And *waste* huge stones with little water drops.'
>
> 941-59[114]

In the Sonnets, the conventional representation of time serves the poet to build up the immortality claim. In *Lucrece*, a shift of emphasis is even more forceful. First, Time the Destroyer is depicted as the natural accomplice of Opportunity and Night: 'Misshapen Time, copesmate of ugly Night' (925).

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[112] There are, roughly, 26 occurrences of personified time in 13 sonnets. The original impression of the Sonnets did not capitalise the word in that meaning as most of the modern editions do.

[113] On entropy in the sonnets cf. Turner, *Shakespeare and the Nature...*, Chap. I.

[114] *Lucrece* is quoted from John Roe's edition; John Roe, ed., *The Poems*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1992).

The stanzas that follow use the archetypal imagery of movement and spoilage (travelling, carrying, shifting; 925-31). Lucrece's vilification of Time suddenly turns into a eulogy. Is this for the purpose of making the presentation of time's features all-inclusive? The answer to this has to be postponed. What is of interest now is the poetic flexibility of the motif. The vilification is counterbalanced by a number of lines where the powerful agency of Time is said to work moral repair and to rectify wrongs:

> 'Time's office is *to fine* the hate of *foes*;
> To *eat up errors* by opinion *bred*...
> Time's glory is *to calm contending* kings,
> To *unmask* falsehood and bring truth to *light*,
> To *wrong the wronger* till he render *right*...
> To *mock the subtle* in themselves *beguiled*,
> To *cheer* the ploughman with increaseful crops.'
>
> 935-57

This could go on until the poet's *inventio* gave out. What is characteristic of these passages is that the relatively invariable subject matter makes possible such an astounding variety of treatment.[115] This inventory of Time's actions and duties is formally based on an equally liberal use of rhetorical tropes. The revelatory nature of time corresponds with the fine balancing of opposites in almost every line.

These enumerative strings perform a preparatory role in the poem. Soon Lucrece's attention refocuses on her personal misfortune and the complaint that ensues addresses perpetual progression and irreversibility. Predictably, the notorious polysemy of 'time' strains the logical perspicuity of the argument. In a number of curses against the wrongdoer, the motif of 'time' is exploited as if to demonstrate the poet's rhetorical flair. Ever the chief addressee, it serves to link a chain of apostrophes. To give but a few examples, let us first note the copious use of *polyptoton* (in which a word echoes with another word down the line),[116] 'Disturb his hours of *rest* with *restless* trances,' or 'Let there *bechance* him pitiful *mischances*.' And this figure is twined with *paronomasia* (semi-repetition based on outward similarity): '*Stone* him with *hard'ned hearts harder* than *stones.*'

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[115] 'Shakespeare extends the possibilities of the traditional story using most, if not precisely all, of the elaborate strategies made available by the sixteenth-century rhetorical topocosm. The diversity and range of his elaboration is impressive'; Rawdon R. Wilson, 'Shakespearean Narrative: *The Rape of Lucrece* Reconsidered', *Studies in English Literature*, 28 (1988), p. 42.

[116] All definitions of tropes are paraphrased after Brian Vickers review in his 'Shakespeare's Use of Rhetoric', in K. Muir & S. Shoenbaum, ed., *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 83 ff. Concerning the so-called figures of repetition cf. Sister Miriam Joseph C.S.C., *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York & London: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 78 ff.

An apex of rhetorical pomposity is reached in the following two stanzas (981-94): The anaphora, sustaining as it does the apostrophe, makes it possible to squeeze a triple reference to time into one line. '[Thou ceaseless lackey to eternity...] Let him [Tarquin] have time of Time's help to despair.' The meaning itself, regardless of the form of expression, is sophisticated. Tarquin's life is not to be merely shortened; the villain's personal time is to be affected in such a way that it will become an instrument of punishment. This we already know from the Sonnets: emotionally extendible, time can be abused and 'warped' by suffering. Personal time is given over into the vindictive hands of Time. What rivets the attention formally is that the mimetic iteration of the word 'time' (*ploce*) produces beats that measure the elapsing of time: 'Let him have time to mark how slow time goes / In time of sorrow, and how swift and short / His time of folly and his time of sport' (990).

Lucrece's curses shift the allegorical meaning of the narrative. The wrongdoer, who so far has had Time on his side, now himself falls prey to its action: 'At his own shadow let the thief run mad, / Himself himself seek every hour to kill!' (997-8). This brings us to the main point, which concerns personification: poetic time searches for embodiment. While in the Sonnets Time, though personified and apostrophised, remains a detached entity, *Lucrece* supplies a natural expansion of that motif in that it contains a character on which the poet can bestow the load of emblematic heritage.

2.1.3. Swift subtle post, carrier of grisly care

We have arrived at another image, suggestive of movement: Time is swift of foot, and treacherously steals in to countervail growth; flapping its restless wings, it overtakes and frustrates man's designs and hopes. This image complements the previous one, that of the Destroyer. That in *Lucrece* all the enumerated facets of time act in unison will be argued later. For the time being it is essential that we do not lose sight of the chief concern: the co-operation between representation and function.

The tragic suspense evoked by the image of innocence assailed by wickedness largely permeates the first half of the poem, that is, before the character of Tarquin parts with his (its?) allegorical function. Here, again, analogies with the Sonnets are striking: 'Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May' (Sonnet 18), or 'The coward conquest of a wretch's knife' (Sonnet 74). Thus Tarquin's abuse of Lucrece, besides the obvious moral aspect, has also a temporal side to it. Indeed these two are inseparable, as the heroine's diatribe repeatedly hammers it home. The depth of Lucrece's response to the physical violation is a measure of the allegorical, iconographic meaning of the villain and his actions. This is something we are conscious of from the very beginning:

> From the besiegèd Ardea *all in post*,
> Borne by the trustless *wings* of false desire,
> Lust-breathèd Tarquin leaves the Roman host,
> And to Collatium bears the lightless fire,
>
> 1-4

This introductory passage establishes a correspondence between what is diegetically represented and its emotional as well as conceptual and iconographic counterparts: wings are the paraphernalia of time; and equally characteristic of it are speed and unexpectedness. They make us realise that Tarquin embodies destructive Time. Furthermore, his actions set the pace for the narrative. The emblematic and the mimetic unite in one image, that of a villain hastening to surprise an unsuspecting victim. Not unexpectedly, the narrator enlarges on the instability of mundane happiness in a reflective comment:

> O happiness enjoyed but of a few,
> And, *if possessed, as soon decayed and done*
> As is the morning's silver-melting dew
> Against the golden splendor of the sun:
> *An expired date cancelled ere well begun*:
> Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,
> Are *weakly fortressed* from a world of harms.
>
> 22-8

Given this context, the villain is instrumental in unleashing instability fraught with mischief and misfortune. Tarquin cannot control his lust. Evil is unforeseeable even to those who are guilty of spreading it:

> But some *untimely* thought did instigate
> His all too *timeless speed*, if none of those.
> His honour, his affairs, his friends, his state,
> Neglected all, with *swift intent* he goes
> To quench the coal which in his liver glows.
>
> 43-7

This precariousness of worldly affairs is a motif known from the Sonnets. Perfection is brief and fleeting: 'every thing that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment' (Sonnet 15; cf. also 18).[117]

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[117] In Sonnet 77 beauty wears off as minutes waste. Minutes 'hasten to their end' (60) as man's life-time is constantly elapsing.

The ‘crooked eclipses’ from Sonnet 60 connect with the image of Time mowing with his scythe or knife in Sonnet 100. The scythe of Time, despite the obvious naturalness of death and the decline of vital powers, always seems to intrude upon the natural order. Lucrece, like beauty in the Sonnets, is ambushed by time: she sheds ‘untimely’ tears and is compared to ‘a poor unseasonable doe’ (581). The emblematic-allegorical meaning of Tarquin is strengthened by his use of ‘a falchion’. This name for a short curved sword is related etymologically to the Latin *falx* = sickle or scythe, the conventional instrument of Time’s destructiveness.[118] The word appears four times in the poem. In her account of the assault, Lucrece reports, ‘For in the dreadful dead of dark midnight, / With shining falchion in my chamber came / A creeping creature, with a flaming light’ (1625 ff.). As Tarquin impersonates an aspect of time, there can be no protective shield between Lucrece and the stalking Tarquin-Night, and indeed there is none; the passages which describe how Tarquin stalks his victim are as drawn-out as anything in this poem, yet we must at no time forget that this narrative preoccupation will be later reshaped into dramatic situations of the utmost intensity. Like *Macbeth*, with which it has a great deal in common, *Lucrece* is a study in motivation. The increase in Tarquin’s appetite is synchronised with his thievish advance towards Lucrece’s bed, a progression that sustains the reader’s awareness of time’s passing. Tarquin forces all the locks; he stalks his victim in the stealthy pace characteristic of Time, whose thievish progress imperceptibly intrudes upon beauty. He is ‘the creeping thief’ (305) closing in on his ‘boot’, and the latches on the door are but ‘poor forbiddings’ (323), powerless to arrest his advance. Tarquin’s steps actually measure out time; obstacles on his way are as ineffectual as bars on the dial of a clock are to stop the advance of the hands:

> The doors, the wind, the glove, that did delay him,
> He takes for accidental things of trial;
> Or *as those bars which stop the hourly dial,*
> Who with a ling’ring stay his course doth let,
> *Till every minute pays the hour his debt.*
>
> 325-9

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[118] Interestingly, Iwasaki, who devoted some space in his book to *Lucrece*, does not comment on Tarquin’s falchion, although in a chapter on *Richard III* he proposes identifying Richard’s sword with the youth-cropping Saturn-Time known from the sonnets. ‘Symbolically Richard’s sword is Saturn’s sickle, and Richard ... can be identified with “this bloody tyrant Time” of Sonnet 16, the image of Saturn-Time who lords it over the sublunary world of time. We can justifiably affirm that Richard ... with his destructive sword in his hand, is Shakespeare’s dramatic version of Saturn-Time.’ (*The Sword* ..., pp. 53-4).

Tarquin's evil intent conforms to the time of day conventionally befitting it. It is clear for Lucrece that he personifies the nefarious union of Time and Night: '"Were Tarquin Night, as he is but Night's child..."' (785).

> *Now stole upon the time the dead of night,*
> When heavy sleep had closed up mortal eyes;
> No comfortable star did lend his light,
> No noise but owls' and wolves' death-boding cries.
> Now serves the *season* that they may *surprise*
> The silly lambs. Pure thoughts are *dead and still,*
> While lust and murder *wake to stain and kill.*
>
> 162-8

Similar nocturnal imagery will be used in *Macbeth.*[119] Tarquin's awareness of the opportune moment which has to be seized brings to mind the idea of *kairos*: his long awaited moment of fulfilment must come as surely as spring follows winter.

> 'So, so', quoth he, 'these lets *attend the time,*
> Like little *frosts* that sometime threat the *spring,*
> To add a more rejoicing to the *prime,*
> And give the sneapèd birds more cause to sing.'
>
> 329-33

There must have been a powerful allure for Shakespeare in the totality of one image of evil, of which Tarquin is merely one element: Time, Occasion, and the 'uncheerful Night' (1024), in one of Lucrece's outbursts. This totality of the flawed *kairos* is made up of night, of imperceptible progress (suggestive of the movement of the hands on a clock's face), and of impending corruption.[120] The negative affixes added to the stem 'time' indicate overwhelming deviant desire.[121] Working his mischief, the villain collaborates with time, yet then falls prey to it. He steals in, like Time, only soon to be robbed himself:

> This momentary joy breeds months of pain;
> This hot desire converts to cold disdain:
> Pure Chastity is rifled of her store,
> And *Lust, the thief* far poorer than before.
>
> 690-3

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[119] Cf. below, the discussion of *Macbeth* in Chapter 4.1.

[120] The most telling reverberation of this cluster of motifs is found in Sonnet 77.7: 'Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know/Time's thievish progress to eternity.'

[121] The time-sense conspiring with wickedness is well known from the Sonnets; cf. 129 ('The expense of spirit in a waste of shame').

Chastity, honour, let alone carnal satisfaction — nothing endures. 'Rash false heat, wrapped in repentant cold, / Thy *hasty spring* still blasts and *ne'er grows old*!' (48-9). The ravisher leaves as furtively as he arrived, 'like a thievish dog creeps sadly thence' (734), 'through the dark night he stealeth, / A captive victor that hath lost in gain' (728-30). Tarquin 'faintly flies', 'runs' — his movements and actions largely imitate time itself. Whatever the manner of his 'flight' from the scene of the trespass, he is fated to be time's fool.

2.1.4. O time, cease thou thy course

Let us return briefly to the motif of personification. The Cambridge editor comments on the 'remorseless wrinkles' in Tarquin's face (cf. 562), writing that the expression 'connotes age and unregenerate sin'.[122] Pity, he continues, 'is associated with the unblemished condition of a naked new-born babe'. Associations with emblematic Time (cf. Sonnet 19 and 'old Time' and Sonnet 100 for 'wrinkles') become obvious. Lucrece's spoiled prime is the causal counterpart of the theft-metaphor. Both Tarquin and his victim have undergone the peculiar metamorphosis of untimely ageing. Their conflict gradually comes to resemble a psychomachia within one soul where regenerative time militates against entropic time. Complains Lucrece,

> 'My honey lost, and I a drone-like bee,
> Have no perfection of my summer left,
> But robbed and ransacked by injurious theft.'
>
> 835-7

The bee distils the aestival perfections of the flower — a motif known from the Sonnets. Lucrece, however, rejects the possibility of ever bearing Tarquin's offspring, thinking of the bastard-child she might have conceived:

> 'This bastard graff shall never come to growth:
> He shall not boast, who did thy stock pollute,
> That thou art doting father of his fruit.'
>
> 1062-4

Organic time is not unaffected by human actions. Refusal to procreate confounds the flow of time. (Cf. 'barren rage of death's eternal cold' in Sonnet 13.) Lucrece rejects the chance of reproductive life-extension. In her oath against procreation she rebels against augmentative time.

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[122] Roe, ed., *The Poems*, p. 171.

Lineage, nuptial loyalty, and the legitimacy of progeny — all are motifs thematically woven into most of Shakespeare's plays, and not only the so-called 'domestic' dramas. In the relatively wide social context of the epic, the organic imagery takes on additional significance. Lucrece's oaths against procreation, delivered as they are as a speech to her husband and those that accompany him, have, apart from the stagey energy characteristic of Shakespeare's dramatic dialogue, a distinct ontological meaning. As Roe suggests, 'the thought belongs to the recurrent idea of lineage and inheritance since cuckoldry threatens...the prospect of an illegitimate heir'.[123] Lucrece's suicide has the same time-halting effect. Towards the end of the poem, old Lucretius bemoans his daughter's death in lines whose rhetoric is reminiscent of the procreation sequence of the Sonnets. In Sonnet 3 the mother in her son's appearance 'Calls back the lovely April of her prime'; and the youth 'through windows of [his] age shall see, /...[his] golden time'. The mirror is another conventional attribute of Time; 'the mirror' — writes Panofsky — 'finally became a typical symbol of transience equally frequent in art...and in literature'.[124] Panofsky goes on to give Shakespeare's Sonnets 3 and 77 (at least two more qualify: 22 and 62), as well as *Richard II* (IV.i), as evidence, ignoring a number of lines in *Lucrece* (1758 ff) which expand this motif. Here, however, the order of things has been dramatically subverted. Unnaturally, 'children predecease progenitors' (1757); the father comes to see, in the dead body of his daughter, his old age instead of his prime:

> 'If children predecease progenitors,
> We are their offspring, and they none of ours.
>
> 'Poor broken glass, I often did behold
> In thy sweet semblance my old age new born;
> But now that fresh fair mirror, dim and old,
> Shows me a bare-boned death by time out-worn.
> O from thy cheeks my image thou hast torn,
> And shivered all the beauty of my glass,
> That I no more can see what once I was'
>
> 1756-64

The seeming antilogy, explored poetically in the mourning scene of *Romeo and Juliet* (IV.v), shares its dialectic with the Sonnets. The common motif is the belief that his offspring revive the ageing 'progenitor'. No wonder, then, that, seeing an only child is dead, the parent anticipates his own decline and ultimate demise. As before, Lucrece's body is emblematic of time's destructive action. This, too, explains the astounding transformation: the corpse becomes a looking glass wherein her father espies entropy. The mourning is rounded off with a fitting apostrophe:

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[123] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

[124] Panofsky, 'Father Time', p. 82.

> 'O time, cease thou thy course and last no longer,
> If they surcease to be that should survive.'
>
> 1765-6

2.1.5. The giddy round of Fortune's wheel

Another of our themes is that of the wheel of time. This cluster-idea covers a wide range of subordinate notions, all of which point to a common ontological archetype. The wheel of time may not be, contrary to some opinions,[125] Shakespeare's overriding image: nonetheless various motifs of cyclicity and circularity play an important role, and not only in his poetry.

Cyclicity in Nature can be depicted by a number of wheels: the wheel of diurnal cycles, of seasonal changes, of generation and corruption. Time is conceived as a circle, an idea that seems to guarantee stability in the eternal flux of all things. 'This also is why — writes Aristotle — time is thought to be the movement of the sphere, viz. because the other movements are measured by this, and time by this movement. This also explains the common saying that human affairs form a circle, and that there is a circle in all other things that have a natural movement and coming into being and passing away. This is because all other things are discriminated by time, and end and begin as though conforming to a cycle; for even time itself is thought to be a circle.'[126] The circle seems always to have been an archetypal image of time. In Iwasaki we find the following comment on Time's Wheel:

> The common factor among all these deities . . . is the image of a turning wheel; the wheel of Nature is . . . the Wheel of Life, which originally comes from the cycle of generation, or the generative cycle of vegetable and animal life; and therefore the wheel of Nature is directly related to the wheel of Time that comes from almost the same kind of cyclical movements in natural phenomena including the cyclical movements of celestial bodies and the resulting recurrences of days-and-nights, and of seasons; the change of seasons from summer to winter again brings the wheel of Time very close to the wheel of Fortune, which causes the ups and downs of man's life.[127]

The basic wheel, that of the natural cycles, indicates both mutability and cyclicity, or stability amidst change. Seasonal changes and the daily journey of the sun across the sky are conspicuous and puzzling. Writes James Frazer, 'The spectacle of the great changes which annually pass over the face of the earth has powerfully impressed the minds of men in all ages, and stirred them to meditate on the causes of transformations so vast and wonderful.'[128] Shakespeare's copious use of the images of natural cycles owes a lot to Ovid. The story of Phaëton from Book II of the *Metamorphoses* finds many renderings, as in Sonnet 7. A notable dramatic employment of this myth is found in *Richard II.* For now let us observe that there is no overstatement in ascribing ontological meaning to the wheel of time, although some particular formulations in the context of a philosophical discourse may sound trivial.[129]

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[125] Cf. Fabiny, 'The Wheel . . .', *passim*.
[126] Aristotle, *Physics*, Book IV, 223 b.
[127] Iwasaki, *The Sword* . . ., p. 31-2.

In Shakespeare, the wheel-motif appears in various patterns of cyclicity. Sometimes a number of such patterns intertwine to construct a single poetic argument. In Sonnet 7, the image of seasonal changes complements that of the diurnal cycle. Admiration is a natural response to the sun-Phoebus journeying across the sky. During this 'pilgrimage' the sun reaches its meridian, which apparently earns the poet's praise. Afterwards, however, the route leads downwards, to collapse and decline. The Sun is itself subdued by Time, but will rise again. The finishing wordplay on Sun/son (or Sunne/sonne, in Shakespeare's spelling) in: 'Unless thou get a son,' contains an undertone of optimism: beauty is regenerative and renewable.[130] Thus the wheel finds another application in images expressing organic time, and especially in those representing the natural cycle of procreation, of births and deaths. Shakespeare uses the image of the generative cycle to warn against the fleetingness of beauty, which he conceives as the being-in-perfection, the moment of ontological fullness close to Aristotle's *entelechia.* This is further coupled with the motif of Occasion. In Sonnet 5, the short-lasting prime can be measured in 'hours', which soon 'prove tyrants' unless the fleeting Occasion is seized for the propagation of beauty. The imagery of seasons helps to drive the point home: summer does not stay but 'leads on to hideous winter'. Further still, organic or natural time is used to formulate the claim to poetic immortality. Cyclicity has a sustaining impact on things; regeneration countervails deterioration. Renewability is the only way to ensure continuity.

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[128] J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (Wordsworth Reference, 1994), p. 324.

[129] The following example from Heidegger is a case in point: 'With the factical disclosedness of Dasein's world, Nature has been uncovered for Dasein. In its thrownness Dasein has been surrendered to the changes of day and night. Day with its brightness gives it the possibility of sight; night takes this away.' (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, p. 412. Page numbers refer to the German original of 1927.) What makes good poetry evidently fails to make deep philosophy.

[130] On the identification of Time with the Sun cf. Panofsky, 'Father Time', p. 79.

Finally, cyclicity can be evoked on a more fundamental poetical level: that of a single poem, or even a single line. We could also collect general statements that reflect the concept of Time's cyclicity, or the law of returns. This is the case in the following conjunctive balancing of parallels in *Lucrece*:

> 'To wake the morn and sentinel the night,...
> 'To dry the old oak's sap, and cherish springs...
> And turn the giddy round of Fortune's wheel;
> 'To show the beldam *daughters* of her *daughter*,
> To make the *child* a *man*, the *man* a *child*.
>
> 942-54

To transcend the confines of the merely rhetorical emulation of the wheel of time, the sonnets offer a sophisticated meta-poetic treatment of the idea of cyclicity. The speaker inscribes his claim to immortal fame into natural cycles, which are treated as a rich source for metaphors. That poetic immortality emulates biological regeneration and propagation is perhaps best seen in these two lines from Sonnet 100: 'Return forgetful Muse, and straight redeem / In gentle numbers time so idly spent.' Although no editorial gloss known to me addresses this aspect, the suggestion of circularity in the very prefix, '*re*turn', '*re*deem' is of primary significance. A fit response to the recurrent labouring of the Muse is the repeated reading or refiguration. Sonnet 81 gives this idea a cogent formulation and a plain shape. The cyclicity of reading is evoked by '*re*hearse' = 'recite, recount, bury again',[131] and 'o'er-read' = 'read again and again'.[132] The strength of the immortality claim consists in the fact that it involves the temporal dimension of composition and reception, or prefiguration and refiguration in Ricoeur's terminology. The claim reaches beyond representation and persuasion based on rhetorical reiteration, and connects with actuality in much the same manner as does the theatrical performance.[133]

2.1.6. To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light

When it comes to expressing the idea of time as redeemer and revealer, organic time is once more called upon to supply the imagery. The poet is often on the lookout for natural analogues when he endeavours to depict defection from the sublime Platonic ideal of abiding beauty, as in Sonnet 94, which contains the famous line on festering lilies.[134] In such a context, organic time is given a double role to perform: it triggers the process of festering, yet it also helps the inner truth to come to light. But the context can be much broader than that.

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[131] Booth, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 278.

[132] G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Sonnets*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 188. I have given an analysis of this aspect in a wider context in my article 'Poor Retention...'.

[133] Cf. Mydla, 'Poor Retention', pp. 159-60.

Iwasaki finds in both *Lucrece* and the Sonnets 'unmistakable proof to Shakespeare's concern for the idea of Time as redeemer and father of Truth'.[135] *Lucrece* contains lines expressing this conventional notion: 'Time's glory is . . . / To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light' (939-40). Time the Revealer, an idea which commands tremendous dramatic potential (Sophocles in his *Oedipus* was one of the first to tap it), even by itself renders sensible most of the action of *Lucrece*. To succeed in his assault, Tarquin keeps pact with Night, and sets a trap of 'shadows' and 'counterfeits' (cf. Sonnet 53).[136] Opportunity makes it possible for the villain to pursue his ill intent and thereby expose his corrupt inside and earn everlasting condemnation. Tarquin becomes 'Time's fool', and Time will be the ultimate executor of his punishment.

Although the association between truth and natural growth is often troped in the Sonnets, its potential is more fully explored in *Lucrece*. 'How will thy shame be seeded in thine age,' — expostulates Lucrece — 'When thus thy vices bud before thy spring!' (603-4). The trope evokes organic time ('be seeded' = 'be full-grown'),[137] and this connection between truth coming to light and natural growth will provide many plays with an effective imaginative anticipation structure. The lines quoted above about a flower meeting base infection contain the nucleus of the story's moral, as well as the logic by which the villain ends up doomed and the victim self-condemned. The heroine shares anxiety over the coming of the 'revealing day' with Macbeth (1086), and the urge to 'purge [her] impure tale' pushes her to suicide. The imaginative impact of the rhetoric is linked up with concrete time to produce a powerful dramatic effect. This brings us to the problem of the temporal value of rhetoric in the poems.

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[134] 'But if that flower with base infection meet, / The basest weed outbraves his dignity: / For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds; / Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.'

[135] Cf. Iwasaki, *The Sword . . .*, p. 195.

[136] For summer as a truth-disclosing period cf. Sonnet 54. 'Summer' is also evoked in the lines from *Lucrece* already quoted (837). According to the Cambridge editor, it can mean either 'my personal glory' or 'my prime time' and there seems to be an analogy with Sonnet 94: 'The summer's flower is to the summer sweet, / Though to itself it only live and die, / But if that flower with base infection meet, / The basest weed outbraves his dignity.'

[137] Roe, ed., *The Poems*, p. 173.

2.2. The time of rhetoric

2.2.1. Attending time's leisure

We shall start our analysis of the second aspect of the poetry by looking at a motif which will have direct bearing on our analyses of the plays, that of emotional compliance with the rhythms of time. Strictly speaking, the Sonnets do not represent time. The sheer wealth of motifs and the abundance of tropes would explode any representation. Instead, they refigure time by means of a rhetorical argument. However, in some instances the poet gets very close to an almost narrative portrayal of duration, and this will now be our concern.

Scarce as the mimesis of time in the Sonnets may be, they do address the problem of the emotional colouring of time's progress. Seasonal changes provide an imaginary background for the alternation of absences and reunions, as in Sonnet 97 with its theme of interpersonal rhythms that lend time a psychological undertone. Time spent apart from the beloved counts as lost and has to be 'beguiled' (Sonnet 39). The presence and absence of another person bestow value upon time and the valorisation of natural rhythms changes accordingly. 'Night' takes on a new meaning and signifies temporal stasis brought about by the beloved's absence (Sonnet 27). Moments of happiness are like short sunny spells whereas the vicissitudes of fortune are likened to changeable weather (cf. Sonnet 33); a favourable look revives affection.

Apart from these motifs, some of the Sonnets poetically rework 'typically dramatic' situations and experiences. Sonnet 44, probing boldly into 'thought travel', shows that the dramatic telescoping of time had for Shakespeare also other values than the purely technical. Telescoping seems to have stemmed from the poet's insight into how time is experienced. The sonnet deserves to be quoted in full:

> If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
> Injurious distance should not stop my way;
> For then, despite of space, I would be brought,
> From limits far remote where thou dost stay.
> No matter then although my foot did stand
> Upon the farthest earth removed from thee;
> For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,
> As soon as think the place where he would be.
> But, ah, thought kills me that I am not thought
> To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
> But that, so much of earth and water wrought,
> I must attend time's leisure with my moan.
> Receiving nought by elements so slow
> But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

Sonnet 44

This poem charts lived time, time intimately connected with space and all that fills it. The mind is naturally prone to telescoping or compressing lengths of time. An obvious human deficiency, man's inability to thought-travel, naturally becomes an abundant structural resource for the drama, which presupposes and depicts at least some basic forms of social interaction and transmission. The topographic arrangement of individuals, their actual placement in the represented world, prescribes access to the means of communication. Sustaining social exchange, these means have a direct influence on the deployment of dramatic time inasmuch as dramatic action can be regarded in terms of physical distance. Various degrees of proximity and remoteness between the participating characters make up the ontological basis for the mimesis in drama. Particular actions involve shifts within the socially defined space (the fictive world of the drama) and as such necessitate and trigger the deployment of the mimesis of time.

In Sonnets 51 and 52, the representation of time is exceptional for its narrative verisimilitude. The horse's plodding onwards measures the rider's time. There is a bitter discrepancy between the actual pace and the covering of the same distance in the mind. This relativity of time is one of Shakespeare's recurrent ideas, known chiefly from Rosalind's adage in *As You Like It*. However, poetic and dramatic uses of this concept exceed the confines of any single play. The 'time-scape' of a passionate lover can have various emotional shades. In many a dramatic situation, the represented time absorbs the colouring of the underlying emotion. Rather than being an abstract vacuum-continuum, time is filled with dynamic being (cf. 'million'd accidents' in Sonnet 115). This lived time or filled duration is contrasted with empty or linear time, the object of Bergson's critique.[138] Once more we become convinced that ideas regarded by some as characteristic of tragic time can be discovered 'already' in Shakespeare's poetry.

The line 'I must attend time's leisure' in Sonnet 44 makes it clear that space and time are both at issue. The poet dwells on the spatiotemporal dimension of a particular instance of the existential thrownness, to borrow a term from Heidegger's fundamental ontology.[139] As can be observed in *Richard II* for instance, Shakespeare decided to bring onto the stage this predicament of the speaker of the sonnets and to show a protagonist living on borrowed time. In 57 and 58, the lover becomes a time-slave to his love:

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[138] The notion of phenomenal time was developed by Roman Ingarden in the context of works of art (cf. his *The Work of Music and the Problem of Its Identity*, trans. Adam Czerniawski, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 66 and 70; cf. also Ingarden, *The Cognition*..., p. 105). It goes back to Bergson's concept of duration. The terms 'lived' and 'durative' time are used by Sypher in *The Ethic of Time*...

[139] In my interpretation thrownness would denote the inescapable involvement of human existence in a given spatiotemporal context.

> Being your slave, what should I do but tend
> Upon the hours and times of your desire?
> I have no precious time at all to spend,
> Nor services to do, till you require.
> Nor dare I chide the world without end hour
> Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
> Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
> When you have bid your servant once adieu.
>
> Sonnet 57

Emotional time is thus embedded in a social context. Duration seems to be erratically pliant to the point of almost infinite extension, as personal time can be disowned, bestowed upon others, given away. This temporal deprivation simultaneously exposes empty time, detected on the clock-dial. The lyric 'I' is bitterly aware of the passing of time where even the tiniest particles are descried and reckoned. This lyric context invokes the personalised time, Time the Sovereign. Just as Time exerts its prerogatives over man's life, the beloved reigns over his or her lover. One of these prerogatives is dispossession, hence the imagery of thieving: in the lover's absence (troped as 'stealing away'), one encounters time's thievish progress (cf. Sonnet 92). The formula lover = Time obtains for some of the Sonnets (cf. Sonnets 90-3), but further variations on this theme will be analysed in concrete dramatic contexts.

2.2.2. This helpless smoke of words

Predictably, the representation of time in *Lucrece* is far more complex than in the Sonnets. The difference seems to lie in the principle of the narrative structure of *Lucrece*, namely the principle of causal-temporal succession: Collatine's praise of his wife awakens Tarquin's desire; desire causes Tarquin to visit Lucrece; the rape stirs up his remorse and escape and this, in turn, incites the victim to self-reproach and eventually leads her to suicide; the rape and the suicide inspire vengeance. However, this is not where one will detect the hand of the poet reworking the material.

The story of the rape of Lucrece has both a historical context (Rome in the 6th century BC) and a long literary tradition.[140] A prose account of the sequence *precedes* the poem in the form of a brief outline called the Argument:

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[140] The Roman sources are Livy's history of Rome (*Ab Urbe Condita*) and Ovid's *Fasti*. John Roe, 'Introduction', in *idem*, ed., *The Poems*, *op. cit.*, p. 39. A passage of around 200 lines devoted to the incident is found in Chaucer's *Legends of Good Women*.

> Lucius Tarquinius...after he had caused his own father-in-law Servius Tullius to be cruelly murdered, and...had possessed himself of the kingdom, went, accompanied with his sons and other noblemen of Rome, to besiege Ardea. During which siege the principal men of the army meeting one evening at the tent of Sextus Tarquinius, the king's son, in their discourses after supper every one commended the virtues of his own wife....They posted to Rome; and intending...to make trial of that which every one had before avouched, only Collatinus finds his wife...spinning amongst her maids....Whereupon the noblemen yielded Collatinus the victory, and his wife the fame. At that time Sextus Tarquinius being inflamed with Lucrece' beauty, yet smothering his passions for the present, departed with the rest back to the camp; from whence he shortly after privily withdrew himself, and was...royally entertained and lodged by Lucrece at Collatium. The same night he treacherously stealeth into her chamber, violently ravished her, and early in the morning speedeth away. Lucrece...hastily dispatcheth messengers, one to Rome for her father, another to the camp for Collatine. They came, the one accompanied with Junius Brutus, the other with Publius Valerius; and finding Lucrece attired in mourning habit, demanded the cause of her sorrow. She, first taking an oath of them for her revenge, revealed the actor...and withal suddenly stabbed herself. Which done, with one consent they all vowed to root out the whole hated family of the Tarquins;...

The fact that the reader is thus briefed on the sequence of events which are then to be poetically depicted highlights the fact that Shakespeare's preoccupation is something different from the plot or the mere chronological and causal ordering of events. It is left to the Argument meticulously to establish chronology. Some seek Shakespeare's preoccupation in the emphasis he places on the heroine and her response to the abuse she suffers, a novelty in the long tradition of artistic treatments of the legend.[141] However, besides any thematic shift of concern, one very distinctive feature is to be discovered in the construction. This feature concerns Shakespeare's observance of the dramatic unities and the abundant use of direct speech, which makes up over half of the body of the entire poem (970 out of 1855 lines).

As for the unity of time, Shakespeare adheres to the 24-hour time-span of the source narrative: from Tarquin's arrival at Collatium to Lucrece's suicide. Yet he does not do so in order to narrate more effectively. The typically dramatic employment of rhetoric is meant to fill the gaps between major events and to render time's progress palpable. Both indicate the narrator's anxiety to create a backdrop illusion of filled duration. The contrast between the prosaic Argument and its poetic interpretation consists also in the fact that in the latter we can detect a dramatist's concern about how the reader refigures time during the process of reception.

A line-count shows that in *Lucrece* the amount of direct speech exceeds that of simple narration. In the first part of the poem, preceding the rape, Tarquin soliloquies on his motivation (around 100 lines; between 181-357), then a dialogue ensues between the victim and the rapist (around 155 lines of their dispute: Tarquin 70, Lucrece 85 lines; between 477-672). After Tarquin's departure, Lucrece frenziedly gropes for some verbal means to cleanse the stigma of disgrace. Her rhetoric turns not only against the perpetrator, but also against any verbal comfort. She takes long to scold Time and Opportunity, reprimanding the former for not doing his 'office' (414 lines, from 747 to 1211). Then she sends messengers to fetch Collatine, her husband. Awaiting his arrival, she contemplates the picture of the sack of Troy, delivering a mixture of pictorial description and moral evaluation (50 lines, from 1464 to 1560). When her husband arrives, Lucrece gives an account of the rape and then takes her life (79 lines, from 1612 to 1722). An ironically inappropriate dispute ensues, in which Collatine and Lucrece's father put on an inordinate competition in mourning (31 lines in all, between 1751-1804). The finishing lines belong to Brutus and his summons to revenge (24 lines, 1818-41).

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[141] Cf. Roe, 'Introduction', p. 39.

Criticism has generally regarded as baffling and blameworthy the fact that the rhetorical embroidery which the source story receives seems to be at odds with the subject matter, especially in the latter part where Lucrece takes a long while to contemplate the painting of the sack of Troy. Here, instead of following the rhythm of the events (the speeding messenger and the homecoming husband) the poet has chosen to abide with the stranded martyr. Lucrece's centrepiece complaint has been called 'one of the most extended tragic utterances attributed to a woman in English Renaissance literature'.[142] By comparison, Ovid's Lucrece is utterly mute, which is what gives the rendition of rape in the *Fasti* narrative a unique force. To some scholars 'narrative pauses' in *Lucrece* 'seem an artificial and stilted slowing of the action'[143], a criticism that strongly resembles that of the over-use rhetoric in drama (cf. Kujawińska-Courtney's expression: 'a stilted diegetic description ... slowing the movement of the action'). It is my belief that such attacks ought to be underpinned by sufficient clarity over the fundamental distinction between dramatic and narrative uses of speech. It would be nothing short of a methodological shortcoming to analyse Shakespeare's plays, especially his Roman series, with regard to their dramatic arrangement of the 'mimetic' and 'diegetic' components without first analysing them in their pre-thespian state in the narrative organisation of *Lucrece*.

Although the poem lends itself to fruitful narrative analyses, as shown by Hart and Rawdon Wilson, we have to be aware that there is a difference of perspective between a narrative analysis and a time analysis, and the latter is of course here our principal concern. First, however, it must be noted that neither Hart nor Rawdon Wilson succeeded in making clear what makes *Lucrece* a narrative poem. This deficiency is especially palpable in Rawdon Wilson, who pledges his determination to reveal the narrative uniqueness of the poem, and downplays the work's dramatic function even in the numerous cases where the narrative is embedded in a dramatic fabric.[144] However, given the conspicuous mimesis of time in *Lucrece*, the importance of any mode of narrative ought to be obvious. If the mimetic potential of a narrative becomes blurred, then in consequence the difference between lyric and epic, fundamental for any narrative analysis, also collapses. Such a confusion of genre distinctions makes Rawdon Wilson conclude that rhetoric is the actual subject of the poem.[145] Our previous analysis shows that time in *Lucrece* acquires superimposed meanings conferred by both the principal narrator and the characters — the result of the ample use of rhetorical tropes and emblematic motifs.[146] Principally, however, time here is depicted as duration, which is evoked to arouse dramatic suspense, as in 'sable night, mother of dread and fear' (117). Thus the elapsing of time is simultaneously put through the 'filter' of rhetoric and given allegorical or emblematic proportions. Both the passing of time and its images are essential for the construction of the fictive world in narrative and dramatic works. They operate in unison to precipitate the narrative. Criticism levelled 'against' stilted passages rests on the assumption that narration in an epic ought to follow the dramatic principle of precipitation. Unlike in a lyric, representation ought to rule over rhetoric: While the sonnet creates a lyric stasis, an epic poem conjures up a dynamic succession. The sheer proportion between 'simple' narration and direct speech, the number of lines devoted to each being almost equal, substantiates the mediating position of *Lucrece* between poetry and drama. The fact, for instance, that 273 lines are assigned to Lucrece's complaint after the rape testifies to Shakespeare's double interest in the execution of the poem: poetic as well as dramatic.

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[142] Philippa Berry, 'Woman, Language, and History in *The Rape of Lucrece*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 44 (1991), p. 34.

[143] Roe, 'Introduction' in *idem*, ed., *The Poems*, p. 29.

This is not all. As we have seen earlier, a rhetorical flourish following a rape, as in the case of Marcus' speech in *Titus*, risks censure as being simply indecorous. Is the situation any different in *Lucrece*, where the victim is the complainer? The reader, encouraged by the heroine, despairs of the smoke of words ever being able to substitute for moral reckoning:

> 'In vain I rail at Opportunity,
> At Time, at Tarquin, and uncheerful Night;...

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[144] Wilson, 'Shakespearean Narrative...', p. 41.

[145] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[146] On the variety of narrators in the poem cf. Jonathan Hart, 'Narratorial Strategies in *The Rape of Lucrece*', *Studies in English Literature*, 32 (1992), pp. 59-77.

> This helpless smoke of words doth me no right.
> The remedy indeed to do me good
> Is to let forth my foul defiled blood.'
>
> 1023-9

This declaration of the bankruptcy of rhetoric as a means of comfort highlights the poem's self-reflexive thrust. It simultaneously reveals the dramatic undercurrent of the entire poem, its anxiety over duration, and its metapoetic analogue, the author's anxiety over the temporal economy of his work.

2.2.3. How slow time goes in time of sorrow

The lines just quoted, as well as other references to the emotive value of time, allow for an important observation. The rhetoric of Time has also a mimetic function to perform; it is a mode of the passing of time in the fictive world of the story. The principal narrator, Lucrece, and, occasionally, the other characters, realise that time is flowing constantly, which in its turn affects the process of reading (refiguration). The realistic portrayal of passing time is enhanced by the use of time references. For instance, after Tarquin arrives at Lucrece's house, a conversation between them ensues and continues 'till sable night' (117): 'For, after supper, long he questioned / With modest Lucrece, and wore out the night' (122-4). More important still is the way in which Shakespeare deploys temporal mimesis by delaying narration with rhetoric and second-hand description. In the rape scene, Tarquin relishes the interval, making Lucrece languish in agonising apprehension (477 ff): 'Yet, foul night-walking cat, [Tarquin] doth but dally, / While in his hold-fast foot the weak mouse panteth' (554). He takes sadistic delight in her harrowed anticipation of the impending ordeal. His passion swells like flood until he is no longer able to endure verbal deceleration:

> 'Have done,' quoth he, 'my uncontrolled *tide*
> Turns not, but swells the higher by this let.'
>
> 645-6

This remark has a double function. Technically, it contains yet another justification of the prolongation of the exchange of rhetorical arguments. Apart from that, it reveals what emotionally (and physiologically) goes on in the characters as they speak. Finally, Tarquin cuts short another of Lucrece's pleas (645-6) in a way similar to the many incidents of mouth-stopping in

Titus Andronicus, to recall once more the closest dramatic parallel.[147] In a similar manner, Lucrece interrupts her own speech later on, when she finds her protestations ineffective (1023 ff), at which point she begins to contemplate suicide. The painful reflection on the rape is accompanied by a time reference: 'Revealing day through every cranny spies' (1086). Indeed, many examples can be found of passages in which more direct references represent commonplace time and effect the accompanying dramatic precipitation.

Along with time references, the significant elements are, conventionally, the manner and speed of travel and the circulation of news. When Lucrece intends to inform her husband of the rape, both the letter and the messenger assume the characteristics of the 'winged' Time:

> 'Bid him *with speed* prepare to carry it;
> The cause *craves haste*, and it will soon be writ.'
>
> 1294-5
>
> Her letter now is sealed, and on it writ,
> 'At Ardea to my lord *with more than haste*.'
> The post attends, and she delivers it,
> Charging the sour-faced groom *to hie as fast*
> *As lagging fowls before the northern blast*;
> *Speed more than speed but dull and slow she deems*:
> Extremity still urgeth such extremes.
>
> 1331-7

Lucrece's command, 'Bid [the messenger] *with speed* prepare to carry [the letter]', is symptomatically ambiguous due to the central placement of the adverbial phrase. We cannot be certain whether 'with speed' refers to the manner of delivering the message to the messenger, to the preparation for his journey, or to the conveying of the letter. In any case, human actions simulate the action of time. Finally, the brevity of the message and the haste accompanying its transmission are counterpoised by a reminder that the inner world of misery is informed by a different time-sense: 'My woes are tedious, though my words are brief' (1309).

The pause between the sending of the letter and the return of the messenger is not a blank gap. Nor is much telescoping involved. Here Shakespeare uses an inset in the role of filler. In the interval that is required for 'offstage' business, Lucrece contemplates the picture depicting the sack of Troy. This is also where Shakespeare's dramatisation of the story seems to leave off, to be resumed with Collatine's arrival. On the other hand, Shakespeare seems anxious to keep to the dramatic unities. The narrator does not accompany

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[147] Cf. Jacek Mydla, '*Titus Andronicus* or the Dramatisation of Wildness', in Wojciech Kalaga & Tadeusz Rachwał (eds.), *The Wild and the Tame*: *Essays in Cultural Practice* (Katowice, 1997), p. 66.

Tarquin in his hasty departure following the rape. Nor does he make the reader accompany the messenger from Lucrece to Collatine, as would probably be the case if the story were cast as drama. The reader cannot choose but keep Lucrece company until the return of Collatine.

Naturally, this interval is tedious, wearisome in its woefulness. It is as if the reader were invited to share the experience, to 'mark how slow time goes / In time of sorrow' (991; cf. also 1573, 'Short time seems long in sorrow's sharp sustaining'). Our appreciation of this temporal realism will depend, quite paradoxically, on whether we find the reading process as tedious as Lucrece does her hours of mourning:

> But *long* she thinks till he return again,
> And yet the duteous vassal scarce is gone.
> The *weary time* she cannot entertain,...
>
> 1359-61

The reader 'watches' scenes from the sack of Troy and simultaneously 'listens' to Lucrece's lamentations (1496-8). As if to compensate for this narrative stasis, the world in the picture assumes epic dimensions when contemplated and commented on by Lucrece. A multi-level narrative runs parallel to a multi-level narrative time: the embedded narrative of the painting and Lucrece's self-reflexive comments. Shakespeare's time-mimetic concern demands that the duration be felt psychologically long enough to make the messenger's return plausible and 'timely'. The inertia of Lucrece's 'time of woe' (cf. 1569-75) does the trick very well. Finally, the narrator is able to comment:

> Which all this time hath overslipped her thought
> That she with painted images hath spent...
>
> 1576-7

With the arrival of the messenger, enough phenomenal time has elapsed for the story to resume its former pace. The playwright-turned-poet, or rather poet-turned-playwright, is obviously well aware of how fictional time influences the sense of time's passing in the recipient.

Conclusions

Time in the Sonnets seems static. In the epic, and perhaps also in drama, time as theme may recede into the background but it simultaneously becomes tangibly present: through the narrative sequence in an epic, and through the dramatic suspense in a play. In the Sonnets, however, time's nature is set forth verbally, and still the Sonnets are far from being petrified depictions of time's properties. Rather, they take a dynamic attitude to time whose significance and uniqueness ought to be recognised. The sonnet enhances memory with prosody and rhyme. Even a very simple repetition of certain sounds at metrically organised intervals imposes order on the process of reading: time cannot erase all because those sounds that have already resounded are still ringing. The sonnet becomes a machine for the suppression of time.[148] However, the functions of lyric and of the narrative vary with respect to how they affect our experience of time. In an epic, time is filled with events which are ordered according to the principle of causal rather than rhetorical connection and continuation. Initially at least, a reader of *Lucrece* encounters time through both rhetoric and narrative representation as well as through speech imitating time's flow.

Lucrece allows us to experience something different still: the disturbing discrepancy between the temporality of the plot and its actual poetic rendition. That *Lucrece* has rhetoric for its real hero is not a point with which we have taken issue. The above discrepancy arises out of the poet's awareness of the temporal qualities of language. Certain passages in *Lucrece* perform a time-extending function. They are time-fillers or instances of padding, to use Raysor's term. That this is achieved thanks to a peculiar reflexivity is an achievement in its own right. In her complaint Lucrece seeks to make time stop by addressing and evoking it. Soon she realises that such endeavour is bound to fail. In this way, the poem makes time mimetically present as well as verbally portrayed. Poetic language keeps company with the afflicted; language is a principal time-filler and companion in distress.

In *Lucrece* we are able to sense an employment of time which is characteristically dramaturgical:

1. time-references help produce the chronological-causal succession, settling events within a definite period of so many hours;
2. time is endowed with conceptual-imaginative (iconographic) meaning; thanks to a wide range of poetic and rhetorical means time transcends chronology and causality, enriches characterisation and, especially in the first part of the poem, precipitates the narrated action;
3. mimetic or direct representation of time is foregrounded by the suggestion of dramatic exploitation of rhetoric and embedded narration, both of which intensify the reader's awareness of time's presence and direct action in the fictional world of the narrative; not only is rhetoric involved in producing verisimilitude but, in addition, sequential and

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[148] Cf. Robert C. Ketterer, 'Machines for the Suppression of Time: Statues in *Suor Angelica, The Winter's Tale*, and *Alcestis*', *Comparative Drama*, 24 (Spring 1990), no. 1, pp. 3-23.

causal representations of events enhance the significance of rhetorical devices; the relations between the above aspects are further complicated by the interplay of various narrative modes: the principal narrator, characters as narrators, and the two different modes of speech: direct and indirect.

These conclusions will have direct bearing on our subsequent analysis of verbalised time in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

3. Comic time

3.1. Verbalised time in the exposition of *Love's Labour's Lost*

3.1.1. Spite of cormorant devouring Time

Mable Buland does not give any particular time-scheme of the action of *Love's Labour's Lost*. He does however mention some important aspects of the presentation of time in this early comedy. These are: 'the centralising of the action upon the dinner-hour ... and the insistent presentation of the previous scene as "just now", "not half an hour since" ...'[149] Indeed, in this seemingly loosely constructed play, Shakespeare observes the rule of temporal unity with great precision despite the small number of references. Here we shall concern ourselves with the first day, which corresponds to the first three acts.

Love's Labour's Lost opens with a speech which might be mistaken for a Shakespeare Time-defying poem. Indeed, this comedy shares more than just a few superficial features with Shakespeare's poetry. As G. F. Waller points out, *Love's Labour's Lost* is 'the first of Shakespeare's plays to consider in any significant depth man's attempts to escape time's pressures into a world of fantasy ...'[150] The questions that it evokes and provokes revolve around one basic: What is the relation between time and language?

Richard David, the Arden editor of the play, in his rather laconic thematic analysis, does mention its 'intensely lyrical' character and emphasises the presence of 'echoes of the non-dramatic poems of Shakespeare'.[151] The lines with which Ferdinand King of Navarre opens the comedy evoke the image of the common *tableau* of 'devouring Time':

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[149] Buland, 'The Presentation ...', p. 92-3.

[150] Waller, *The Strong Necessity ...*, p. 83.

[151] Robert W. David, ed., *Love's Labour's Lost* (London & New York, Routledge, 1994), p. xxiv. All quotations from the play are from David's edition.

FERDINAND Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live register'd upon our brazen tombs,
And then grace us in the disgrace of death;
When, spite of cormorant devouring Time,
Th'endeavour of this present breath may buy
That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge,
And make us heirs of all eternity.

I.i.1-7

This project of braving Time's action by fame recalls the sonnets, and indeed has much in common with the conventions of Renaissance time-defying writing. A prominent position is conferred on inscription: the thus-envisaged fame can mean 'words engraved to all eternity upon the graves which hold mere mortal remains'.[152] It is hardly surprising that in his 'dramatic poem', as it is sometimes called, Shakespeare begins with a theme which haunts his poetry: Time the commonplace Devourer. Further, the play claims our interest as Shakespeare's endeavour to test the existential soundness of poetry with the mimetic tools offered by drama.

The characteristic preoccupation with language in *Love's Labour's Lost* is found on both the thematic and dramatic levels. L. C. Barber writes about the verbal games, pastimes, and sport characteristic of the comedy.[153] According to his famous statement describing the peculiar pleasure the characters take in the use of rhetoric, 'In a world of words, the wine is wit.' If festivity is about celebrating the physical attributes of the world, then in *Love's Labour's Lost* the 'things' celebrated and savoured are 'the physical attributes of words'.[154] This is indicated by Moth's mocking aside: 'They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps' (V.i.35-6). This preoccupation with language rather than reality is considered the cause of the undoing of the male characters in their wooing labours. Indeed, some see in it — with a personal stab at the up-and-coming dramatist — the undoing of the comedy itself, the genre allegedly abused by this 'immature' play.

The early evocation of an immortalising inscription or epitaph coupled with the courtier's time-defying oath to study three years in seclusion has a powerful ironic impact. According to one of Keir Elam's cogent phrases, it is characteristic of *Love's Labour's Lost* to give language 'privilege over the humble object'.[155] Initially this is certainly the case with respect to time. Underlying the oath is an idea that time is subservient to language, and one of the play's morals is that this idea is wrong. This richly poetic play is also the most strongly anti-poetic in that it continually makes the audience weigh the value of rhetoric against that of experience.

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[152] Ruth Nevo, *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare* (London & New York: Methuen & Co., 1980), p. 70.

[153] Cf. L. C. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy. A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 93 ff.

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Ferdinand's decorous opening address, the phrase 'cormorant devouring time' evoking the *tempus edax rerum* emblem,[156] is certainly fitted well into the play's idiom. Yet by problematising the vehicle of poetic expression, the play also undermines its own basic artistic medium. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, various types of literary creativity — sonneteering, letter-writing, and masque-staging, as well as word-coining[157] — take possession of the stage and keep busy both the characters and the audience.

The relevance of *Love's Labour's Lost* to the study of dramatic time in general can hardly be overestimated. It is therefore worthwhile to enumerate the levels at which the idea of time operates in this comedy: We have already mentioned that personified Time provides a scaffold for the idealistic project of preventing time's ravages. It is naturally related to thought time, which Bergson calls an empty 'variable' and which underlies the project of the three-year abstinence: the alleged free adjustability of t is a psychological prerequisite of this long-term future-planning exposed in the 'schedule'. This emptiness of thought time also acts dramatically in that it evokes anticipations in the audience. Underlying the above is linguisticised time; time controlled and measured by verbal action; time as word. 'The "three years" signal' — comments Elam — 'becomes an obsessive refrain, creating a "virtual" temporality the very nomination and renomination of which are equivalent to its enactment.'[158] Further still, we can distinguish natural time, the backdrop for the oath. Shakespeare was able so successfully to exploit the comic potential of time as subject of lyric also because, as we have seen in the previous chapter, his poetry recognises aspects of Time other than destructiveness. The intrusion of 'realistic', augmentative time supports Berowne's argument against the austere oath. Moreover, it supplies the dramatist with means to construct a plot which annuls the initial time-defying unpractical vows and protestations. Natural time is inscribed in cyclic, or periodical time. Further on, we shall see that seasonal time, the alternation of festivity and abstinence, has an impact on the construction of the comedy as well. A thematic analysis of time will be undertaken in the next section.

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[155] Elam, *Universe of Discourse*..., p. 93.

[156] The epithet 'cormorant' appearing in line 4 is suggestive of insatiability, rapaciousness and greed (cf. *OED*); for its use in a different context in Shakespeare cf. *Richard II*, I.ii.39.

[157] Elam, with a reference to the *OED*, gives the number of over sixty first-used words in the play.

[158] Elam, *Universe of Discourse*..., p. 110.

The comedy also contains a powerful metadramatic potential, which was given much scrutiny by Keir Elam. In *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse*, Elam clarifies the methodology of any study of drama by rightly emphasising the pre-eminent position of language, the all-constituting dramatic agent, whose role is not always fully recognised.[159] In the words of another scholar, 'the essential structure of Elizabethan drama lies not in the narrative but in the words'.[160] The exceptional quality of *Love's Labour's Lost* lies in its dauntless pursuit of this tenet: the playwright shares his meta-dramatic awareness with the characters. The realisation that speech has a world-creating power is an object of the experiences and artistic explorations, with varying outcomes, of the *dramatis personae* themselves. For the focal male figures, the world is spun out of the fabric of language.[161] In addition, returning to our basic interest, this means that time itself is also, to re-use Elam's jargon, 'linguistisised'. This intrinsic connection between word and time, and the temporal-dramatic value of the spoken word, will prove to be of paramount importance in other comedies as well.

3.1.2. Till painful study shall outwear three years

In *Love's Labour's Lost* all the main characters engage in language games. The level of sophistication might differ, yet one thing remains certain about the prominent male figures, and this is their verbal contamination. 'Armado's language is ludicrously conceited, Nathaniel and Holofernes converse in an extraordinary mixture of Latin and English, and Costard's witty sallies are too often spoilt by his lack of command of the language.'[162] While the commoners abuse and distort language to the point of incomprehensibility, the noblemen in their turn suffer from a different type of disease: they take language for what it stands for. All fall prey to their hermetic belief in the substantiality of the word. If comedies ridicule our untested beliefs, including dogmas and preconceptions about time, then in *Love's*

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[159] *Ibid.*, pp. 3 ff.

[160] M. C. Bradbrook quoted in Barton, 'Shakespeare and the Limits of Language', *Shakespeare Survey*, 24 (1971), p. 19.

[161] Very interesting remarks on the specific treatment of language in *Love's Labour's Lost* can be found in Nevo's book already quoted, in the chapter relevantly entitled 'Navarre's world of words'.

[162] J. J. Anderson, 'The Morality of *Love's Labour's Lost*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 24 (1971), p. 58. Elam regards their reverence towards language as a common feature of all the male characters (Elam, *Universe of Discourse*..., p. 126). Berowne's ambiguous attitude calls for a separate analysis.

Labour's Lost the irony uncovers the gap that yawns between word and reality.

Let us return to the initial motif of braving Time's ravages through scholarly exploits. The exposition makes us acquainted with an oath taken in the dramatic pre-history. It is an agreement binding the king and the three courtiers, Berowne, Longaville, and Dumain, to be confined to the court, turned into an *academe*, for a period of three years.[163] In Scene I.i, the oath is to be re-taken as they sign up to a fixed schedule. Any oath, by virtue of its binding power, defies time, being an attempt to put a halt to the flow of events, to challenge the mutability of things.[164] In Elam's classification promises, vows, and contracts are classed as under the heading of 'commissives'. Their temporal meaning is clear; they all 'commit the speaker to the future course of action'.[165] The inhibiting meaning of the performative is foregrounded by the temporal strictures stipulated in the schedule against which Berowne so vehemently protests. Laid atop bookish seclusion is a strict timetable which imposes a day-to-day asceticism.

> So much, dear liege, I have already *sworn*,
> That is, to live and study here *three years*.
> But there are other strict observances;
> As, not to see a woman *in that term*,
> Which I hope well is not enrolled there:
> And *one day in a week* to touch no food,
> And but one meal on *every day* beside;
> The which I hope is not enrolled there:
> And then to sleep but *three hours in the night*,
> And not be seen to wink of *all the day*,
> When I was wont to think no harm *all night*,
> And make a dark *night* too of half the *day*,...
>
> I.i.34-45

Such asceticism, against which Berowne is a choric mouthpiece,[166] implies a virtual standstill, a future arranged in advance. Berowne's reservations make it clear that the oath is meant to transport existence to a point outside reality, to alienate the schoolmen from all actuality.

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[163] On the meaning of the academe cf. Elam, *Universe of Discourse*..., pp. 125 ff. French academies were dedicated to mystical research rather than science in our contemporary sense of the word. The central idea of those institutions seems to have been the treatment of words as substances, or a belief in the existence of a link between a name and the named thing.

[164] This calls to mind Sonnet 115, and the 'millioned accidents' which creep in between vows.

[165] Elam, *The Semiotics*..., p. 167. Pütz devotes a separate section of his book to the temporal significance of the oath, stressing their anticipation function; cf. Pütz, *Die Zeit*..., pp. 70-3. On the use of performatives in *Love's Labour's Lost* cf. Nevo, *Comic Transformations*..., p. 70. Jones, who also analyses the situation of taking a pledge (as in *Othello*, III.iii.), emphasises the climactic function of such moments.

[166] I am aware of the dispute concerning the role of Berowne over the extent to which his sense of reality is polluted by indulgence in grandiloquence. Since the subject of my analysis is the

Here we arrive at the comedy's most persistent thematic concern: the conflict between contemplative and active life.[167] A question arises: Can time be thus opposed and transcended; or is this perhaps a 'barren task' (I.i.48)? To wriggle out of the vow, Berowne heaps up problems, increasingly sophisticated as well as fundamental: 'What is the end of study?' (l. 55) He conjures up paradoxes: One is unable to justify the benefit of learning until one has achieved it. However, the chief point, and indeed one that contains the entire dispute, is the paradox buried in such sophistication. To argue as the courtiers do one has to have been schooled already; the king's remark about Berowne states this plainly: 'How well he's *read*, to reason *against reading*!'

And this is exactly the point. The pursuit of knowledge betrays double vainglory: the courtiers may not need to know more, but they certainly need to live more. Besides, they hope to know more by studying more books and turning their backs on reality. Their knowledge of the nature of time is as bookish as their dispute; they defy time by reciting commonplaces about time. As John Hunt pointedly remarks about Ferdinand's opening speech:

> Navarre and his lords aim at post-humous and lasting fame, based upon intellectual endeavours *now*. The 'brazen tombs' nicely announce the hollow audacity of worldly ambitions. Yet the (syntactical) dominance of 'cormorant devouring Time' and the meagreness of 'this present breath' are early clues to what the lords only learn by the play's end, that they must move within and not outside time's demanding rhythms.[168]

The anxiety over the search for knowledge that lies beyond what is given is a variation on the theme of beliefs put to the test of time, common in Shakespearean comedy (*Much Ado, Measure, The Two Gentlemen of Verona*). Berowne alerts his companions to the hazard: the pursuit of arcane lore ('things hid and barred...from common sense;' I.i.57) is based on some fundamental existential ignorance.[169] In a manner similar to *Romeo and Juliet*, which discredits human presumption to control time, *Love's Labour's Lost*

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opening of the comedy I do not think it appropriate to take a decisive stand in advance on this matter.

[167] Cf. John Dixon Hunt, 'Grace, Art and the Neglect of Time in *Love's Labour's Lost*', *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies*, 14 (1972), p. 76.

[168] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[169] From this perspective Juliet's unwillingness to receive Romeo's oath is very symptomatic of the basic deception: 'Do not swear at all;/Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self.'

questions man's ambition to overpower or to spellbind time verbally, an ambition that characterises Shakespeare's immortalising sonnets. According to Berowne, genuine pursuit of knowledge means giving oneself over to fruits yielded by natural time. He has no doubts about the bookish, language-mediated character of the knowledge otherwise to be gained, which spells submission to 'base authority from others' books' (I.i.87).

Berowne's antagonistic rhetoric introduces a natural time-scale. He calls his companions 'green geese' who are 'a-breeding', which questions both the endeavour and the values supporting it. Natural time is set against immortal fame, which dwells outside change. The opposite party retorts by subverting Berowne's metaphor: Berowne 'grows weeds' and 'is like an envious sneaping frost' (ll. 97-100). His answer extends the seasonal imagery:

BEROWNE Well, say I am; why should proud summer boast
Before the birds have any cause to sing?
Why should I joy in any *abortive birth*?
At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in *May's* new-fangled mirth [/shows];
But like of each thing that *in season* grows.
So you, to study now it is *too late*,
Climb o'er the house to unlock the little gate.

I.i.102-9

This sophisticated flyting, or dispute, illustrates the hazards of rhetorical sophistication. The entire opening argument testifies to familiarity with the rhetorical tropes and motifs of Renaissance poetry, yet the respective attitudes, though seemingly opposed, are utterly inauthentic. This is despite Berowne's more sober insight into the nature of time and the imagery of seasonal changes, important for both the structural layout of the comedy and its theme.[170] Ultimately Berowne will also have to undergo detoxification from rhetorical poisoning, along with all the other would-be schoolmen. Yet it is he who brings into play the idea of *kairos* or the proper moment ('Fit in his place and time', I.i.98) for action, designated by the natural order of things.

The character of Berowne is a fine and complex creation as he has a foot in both worlds: the Time-defying, tongue-twisting world of Fernando and his courtiers and the obtruding world of mundane necessities that need to be attended to. This latter world naturally imposes a time-scheme on the plot. In Berowne as well as in the other male characters there is potential for maturation through experience. Although one ought to avoid simplifying the figure of Berowne, he shares with the others a belief in the unlimited power of words and will be punished accordingly. Thus, from another perspective, the word play is self-deconstructing: it is an exercise in the much-wished-for subservience of time to language. The image of seasonal changes serves his turn as well as any other trope. Ultimately those infected by verbosity will be forced to shake off their verbal intoxication and countenance the pressures and necessities of extra-verbal nature.

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[170] Cf. Hunt, 'Grace, Art...', p. 82.

Meanwhile, Shakespeare gives us another illustration of how to evade impractical vows. Armado, the Spanish guest in Ferdinand's court, is dedicated to following in the noblemen's footsteps, but in fact mock-mirrors them as he proceeds. Aside from the elaborate refutation of the oath by Berowne, the uneducated Moth, Armado's page, has his own way to do away with it. He ventures to prove, in perfect accord with the play's idiom, that language is time. In Scene I.ii, where Armado tells his servant of his decision to sign up to the King's project of a three-year-long study,[171] Moth ridicules this verbal infatuation by arguing that three years can be studied in an hour:

> MOTH ...Now here is three studied, ere ye'll thrice wink; and how easy it
> is to put years to the word three, and study three years in two words,
> the dancing horse will tell you.
>
> I.ii.47-50

Obviously, Moth speaks here of syntax, the actual wording, which certainly can be perused in less than an hour. The choppy logic of this argument rests on the assumption that the difference between words and the things they denote is negligible. Hence 'three years' are merely two words. This syllogism answers to the more general predicament which the play depicts, an assumption that the signified is as good as the signifier. Still, the consequence is unexpected, as it seems to be utterly absurd to make a three-year-study vow if no actuality supports the pertinent verbal signifier. In Elam's comment, Moth's 'demonstration for Armado's benefit of the power of a single noun phrase over the denoted time period... looks like a sly stab at the elaborate trust placed by the scholars in the empty temporal clause of their decree'.[172] Speaking about the future — Shakespeare seems to be saying — is worth about as much as the time it takes to produce the respective lexical or phonetic units.

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[171] Armado, a 'refined traveller of Spain', who has 'a mint of phrases in his brain' (I.i.162-4) mock-mirrors the noblemen in their predicament of being dazed by the 'sweet smoke of rhetoric' (III.i.60). Where the courtiers break their oaths of celibacy and take to composing love sonnets, Armado, doting on a country maid, *becomes* one: 'Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise, wit; write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio' (I.ii.172-5).

[172] Elam, *Universe of Discourse*..., p. 129.

But time can be reduced to language about as effectively as money can. In III.i, Costard receives a 'remuneration' from Armado for his services as messenger and for a short moment catches the common sickness of verbal intoxication. Luckily, it only lasts until he finds that a long word can mean little money. If the characters' initial belief is that time can be valued at the price of language, then the eventual penetration through that misconception is painful. As the King presses the French princess for a vow of love before her departure, she makes the point quite clear:

FERDINAND Now, at the latest minute of the hour,
Grant us your loves.
PRINCESS A time, methinks, too short
To make a world-without-end bargain in.
V.ii.779-81

Further extension of the above reasoning comes with the quibble on man becoming 'sonnet' (cf. the smitten Armado turning into 'extemporal god of rhyme'). Sophistry, rhetoric and rhyming cut man off from dynamic reality. The noblemen fall in love by producing sonnets and pageants, substituting words for their referents. The treatment of their own poetic infatuation consists in, fittingly, an exchange of identities among the masked women. In effect, the book-mates, who fell in love with their poetic representations of the women, woo signification and signs (masks, words) rather than persons.[173] Their verbal intoxication has made them numb and unintelligible (cf. especially V.ii.744). It spreads an atmosphere of incapacitating inertia where even reporting is paralysed: message-sending and letter-reading are debated and ridiculed rather than performed (cf. I.i.180 ff, III.i). Consequently, the stage business is brought to a virtual standstill. Here one finds the dramatist intent on laying bare the dramatic-mimetic engines of the action. The metadramatic potential of *Love's Labour's Lost* will become manifest when we come to see time as a dramatic agent rather than as a thematic motif.

3.1.3. That's too long for a play

Initially, we listed several meanings of time in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Now our task is to see how these motifs serve dramatic purposes. Despite the persistent and exuberant thematic preoccupation with language, the comedy is also consistently faithful to the artistic priorities of its genre. Drama never gives way to purely poetic or academic concerns no matter how overwhelming the smoke of words might be in specific passages. To make language a dramatic hero without stifling the progress of the action was one of the technical goals which Shakespeare largely succeeded in achieving.

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[173] On wooing the sign cf. *ibid.*, p. 129.

The stage business of *Love's Labour's Lost* develops between the initial challenge of Time, the emblematic Consumer, and His intrusion as the grim messenger-Mercury bringing news of death. This intrusion of the messenger, which breaks up the merry-making, has an indisputable dramaturgical character and function, yet it also makes a clear statement which we are to interpret by taking into account of the verbal nature of the play's action as a larger context. Metadramatically, puns and dialectical feats jeopardise any oaths that relate to a distant future. The news of death is virtually the only physic that is able to put a halt to this ongoing feast of languages. The dissonance produced when the words of Mercury clash against the songs of Apollo (cf. the ultimate line of the play) is another effect of this kind. The dramatic genre with its intrinsic time-quality makes itself manifest against the claims of the 'arts of language'.

Characteristically, the action of this poetic comedy is almost entirely made up of language (swearing, arguing, wooing, mocking, etc.), which supplants the customary plot. This means that time is also measured out by how much is being spoken as well as by the internal dynamics of language. The confrontation between language and action however is a broader characteristic of time in Shakespearean comedies.

Let us enlarge on this aspect: How can speech, in the sense of rhetorical confrontation, supplant action? Engaged in 'skirmishes of wit', characters get caught in the inner complexities of language, which thus come to the fore. The dramatic effect is to slow down the tempo of the action, as the distance between the initiation of some dramatic business and its completion grows, gets disproportionately lengthened, or makes completion impossible altogether. In *Love's Labour's Lost* neither the subject disputed nor the very fact of four courtiers engaging in an abstract dispute, results in any dramatic action. If there is any action proper, it consists in making the audience realise the lack or impossibility of any. The audience may well feel that time is 'idled away' in dispute. The play indeed begins with a persuading sequence (in the Hallets' sense) before any 'imitation of an action' comes into view. Real ('concrete') time is hardly mentioned and has little effect on the commerce of wits. However, when the outside world finally breaks in, the disputants find themselves belated and unable to respond to the necessities it imposes. Here the opening is time-mimetic: the very dispute over the oath, apart from exploiting common tropes about time, is a way of defying time's demands.

After what was said in the previous section, it can easily be seen that such a-temporal occupation of the characters has its root in the pursuit of the thematic interest of the play. The action being principally verbal, dramatic mimesis becomes suspended. 'Verbal action' is constituted by what Elam describes as the self-propagating properties of language, especially in its rhetorical and poetic use. Language put to comic use is infinitely extendible[174]; it takes an outward necessity to put an end to a language game in progress. Without such an interruption, discourse goes on and on, indefinitely postponing dramatic action. The opening of *Love's Labour's Lost* is an example of such verbal flourish. The King is wholly absorbed by the lofty poetry he delights in oozing, but the frequent feats of verbosity are deservedly ended. The arrival of the grim news in Act V, structurally an encroachment which repeats and intensifies that of Act I, is the necessary link to complete the chain of dramatic breaches wrought in the fine texture of poetry and rhetoric. This victory of drama over verbal artifice is a reminder of the demands of time; dramatic time tolling to reprimand poetry gone berserk. No sooner have the courtiers claimed fame for their defiance of time than they find themselves forsworn. Immortal fame turns into an all too mundane shame (cf. I.i.159 and 300).

There are good grounds for the courtiers to be ashamed. In Hunt's comment: 'The King is perhaps the first to recognise that time neglected means missed opportunities [...] (V.ii.728-31). They have neglected time both in their original vow to live outside it in pursuit of intellectual honour and in the artifice of their courtly dalliance with the ladies.'[175]

There are indications that signal that this neglect of time is dramatic as well as thematic. The conventional letter and messenger appear on stage relatively late (I.i.181). The message itself, in the mock accusation cooked up by Armado, is dimmed by the smoke of rhetoric to the point of incomprehensibility (cf. Costard in I.i.278-80). The very process of reading turns into a verbal feat and celebration in its own right.[176] The number of lines preceding the delivery of the message is symptomatic: So much time has been 'squandered' and the loss becomes painfully manifest. The on-stage time may not be flying fast, yet in dramatic terms a lapse is inevitable. It is only in II.i that Navarre attends to the political business and reads the letter delivered by the French princess. Finally, a pivotal short-time reference is used ('tomorrow' occurs several times in II.i), and the short-time unit is shaped to supplant the unrealistic period of 'three years'. This short-time assignation leads us on to the next scene, which, with actual breach of the long-term vow, thrusts the audience attention forward and makes them expect a change of attitudes. The reception of the French embassy, anticipated as an insignificant interval, suddenly becomes the most crucial period in the time-scheme of the action. The princess's political mission provides the would-be schoolmen with a much-welcome opportunity to go back on their oath (cf. Longaville's sonnet 'Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is', IV.iii.65).

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[174] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[175] Hunt, 'Grace, Art...', p. 82-3.

[176] There are of course many parallels and various modes of such comic transformation of the message delivery; cf. the mock-the-bearer in *As You Like It*, I.ii. *Love's Labour's Lost* provides many interesting variations on this theme.

The pace of the action, however, is unusually slow; the 'tomorrow' of Scene II.i materialises as late as Act IV:

PRINCESS Well, lords, *to-day* we shall have our despatch;
On Saturday we will return to France.
IV.i.5-6

It is *after* the renouncing of the oath that the feast of words begins. Not unexpectedly, the period of verbal fasting imposed by the French ladies resembles the pattern of Lenten penance periodically following carnal revels. The peculiar ending of the comedy brings the 'defeat' of the word,[177] as the noblemen are sentenced to a yearlong period of penance for their linguistic abuses. In her farewell speech, the Princess 'subjects their professed affections to a cycle of seasonal change: their love will be tested both by its survival in time and by its ability to outlast it'[178]. The dramatist's determination to retain a realistic time scale for the penance and his metadramatic frankness impress us:

BEROWNE Our wooing *doth not end like an old play*;
Jack hath not Jill: these ladies' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.
FERDINAND Come, sir, it wants *a twelvemonth and a day*,
And *then* 'twill end.
BEROWNE That's *too long for a play.*
V.ii.865-70

This reflexive anti-climax has given occasion for more or less severe censure of the whole work as apparently lacking a narrative backbone and slipping into verbosity and tediousness.[179] However, from the perspective of our study the lines just quoted testify to a remarkable meta-dramatic or perhaps meta-theatrical awareness of the temporal limitations to drama, and this type of awareness is one of the distinguishing features of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

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[177] Cf. Anne Barton, 'Shakespeare and the Limits...', p. 23.

[178] Hunt, 'Grace, Art...', p. 82.

[179] Nevo argues that in the extant form the play is unfinished, but does not see this open-endedness as a deficiency: 'Self-reflexion of this kind, a deliberate drawing of attention from within the represented world of the play to some alleged inadequacy in the artifice of its

The dialectic of seasonal changes (thematically picked up by the final song) penetrates to the bottom of the comedy and dictates its principles of construction. François Laroque's ideas concerning the continuous interchange between Lenten and festive periods can explain the abrupt, anticlimactic cessation of the verbal carnival in *Love's Labour's Lost*.[180] According to him, the underlying idea of time is pendulum-like, being an alternation between the auspicious and the inauspicious.[181] With the daily periodicity transformed into the timelessness of an on-going festivity, an arbitrary intrusion is needed. The note it strikes is predictably mournful. The news of the French king's death comes only in the final part of the play (V.ii.710-2).

The words of the tongue-tied Mercury create a harsh discord amidst the tunes of revelry. But such an unwelcome occurrence is — according to Laroque — perfectly in keeping with the nature of a festive time: like the comic use of language, it has to be arbitrarily terminated. The executioner is, as indicated, Time himself. As 'the sudden hand of death' (V.ii.807) he answers the initial challenge with a vengeance; the Reaper cuts merriment like stalks of wheat.

The stage business in *Love's Labour's Lost* develops between the initial evocation of Time as the emblematic Eater-Up of things and his intrusion as the grim messenger bringing the news of death. Ralph Berry has no doubts about a profound thematic coherence: 'the play has opened with an assault upon Time/Death (lines 1-14), as it closes with the acknowledgement of Time's victory. The death message is organically present in Scene I.i, as certain cells die shortly after the body's birth. And the final Act makes sense only as a reversal of the first Act....'[182] This shows how penetrating is the concern of *Love's Labour's Lost* with time. The action is suspended between two significant events: one being a verbal challenge against Time, the other the intrusion of Time's intractable actuality. This is also the reason why there need be only one such play in a dramatist's output. Indeed, one attempt should suffice to prove that compliance with

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representation can only act either as a forestalling of possible criticism, or as an invitation to consider all that has passed in an ironic light.' (*Comic Transformations*..., p. 90.)

[180] Cf. Françoise Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World. Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge University Press, 1993); especially Chap. 7: 'Festivity and time in Shakespeare's plays', pp. 201-43.

[181] *Ibid.*, pp. 201 ff.

[182] Ralph Berry, 'The Words of Mercury', *Shakespeare Survey*, 22 (1969), p. 69.

the demands of time is as much the dramatist's duty as that of any of his characters.

3.2. The seizing of occasion in the climax of *All's Well That Ends Well*

3.2.1. The instant and its the forward top

Buland seems to be rather satisfied with Shakespeare's consistent time-scheme in *All's Well That Ends Well*. The play, writes Buland, 'offers no tangle in time-references', but the protagonists 'must be credited with marvellous celerity in travel'.[183] Let this remark suffice for the time being before we discuss the aspects of concrete time in detail. In our analysis we shall concern ourselves with the ring-sequence of the second half of the play.

All's Well is almost resistant to a thematic time analysis. This does not mean that the play's idiom ignores time altogether. On the contrary, the idea of time crops up in a number of passages, yet, until the final sequences, this barely affects the dynamics of the action. Time-thematising insets, particularly the eponymous aphorism in Scenes IV.iv and V.i, become more and more frequent as the action draws to its close. Their application is nearly as difficult to assess critically as that of the emblematic representations which embellish, for instance, *As You Like It*. What makes this comedy remarkable is the overpowering of thematics by the sweeping vigour of the action. This impression is repeatedly re-enforced towards the end of the play. The conciliatory mood is repeatedly evoked by the king as he advises to 'kill all repetition' (V.iii.21), or states 'that the time is fair again' (35), etc. A longer set piece featuring the seize-the-Occasion motif provides a culmination, at the same time expressing the most pervasive motif, that of recaptured Occasion, which occurrs as early as I.ii.38 ff.[184] The king's tableau speech on Occasion (Opportunity) seized by the lock of hair,

KING All is whole.
Not one word more of *the consumed time*;
Let's *take the instant by the forward top*;

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[183] Buland, 'The Presentation ...', pp. 112-3.

[184] Source for quotes and references is the Arden edition by G. K. Hunter, ed., *All's Well That Ends Well* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995; 1st impression 1962).

> For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees
> *Th'inaudible and noiseless foot of Time*
> *Steals* ere we can effect them.
>
> V.iii.38-42

characteristically has both local and universal significance. On the one hand, its placement in the concluding scene sustains a theme that permeates the action as a whole, the motif of redeemed time. On the other hand, its reconciliatory tone is soon replaced by the harsh forensic proceedings. Thus, the intended meaning of the emblem is oblique: the easing of tension into serenity will not be sustained after the discovery of the ring, the sequence-sustaining item.[185] The action's energy gets the upper hand by destroying the validity of the moral precepts. As a result, the audience is at a loss, faced with the lack of alternative conceptualisations of the plot-riddle. The King's reconciliatory admonitions are denounced by controversy and surprising revelations, which throws into ironic relief the accompanying ideas about time. The action promptly belies the rhetoric of the all-too-soon-forgotten past. When Helena's ring reappears, the action resumes its previous pace as the dramatist thickens the conflict in order to provide a riveting resolution.

Depending largely upon mimetic-deictic rather than thematic developments, the plot — to use Bakhtinian categories — betrays many characteristics of the adventure chronotope. 'The adventure chronotope' — says Bakhtin — 'is . . . characterised by a *technical, abstract connection between space and time*, by the *reversibility* of moments in a temporal sequence and by their *interchangeability* in space'.[186] In *All's Well*, features of the source narrative which do *not* belong to this chronotope, most notably descriptions (with temporal specifications) of natural processes such as maturing, gestation, ageing, etc., have been left out by Shakespeare. The transition from the source narrative to Shakespeare's dramatisation can be described as a shift between two types of chronotope, from filled-out natural time to empty adventure time. This is surprising in view of Bakhtin's contention that historically chronotope evolved in the opposite direction.[187]

In this respect the contrast between *Measure* (concerned with natural maturational-generative time) and *All's Well* is remarkable. The characteristics included by Shakespeare in the chronotope of the play make for the rapidly progressing, episodic (in the sense specified), close-knit structure of dramatic action with its basic skeleton of next-day anticipation-fulfilment links and the ensuing short-term precipitation. Characterisation is simplified accordingly. In consequence, reversibility, built up by the mechanic mimesis of the action, comes to play a significant thematic part. Time is 'redeemable'; lost opportunity can again be seized. The disconcertingly expeditious absolution of Bertram in the final scene of the play is perfectly in tune with the message conveyed by the overall design. The baby kicking in Helena's womb only a few days after conception is, too, tell-tale evidence of the sort of temporality at work in the comedy. In Bakhtin, the phrase 'empty time' refers to narrative sequences other than historical, quotidian (in the sense of their faithfulness to the rhythms of daily activities), biographical, biological, or maturational. In the source narrative, as we shall see, the last two types of time are found in the natural processes and the adequate duration allocated to them. 'Empty time leaves no traces anywhere, no indications of its passing.'[188] In Shakespeare, not only has this 'empty' Time failed to deposit its marks. It has been positively reversed by the king's miraculous recovery and redeemed by Helena's sexual trickery.

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[185] On this conventional function of the ring cf. Pütz, *Die Zeit . . .*, pp. 120 ff.; and below.

[186] Cf. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time . . .', p. 100. Original emphasis retained.

[187] On Bakhtin's idea of the decline of chronotope cf. Vice, 'The Chronotope . . .', p. 204.

The dramatic-moral conflict which *All's Well* leaves unresolved is this nagging incertitude concerning the most advantageous course of the action in the given circumstances. Bertram initially spurns Helena and the play seeks to convince us that this decision was wrong. However, the way the dramatist tries to impart this conviction is slippery. The philosophy of seizing opportunities is naturally hostile to any summons to reconsider the past. Despite this, the ring-sequence is headed in this direction. The ring, the token of the bed-trick, and the baby kicking away in Helena's womb are cords which keep the shadowy things of the past leashed to the present.

3.2.2. This exceeding posting day and night

All's Well admits of no facile comparison as regards the representation of time. The racing tempo of the plot is accompanied by appropriately rapid shifts of setting. There is no dramatic time to 'waste' on songs or masques. To give the plot the required cohesion, legions of messengers untiringly journey across the off-stage territory. The most accurate gauge of the dynamics is the operation of the next day scheme and the resultant partitioning of the plot into so many episodes of relative temporal unity.

The plot of *All's Well* breaks down into two parts ('halves or movements'),[189] each containing an accomplishment: the healing of the king and the fulfilment of Bertram's conditions. A closer look, however, discovers a division into a number of episodes governed by so many short-time action-precipitating units which roughly correspond to the plot-construction of the source narrative: one of the novellas in William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (3rd edition, 1575).[190] Hence, although our chief aim is to analyse the climax of the comedy, it seems advisable to compare briefly the representation of time in the narrative with its dramatic rendering before addressing head-on the problems of dramatic time. Only then will the full sense of the ending of *All's Well* lend itself to critical examination. In the following enumeration, the focus is on the representation of duration in the source narrative, while other significant differences between the narrative and the play have been ignored.

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[188] Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time...', p. 91.

[189] Cf. Hunter, 'Introduction', in *idem*, ed., *All's Well That Ends Well, op. cit.*, p. xxxi.

Sequence I

[*N*arrative] Beltramo departs from Rossiglione to Paris and Giletta (Shakespeare's Helena) follows him. Giletta desires to follow Beltramo 'a little while after' but does so only after refusing many suitors, after learning that her beloved 'was growen to the state of a goodly yong gentleman', and that the French king reportedly suffers from a swelling on his breast 'growen to be a Fistula'.

[*D*rama] The opening of *All's Well* is typically devoid of time references. Only with the shift of the setting is the short-term clock wound up, and in Scene I.iii the Countess bids Helena leave for Paris tomorrow (l. 250), thus creating an inter-sequential hook-up to Act II.

Sequence II

[*N*] Giletta heals the French king and marries Beltramo. Having arrived in Paris, Giletta promises to cure the king 'within eighte dayes' and takes a solemn oath to that effect, but succeeds 'in short space before her appointed time'. Her marriage to Beltramo takes place on 'the appointed day', after 'great preparation'.

[*D*] The action thickens in Act II. Bertram becomes increasingly annoyed with the appointed delay of his martial engagements. He decides to 'steal away'. The short-time effected by Helena's arrival changes the king's mood in a similar way (cf. his emblematic exclamation in II.i.92: 'This haste hath wings indeed'). The deal between Helena and the king evokes suspense characteristic of a single sequence. The anticipation of the healing is worked up into a piece of verbal celebration:

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[190] This source is published as Appendix to the Arden edition of *All's Well* (*op. cit.*, pp. 145-52; cf. below); all quotes are taken from — as are references made to — this edition of the novella. The story is a translation of the ninth novel of the third day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

HELENA The great'st grace lending grace,
Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring
Their fiery torcher his *diurnal ring*,
Ere twice in murk and occidental damp
Moist Hesperus hath quench'd his sleepy lamp,
Or *four and twenty times* the pilot's glass
Hath told the *thievish minutes* how they pass,
What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,
Health shall live free and sickness freely die.

II.i.159-67

This is no common time reference or a mere hook-up to the next day. The familiar poetic and mythological images do evoke the passage of one day, indeed the passage of time as such. Yet above all, this apostrophe seeks to link time with the universal idiom of decline and health, of life and death. It raises our awareness of the meaning of the moment of seized Occasion in the rushing-on dynamics of the action. Scene II.iii brings the fulfilment of Helena's promise. The wedding is appointed for 'tonight' (II.iii.180), but the would-be bridegroom is already determined to escape on the following day, which effects a hook-up to the next sequence, '*Tomorrow* / I to the wars, she to her single sorrow' (l. 290).

Sequence III

[*N*] Beltramo escapes. When about to return to his estates, Beltramo gets away, and joins the Florentine army 'continuing in their service a long time'. In the meantime, Giletta returns form Paris and whiles the time tending to the estate in Rossiglione. In a reply to her letter, Beltramo stipulates his allegedly impossible conditions of reunion.

[*D*] The hasty wedding causes Bertram to devise a counter-scheme. The next day brings its accomplishment. Once more, the announcement is elaborate in the mouth of the notoriously loquacious Parolles (II.iv.36). This resembles many a promise of future happiness known from the tragedies. Symptomatically, Bertram's day-after-next assurance spells insincerity: ''Twill be *two days ere* I shall see you' (II.v.70). By the end of Act II, three short-term sequences have already been presented and others follow in quick succession. Furthermore, the three form a higher-level unit, which is indicated by an *absence* of definite time references at the end of Act II, except for the indeterminate 'two days'. This specification, however, has another task to perform. It suggests non-fulfilment rather than being a tension-sustaining device. A letter instead of a time reference is used as a hook-up to the succeeding part of the plot (mentioned in passing in II.v.23).

Sequence IV

[*N*] Giletta's pilgrimage. To encourage her husband to return to his native land, Giletta decides 'to spende the rest of her time in Pilgrimages and devotion'. On arriving in Florence, she chances to see her husband 'the next day' and learns of his advances towards a local belle (Shakespeare's Diana) whom Giletta persuades to be an accomplice in her scheme.

[*D*] Act III sets the martial sub-plot in full swing. The battle is to be fought 'tomorrow' (III.i.23), and Scene III.ii shows the delivery of Bertram's letters (which does not necessarily mean that two days have passed since his parting from Helena in II.v!). The second of the letters, addressed to Helena, establishes the background time-scheme for the remainder of the play. The conditions set down by Bertram, and most notably, the ring 'which never shall come off', arouse the required audience expectations for a 'never say never' counter-action. The messengers (Lords in the play; 'knights' in the source) depart promptly followed by Helena, dashing off to shape Bertram's destiny (her purpose not made explicit though) with emblematic dexterity: 'Come, night; end, day! / For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away' (ll. 128-9). In Scene III.iii, the martial success concludes the fourth episode and Scene III.iv supplies the required messengerial links to the next sequence (III.iv.34-40). The decisive military showdown takes place (cf. Bertram's invocation to Mars; III.iii.8), and continuity is sustained as the Florentine ladies await the return of the victorious army from the battlefield. This smooth *Nacheinander* evokes the operation of a long-time clock by which Bertram has become a well-regarded soldier. By this long-time clock, he has already been wooing Diana for some time (III.v.69-74).[191] Helena's actions, also requiring longer time, are comprised within the short-term framework of the military operations. Bertram's military career provides temporal brackets for Helena's pilgrimage as well as for her plan to outsmart Bertram: the bed-trick. The journey and the planning occur in an unspecified temporal frame, a feature characteristic, according to Jones, of the middle part of a play. It is only in the next episode that we find out that considerable time has elapsed.

Sequence V

[*N*] The bed-trick: 'In fewe dayes' Beltramo agrees, albeit reluctantly, to send his ring to the maiden he is wooing (Shakespeare's Diana). Soon afterwards, 'at the first meeting', 'God so disposed the matter that the Countesse [Giletta] was begotten with child, of two goodly sonnes, and her delivery chaunced in due time'. There is apparent anxiety at that point of the narrative to make the conception credible. We learn that the trick is repeated until Giletta 'perceive[s] herselfe with child'.

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[191] This refutes Buland's opinion that the time scheme contains 'no tangle in the references'. Other instances of the so-called longer time are in Acts III and IV: Bertram's confession that he spoke with Diana 'but once' (III.vi.108) is contradicted by the widow's 'Every night he comes...' (III.vii.39). The most strained reference is found in Scene IV.iii, where the First Lord says: 'Sir, his [Bertram's] wife some two months since fled from his house' (ll. 45-6).

[*D*] With the approach of night the action increases in tempo. The two parallel tricks, one to catch Parolles, the other Bertram, are prepared (cf. Helena's assignation in III.v.97 and Parolles' failed ruse announced, too, for 'this night' in III.v.70; and the counter-trick against him in ll. 96.102).[192] In the short interim Bertram visits Diana (departing at III.vi.106), and before the questioning of Parolles in the small hours of the following morning, a number of unplanned events occur. The complex plotting (Parolles has his own intrigue by which to salvage his reputation; cf. IV.i.24 ff) causes time references to become not only more accurate (up to the point when exact clock time is given at IV.i.24; cf. also l. 22), but also more confusing. The compression of the action and the necessity to harmonise parallel goings-on put a strain on temporal verisimilitude. The represented time stretches out and Bertram has to virtually split in two to be able to negotiate the demands of his presence in the concurrent sub-plots.

Bertram's decision to leave for France the next day is a bridge to the next sequence. Yet the most substantial hook-up is provided by the exchanged rings (cf. III.vii.22-31). They both play an essential part in Helena's scheme to trap Bertram into fulfilling his apparently impossible conditions, 'When thou canst get the ring upon my finger, which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to' (III.ii.56).

Sequence VI

[*N*] The recognition: Giletta stays in Florence 'till the time of childbedde', while Beltramo returns home. The two sons are carefully 'noursed and brought up'. Only then ('when she saw time') does Giletta set out to seek her husband ('resting... for certaine dayes'), and approaches him at a public feast, their children in her arms. Beltramo recognises the ring and sees that the two boys resemble him, but demands an explanation. 'The Countesse [Giletta] to the great admiration of the Counte [Beltramo], and of all those that were in presence, rehersed unto them in order all that, whiche had been done, and the whole discourse thereof.'

[*D*] The pursuit: The many affairs of the night concluded, the plot moves on to yet another sequence, anticipated by Bertram's decision to leave for France the following day. In IV.v we learn that he is expected in Rosillion 'tonight', and the king 'tomorrow'. Helena's pursuit highlights the unpredictability of events concealed in the womb of time. She in fact epitomises the fleeting time. Accompanied by Diana and the widow, Helena travels to meet the king in Marcellus (Marseilles). Having arrived there (V.i), she learns of the king's departure to Rosillion (V.i.23). This apparent misadventure serves a dramatic purpose. It is in Rosillion that the Countesse awaits her son. There too is the resolution going to be staged. Shakespeare's augmentation of the source narrative with the additions of the king and his ring as gift to Helena — both require a co-ordinated denouement. The journeys to Rosillion show a gravitation of the supplementary characters towards one another. Helena's pursuit adds another day to the time scheme (a day passes between IV.v and V.i). The sole purpose of having Scene V.i in the play is to illustrate, in an intensified dramatic form, the eponymous maxim with an added emphasis on time's adversity:

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[192] For time references for 'tonight' cf. ll. 32-3 and 43.

HELENA All's well that ends well yet,
Though *time seem so adverse* and means unfit.
V.i.26-6

3.2.3. Sixteen businesses, a month's length a-piece

Act V, especially the part beginning with Scene V.iii, and the soon-to-be-disproved rhetoric of 'let bygones be bygones', open a new and final sequence. Before we move on to a further analysis of the final passages of *All's Well* we have to draw some conclusions from the material just presented.

Let us first return to the eventful night of the bed-trick. The scene in which Bertram endeavours to seduce Diana is hazardously sandwiched between his summons to the interrogation of Parolles and his reappearance at IV.iii.82. Diana appoints midnight for the rendezvous (which is 'very soon' by the clock of the action), and commands him to stay with her 'but an hour'. Of crucial significance for the long-term anticipation frame of the second movement of the plot is the exchange of rings: Bertram exchanges his family ring for the one given to him by the 'seduced' Diana. An elaborate reference to the second ring makes the audience alert to its significance as a sequence-building prop:

DIANA And on your finger in the night I'll put
Another ring, *that what in time proceeds*
May token to the future our past deeds.
IV.ii.61-3

The exchange of rings, known also from *The Merchant of Venice*, has an obvious linking as well as suspense-evoking function. As Pütz observes:

'When the characters on stage exchange rings, the audience can assume that the last word has not yet been said about these props [*Requisiten*]'.[193]

Another interesting thing is the peculiar time economy of the latter part of *All's Well*. Unlike the thickened time in the nocturnal prison scenes in *Measure* (dramatically more successful), the thickened time in *All's Well* has to accommodate more events than both the on-stage and the off-stage actions can hold or the dramatist co-ordinate. Bertram's entrance words in Scene IV.iii bespeak this predicament of condensed time:

> BERTRAM *I have to-night dispatched sixteen businesses, a month's length a-piece.* By an abstract of success: I have congied with the duke, done my adieu with his nearest; buried a wife, mourn'd for her; writ to my lady mother I am returning; entertain'd my convoy; and *between* these *main parcels of dispatch* effected many nicer needs; the last was the greatest, but that I have *not ended yet.*
>
> IV.iii.82-9

First, the 'not ended yet' refers to Bertram's seduction of Diana and obliquely confirms the meaning of the ring as something to pursue him into the future (cf. l. 94). The past is not easily cut off and this is one of the remarks that reinforce the idea of redeemed time. Moreover, leading Bertram and Diana straight to bed in Scene IV.ii, as Pandarus does with Troilus and Cressida (III.ii),[194] the dramatist would have saved the temporal verisimilitude but ruined the prepared trick. Instead, he devises an interval between their colloquy and the alleged consummation. This is necessary off-stage time to allow Helena to take Diana's place! Shakespeare even poisons Bertram's time by making him receive news (in his mother's letters) of Helena's death.[195]

The conventional character of the bed trick does not redeem the improbabilities with which Shakespeare's handling of time in *All's Well* is ridden.[196]

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[193] Pütz, *Die Zeit*..., p. 120.

[194] Lafew drops a word of allusion to the Trojan-war story at II.i.96.

[195] Cf. IV.iii.2. The countess sends the letters at III.iv.29 ff ('Write, write, Rynaldo ...'). The Second Lord leaves the stage with Bertram at III.vi.13, but no letters are mentioned. In IV.iii the First Lord seems to be already familiar with the news (cf. ll. 45 ff).

[196] Cf. interesting remarks concerning the trick in William R. Bowden's article 'The Bed Trick, 1603-42: its Mechanics, Ethics, and Effects', *Shakespeare Studies*, 5 (1970). Bowden argues that the trick serves to create irony rather than surprise, and emphasises that unlike the latter, the former is longer-lasting: the audience's knowledge of the trick 'will stretch over scene after scene, and the impact of the ultimate revelation to the characters in the play may still be as powerful on the audience as the simple surprise would have been' (pp. 120-1). This effect consists in the sustained anticipation of the villain's impending discomfiture (p. 121). What Bowden does not discuss are the accompanying props (the ring) which, as evidence, are ancillary to the unmasking of the seducer, and dutifully continue their off-stage existence.

One of the reasons why Shakespeare squeezes an added episode, the duping of Parolles, into an action that is already highly compressed might be simply to divert audience attention from the trick itself. Helena also needs to be shoved into the background, which will prepare us for her semi-resurrection towards the end of the play. Be that as it may, Bertram leaves the next day, pursued by the indelible traces left behind: the ring indicative of the alleged seduction and, more materially, of the consummation of marriage and the conception of a legitimate child.

The time specifications in the source narrative may be vague, yet they successfully establish a causally ordered succession by allotting appropriate periods of time to make events credible. Though some episodes inevitably incur charges of incredibility, the flimsiest nonsense being the successfully repeated bed-trick, the fact that the story time spans a number of years considerably enhances verisimilitude. This long duration easily accommodates long-term processes: growing up, decision making, medical treatment, conception, birth, and education of children. The most important is the biologically determined duration required by the central event, Beltramo's recognition of his offspring by his lawful spouse. Thus, in the narrative recognition scene, children are the most substantial 'argument', the ring being a device of secondary importance.

The fact that the plot of *All's Well* lends itself to a break-up analysis of the kind we have undertaken is itself significant. In telescoping the extended plot-time, Shakespeare risked letting in some baffling incongruities. In the narrative source, one finds a natural correspondence between the plot time and the events it accommodates. In Shakespeare's rendition, there is a discrepancy. The long time filled by the developing events and the short time that the playwright allotted to them clash. All the more puzzling therefore is criticism that defends Shakespeare's 'version' as more 'plausible' than the source.[197] Indeed, the critical assessment of the play's construction in general and of the finale in particular has always been marked by discordant voices. Without deciding the matter at this point, let us quote Hunter, who in the introduction to his edition opines that the play reveals 'the failure of technique'.[198] David Kastan, on the contrary, states that the ending of *All's Well* is 'Shakespeare's most insistent exploration of the nature of the comic assertion — indeed of the idea of comedy itself'.[199] Shakespeare's reworking of the narrative source is interesting and instructive not because it seems easy to point out the improbabilities. Those were largely inevitable. The more important question concerns the urgency on the part of the dramatist to compress the temporal span of the source story to fit the preconceived, episodically organised action. The extent to which this is the case in *All's Well* disproves the compromising attitude favoured by those who choose to disregard Shakespeare's method and treat it as subservient to meaning. Hunter may be going too far in arguing that in *All's Well* technique distorts meaning, yet the basic insight certainly deserves credit, for the play does exemplify thematic distortion in search of a dramaturgical coup. As our analysis shows, with Shakespeare the emphasis does lie on the technical aspects such as the co-ordination of sub-plots. The operative prominence of the rings is a case in point. Playing a secondary instrumental role in the source narrative, in *All's Well* they positively substitute for the climactic recognition. Moreover, they do so literally: As we shall see, Bertram hesitates to recognise his wife, yet a recognition of the rings is forced upon the audience.

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[197] For instance B. L. Smallwood writes the following, 'A comparison of the play with its source reveals at every turn the dramatist's care to present the story and its principal characters in as mellow and engaging a light as possible, to give them a dramatic plausibility and a dignity which are *entirely absent from the source*, and, finally, to bring the story to a conclusion infinitely more moving and more human than that of Boccaccio's simple, *vigorous* tale'; B. L. Smallwood, 'The Design of *All's Well That Ends Well*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 25 (1972), p. 46. Emphasis added.

[198] Hunter, 'Introduction', p. xlvii.

3.2.4. And time revives us

The resolution of *All's Well* is thus largely mechanical. Lafew recognises the ring on Bertram's finger, and the audience is expected to subscribe to this verbal coaxing. The closure with its rapid shuffling of characters and props resembles that of *Measure for Measure*. In *All's Well*, unlike in *Measure*, we witness a prolonged investigation in which the defendant, Bertram, unlike Angelo in the final scene of the latter play, is reluctant to admit his guilt and when he finally does, we find his admission rather unconvincing. Little wonder that the resolution has been regarded as inconsistent and has sparked criticism. Dr. Johnson put the failure down to purely technical concerns, 'Shakespeare is now hastening to the end of the play, finds the matter sufficient to fill up these remaining scenes, .and therefore, as on such other occasions, contracts the dialogue and precipitates the action.'[200] Now it has to be noted that Shakespeare has been doing this throughout the play: hastening to conclude one episode after another. The emblem of seizing Occasion by the forelock gives us a clue as to a possible interpretation of the peculiar hastiness that informs the action. There is a 'forelock' to seize in each of the sequences:

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[199] David Scott Kastan, '*All's Well That Ends Well* and the Limits of Comedy', *English Literary History*, 52 (Fall 1985) 3, p. 579.

[200] Quoted by Hunter, ed., *All's Well*, p. 130

Bertram's love by Helena,[201] reputation by Parolles,[202] military glory and seduction by Bertram,[203] etc. Among all these occasions, for the capturing of which the dramatist constructs relatively separate episodes, the King's recovery has a special place. His change of attitude from resignation to spiritual revival is indicative of the importance of Occasion for the idiom of the play.

With no further reference to the future, the plot concludes when Bertram willingly succumbs under the weight of evidence presented to him. The ring more than anything else fulfils the conditions he has himself set to acknowledge his marriage to Helena. This resolution does not seem to emerge from any consistent thematic concern other than that of the recovered occasion, an idea that has accompanied the precipitate action. Kastan puts it this way: 'Shakespeare happily draws the circle of formal completion, but the arbitrariness of his design calls attention to the geometry of his fiction rather than the inevitability of the form. Shakespeare, not time, untangles the knots of frustration and confusion that have inhibited the comic triumph.'[204] The vagaries of the plot, the riddles, ambiguities, and dialectical feats are to be solved by the semi-resurrection of the heroine: an embodiment of the recovered Opportunity.

The chief investigator in the finale, unlike the Duke in *Measure*, is ignorant of the truth that is to come to light. The second ring is produced and immediately regarded as the final and ultimate substantiation: 'That ring's a thousand proofs' (V.iii.198). However, one cannot escape the impression that the meta-dramatic irony of the revelation, which hangs as it does by the thin thread of verbal pressure exerted on the audience. In the interrogation quoted below, the ring sets off an exchange that lasts till all logical possibilities seem to have been exhausted. The linguisticising of this focal stage prop makes one alert to this enforced denouement we are witnessing:

KING ...*This ring*, you say, was yours?
DIANA Ay, my good lord.
KING Where did you buy *it*? or who gave *it* you?
DIANA *It* was not given me, nor I did not buy *it*.
KING Who lent *it* you?

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[201] Cf. Helena's first soliloquy, especially her lines on 'fated sky' and 'slow designs', I.i.213-5.

[202] Cf. III.vi.60 ff; the word 'to speed' (Bertram's 'if you speed well in it the duke shall both speak of it and extend to you what further becomes his greatness, even to the utmost syllable of your worthiness'.) suggestive of expediency as well as hope to succeed is more than appropriate.

[203] Cf. Bertram's impatience and anxiety in II.i.28.; then III.iii on Bertram's 'promising fortune' smiling on him 'this very day', etc.; and, later on, his lines to coax his 'coy mistress' into love-making in IV.ii.5-10.

[204] Kastan, 'The Limits...', p. 578.

DIANA *It* was not lent me neither.
KING Where did you find *it*, then?
DIANA I found it not.
KING If *it* were yours by none of all these ways,
How could you give *it* him?
DIANA I never gave *it* him.
LAFEW This woman's an easy glove, my lord; she *goes off and on at pleasure.*

V.iii.264-72

This 'going on and off at pleasure', ironically calling to attention Diana's participation in the bed-trick, can be regarded meta-dramatically as shedding light on the predominant authorial concern here: the rhetoric. Dr. Johnson's censure of the drawn-out dialogue,[205] justified within his action-focused criticism, ignores the meta-discursive interest of the closure. The contradictions are to carry on baffling the audience:

KING I think thee now some common customer.
DIANA By Jove, if ever I knew man, 'twas you.
KING Wherefore hast thou accus'd him all this while?
DIANA Because he's guilty, and he is not guilty:
He knows I am no maid, and he'll swear to't;
I'll swear I am a maid, and he knows not.
Great king, I am no strumpet, by my life;
I am either maid, or else this old man's wife.
KING She does *abuse our ears*: to prison with her.

V.iii.280-8

In *Measure for Measure*, pregnancy triggers the dramatic conflict. Here, Diana's pregnancy cannot be rendered mimetically relevant due to the temporal compression of the plot. Helena's reappearance arouses hopes that the conundrum will soon be resolved. Yet her words belie her role as a mimetic resolution to a verbal impasse:

DIANA He knows himself my bed he hath defiled;
And at that time he got his wife with child:
Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick:
So there's my *riddle*: one that's dead is quick:
And now *behold the meaning.*
[*Re-enter Widow, with HELENA*]
KING ...Is't real that I see?
HELENA No, my good lord;
'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see,
The name and not the thing.

V.iii.296-302

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[205] Cf. Hunter, ed., *All's Well*, p. 142.

Indeed, like the ring that symbolises the past, Helena has, or incomprehensibly *is*, the retrieved Occasion.[206] The trouble is that Shakespeare expects us to embrace that Occasion verbally in a post-dramatic recapitulation. It would be rash to interpret Bertram's attitude as total compliance and the will for reunion.[207] What he delivers is a conditional request for an explanation and justification:

BERTRAM *If* she, my liege, *can make me know this clearly*,
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.

V.iii.309-10

This, in turn, is in keeping with the King's final address and injunction to re-narrate and reconstruct the plot (ll. 319-26).[208] The reason may be what Brennan interprets as the discrepancy between the audience's and the characters' knowledge of the narrative events, or more precisely the deficiency of that knowledge in some of the principal heroes. Says Brennan,

> The business of keeping off the stage a tracking of events and unfolding of plots that the audience, though not all of the characters, are fully aware of, is frequently operative at the conclusion of the play. Most of the plays do not leave the characters totally unenlightened about the course of events in which they have participated, but there are several in which there are enough loose ends that some leisure will be required offstage to unravel what has happened.[209]

The diegetic climax is relegated to an undramatised future, which highlights the antagonism between narration and dramatisation. Once more Shakespeare leads us beyond the limitations of both the dramatised and the theatrically presentable reality. Certainly, this ending is verbally tuned to the message of Occasion Recaptured or Opportunity Regained. However, the boldness it takes to produce this effect mimetically will be ventured only in *The Tempest*.

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[206] In an analogous situation in *Much Ado* (V.iv) the lines about Hero's coming to life are equally ambiguous.

[207] The enforced nature of the resolutions in both *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure* is often discussed; cf. Julia Briggs' remarks on the 'gap between artistic resolution and uncontainable desire' in 'Shakespeare's Bed-Tricks', *Essays in Criticism*, 44 (1994) 4, pp. 305 ff.

[208] On the use of conditionals in the finale of *All's Well* cf. Kastan's article, 'The Limits . . .'.

[209] Brennan, *Onstage and Offstage Worlds . . .*, p. 10.

4. Tragic time

4.1. Violated time in the exposition of *Macbeth*

4.1.1. Hours dreadful and things strange

Our first subject in this part of the study will be time in *Macbeth*. Let us again listen to Buland's remarks on the time-scheme:

> The double time in *Macbeth* (1605-6) forms an integral part of the plot; we accept without question each impression which Shakespeare chooses to make upon us. In Holinshed's Chronicle, Macbeth reigned for seventeen years; he wore the crown ten years before his thirst for the blood of his peers became notorious;....Shakespeare probably felt that he must have the punishment follow close up on the crime, and that he must have a sensible regard for the principles underlying the unity of time; yet he had for his foundation the story of a lifetime, and had conceived of the gradual ruin of a soul. Thus it came that he united the two impressions; by one aspect we get the short time, by another the long time.[210]

Between these lines, one can read the impossibility of establishing, chiefly due to the lack of consistent clock or calendar designations, a time-scheme of the plot. Emrys Jones, praising its exceptional temporal economy, which he calls 'masterful abruptness', finds *Macbeth* unique in that the action breaks up into three, instead of the usual two, parts or movements: the Duncan part (Acts I-II), the Banquo part (Act III), and the Macduff part (Acts IV-V). Here we shall concern ourselves with the expository albeit in many respects main part of *Macbeth*. The Duncan part itself consists — as we shall observe — of two 'movements' or sequences distinct not only on account of their atmosphere but also for their perceptibly different dynamics.

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[210] Buland, 'The Presentation...', p. 122.

As before, we shall first look at the more general ideas and images that set off the play's idiom. Part of *Macbeth's* unceasing intellectual allure is its profound ontology with respect to the way it splits the disparate dimensions of reality only subsequently to bring them into contrast and forcefully to combine. In our world, the real and the illusory mingle with one another, yet Shakespeare isolates them, and then makes his protagonist choose between the natural and the supernatural by suspending him over a metaphysical vacuum. This ontological collision is accentuated by the superimposition of imaginary time over real time, internal over external, and mental over biological.

In Chapter 1, we discussed the relevance of anachronistic time. We also argued that Sypher, who came up with this idea, ignores the inevitable distortion of time's continuity by drama; dramatic continuity is a category unto itself whose role is to provide mimetic substitution for the real-time continuity. Sypher sees in *Macbeth* a dramatic realisation of the Bergsonian anachronistic moment; '*Macbeth* is a play fusing time into Bergsonian duration'.[211] If it is believed that the future is there before it has been enacted, the role of the Witches is easily neglected or distorted. 'In *Macbeth* time is monolithic,' argues Sypher.[212] Durative or continuous time is mental time; hence Sypher places the emphasis on retrospection, inevitability and even timelessness.[213] Time in *Macbeth* may be the time of inner experience, but, besides this, it also has other meanings that can only be brought to light in a meticulous investigation of the deployment of the temporal representation. Yet even those devoted to such investigations make puzzling discoveries. Brian Richardson, to give an example, who studied the temporal anomalies of the play to see how Shakespeare re-forms time 'to embody his themes',[214] arrives at a conclusion which subverts many common believes. Richardson shares with Sypher the idea that time in drama is more than succession or chronology. According to Richardson, in *Macbeth* Shakespeare radically experiments with time, departs from linearity and 'actually inverts the order of cause and effect'.[215] Richardson may be right when he observes that, on the whole, Shakespeare's handling of narrative time in *Macbeth* is confusing. The night of Duncan's murder truly is a powerful symbol rather than a mere temporal background for the plot to evolve against. None the less, his conclusion concerning inversions of chronology and causality, the assumption that in *Macbeth* time occasionally goes backwards, or rather the approach which leads him to it, is hard to accept.

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[211] Sypher, *The Ethic of Time...*, p. 90.

[212] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[213] *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.

[214] Brian Richardson, '"Hours dreadful and things strange": Inversions of Chronology and Causality in *Macbeth*', *Philological Quarterly*, 69 (Summer 1989), p. 283.

[215] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

Richardson argues that to get across Macbeth's violation of the temporal order Shakespeare himself violated narrative time. The trouble is that Shakespeare had first to provide natural time as the necessary background, inasmuch as any violation logically presupposes order (Ricoeur's prefiguration) which will then be disturbed. This point was raised by Horst Breuer, who interprets *Macbeth* from the perspective of our contemporary experience of discontinuous, Beckettian time (cf. above, Chapter 1.1.6). Breuer argues that this idea of time, 'a metaphorical counterpart' of the background of order in the Elizabethan age, suffers destruction in the play through the protagonist's rebellion.[216] Macbeth places himself outside the order of things, and all the elements of stability (celestial movements, cycles) cease to operate. Time as *logos* becomes 'a sequence of disconnected syllables'.[217] Certainly, Breuer gives us an accurate diagnosis of Macbeth's nihilism. But then one is left wondering whether Macbeth's nihilism can be distinguished from the nihilism of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, as well as from our nihilistic interpretation of *Macbeth*. Furthermore, the question is open how Shakespeare makes the violation of time manifest.

Richardson's and Breuer's can be regarded as complementary attempts at pursuing a notoriously intricate problem in an infamously and variously obscure tragedy. The experience of time in *Macbeth* may be holistic, yet the manifest distortions deeply shake our sense of the world-order. On the other hand, a nihilistic reading of *Macbeth* cannot exhaust the meaning of time which it posits as the background experience, that of dramatic progress, which alone is what makes all disruption conceivable, let alone dramatically presentable. In other words, without a neatly deployed mimetic footing, however greatly disrupted in the course of the action, tragic time in *Macbeth* could never assume any sophisticated meaning. Such is our working assumption, and indeed a recourse to the play's text soon resolves dilemmas resulting from over-elaborate interpretation. If drama enacts succession by its very mode of existence there are no reasons to suspect that the situation is different in *Macbeth*. This is *not* to say, let us repeat, that those memorable moments enacting pure moral horror are false impressions. The extraordinary position of Duncan as sovereign makes regicide the most abominable crime conceivable. De Quincey's description remains valid:

> The murderers and the murder must be insulated — cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs — locked up and sequestered in

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[216] Breuer, 'Disintegration of Time...', p. 260.

[217] *Ibid.*, p. 263.

> some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested, laid asleep, tranced into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated, relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion.[218]

De Quincey however shuns the temptation to philosophise Shakespeare beyond what the content of the drama allows. Let us then see what makes up 'the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs'.

4.1.2. Fruitless crown and barren sceptre

In time imagery, natural time is the framework for the ensuing violation of temporality. Richardson concludes that in the world of *Macbeth* reigns temporal chaos, but this conclusion is a consequence of his complete disregard of the first act. And it is in Act I that Quinones's idea of augmentative time finds unquestionable application. Macbeth wages a war against lineage, commits himself to an illusion of prosperity which is cut off from natural progress, and countervails the potential for growth; he 'does not take account of the restorative and healing powers in life'.[219] Growth, regeneration and progeny, stressed forcibly by Quinones, are also treated as key ideas by Braunmuller, in his Introduction to the latest New Cambridge edition of the tragedy, who recognises their legitimating import for the political structure.[220] Indeed, as passages expressing the tragedy's 'philosophy of time show', the social order is embedded in a species of augmentative time. Social and temporal realities are indistinguishable. The law of succession, the causal and historical bedrock of reality, rests unshaken by man's actions.[221] To explore poetically and dramatically the idiom of succession must have been an irresistible temptation for the playwright: 'The crisis of succession in *Macbeth*' — argues Braunmuller — 'is expressed as a crisis of metaphor'.[222] The idiom of time is submerged in this metaphor and its dissemination accompanies the progress of the action bestowing sense on particular events.

Macbeth's obsessive preoccupation with procreation has often been the focus of analysis.[223] It is however of crucial importance to see how fundamental this preoccupation is for the idea of time: 'the way political and dynastic succession-in-time depends upon a cycle (birth, death, birth); the importance of motherhood and fathering, and the unanticipated ways (Caesarean birth, "unlineal" usurpation) each may become unpredictable'.[224] The imagery of natural growth is present throughout. Natural time emerges in the very image of the seeds of time or 'grains' some of which will grow and some not. Banquo's address to the witches is overtly concerned with time as such: the witches 'look into the seeds of time'. Whatever the configuration of attitudes in particular characters, the tragedy arises from the impact that those attitudes suffer when confronted with the greater, psychologically intractable, 'real' time. Macbeth's inability to exterminate the side of reality that is always on standby, waiting to shoot up from underground — this is what spells his doom. Banquo's offspring, Fleance, is a seed of time which will yield crops upon Macbeth's unhallowed grave.

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[218] Thomas De Quincey, 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*', in *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed., David Masson (14 vols., 1889-90, vol. 10), pp. 393-4.

[219] Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery...*, pp. 351, 360.

[220] Braunmuller, 'Introduction', in Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed., A. R. Braunmuller (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 17.

[221] Cf. Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery...*, p. 360.

[222] Braunmuller, 'Introduction', p. 17.

[223] For more recent treatments of this motif cf. Monika Śmiałkowska, '"Unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles": Children, Procreation, Nursing and Succession in *Macbeth*',

Characteristically, natural time transcends the boundaries of Nature and the relevant imagery encompasses the social order. Duncan's promise to Macbeth can be interpreted as both a natural and a providential design: 'I have begun to plant thee and will labour / To make thee full of growing.' (I.iv.28)[225] It is Macbeth's future victims who sustain the imagery of augmentative and regenerative time.[226] Through regicide, Macbeth quenches the life-sustaining principle ('The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood / Is stopped; the very source of it is stopped,' II.iii.91). In this he bears a more than superficial resemblance to Richard II, the wanton gardener, whose downfall is appropriately likened to sundown.

> The sun also brings about circular, regenerative time, such as the succession of day and night and the alternating seasons, which in turn affect the vital cycles of humans, animals, and plants.... Besides impairing the movement of linear time, Macbeth's killing of Banquo and the unsuccessful attempt on Fleance also obstruct generative time.[227]

We cannot ignore the powerful placement of emphasis (through antistrophe) in 'the fountain of your blood / Is *stopped*; the very source of it is *stopped*'. This sounds ominous, yet we know from his soliloquy in Scene I.vii how much

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Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny, 43 (4/1996), pp. 321-9; and Alice Fox, 'Obstetrics and Gynaecology in *Macbeth*', *Shakespeare Studies*, 12 (1979), pp. 127-41.

[224] Braunmuller, 'Introduction', p. 22.

[225] Equally significant is Banquo's answer to Duncan, I.iv.32. All quotations from *Macbeth* are from the latest New Cambridge edition of the play by A. R. Braunmuller, *op. cit.*

[226] Equally important is the exchange between the two in I.v with Banquo's comment on the birds' nests in the castle walls as procreant cradles.

[227] Luisa Guj, '*Macbeth* and the Seeds of Time', *Shakespeare Studies*, 18 (1986), p. 181.

Macbeth wished that time and causality would stop. The irony is that of course the generative force of time acts against his designs. A servent himself at first, Macbeth is soon faced with serpent-like revenge hatching and growing out of control.[228] A still further extension of the motif is the infanticidal oath by Lady Macbeth in Scene I.vii as she vows to dash out the brains of any cowardly offspring. This arouses an unsettling premonition, confirmed in the further part of the action where Macbeth finds his sceptre barren, threatened by Banquo's and indeed time's own issue (cf. III.i and IV.i). The problem then is, has Macbeth, by stopping the course of his life, stopped dramatic time as well?

By no means. Even the metaphysical powers with which he initially sided betray him and leave him gasping as he tries to catch up with the pace of events. Consistently, the witches and their rituals stand for the future approaching irrevocably, for infinite linear succession extending to the edge of doom. Their imaginative impact is immense, and their meta-dramatic reflexivity astounding. Jones speaks here of a 'pattern of an unfinished triad' whose 'irresistible power' turns the progress of the action towards catastrophe into something inevitable and compelling not only for the fictive participants but in equal measure for the audience.[229] This interpretation can be helped by Morgan's idea, mentioned earlier, of the 'suspense of form' or 'the incompleteness of a known completion' as the cornerstone of dramatic suspense. However, regardless of this triad, Macbeth evokes time's progress with the image of steps on which to climb to future glory as king.

The relationship between structure and characterisation could hardly be more intimate than it is in *Macbeth*. In the heath scene, Macbeth is trying to confront the news with his outdated knowledge of the facts: 'The Thane of Cawdor lives. Why do you dress me / In borrowed robes?' (I.iii.106) We cannot make too much of his bewilderment, which verges on indignation and perhaps even dread of the unknown and uncontrollable. He hears the summons of the future, yet its dubious, mental presence, so to speak, removes the ontological footing from under his feet. The predicament of being exposed to 'the coming on of time' (I.v.7), or the ontological ambiguity of the future, is a classic philosophical issue. In *On Interpretation*, Aristotle states that the truth-value of statements about future events has to remain undecided. In such cases 'there is a potentiality in either direction' inasmuch as things may either take place or not take place. (19 a 5 ff.) The future presents us with 'a real alternative, and a potentiality in contrary directions'. Hence 'the corresponding *affirmation and denial have the same character*'. Since man is unable to decide whether either direction is more true than the other, the alternative has to be left undecided (19 a 35).[230] But this is precisely what Macbeth is unable to do. Although he does consider this as a possibility, namely when he speaks of Chance which may crown him without any deliberate action on his part (I.iii.142), Macbeth cannot let things take whatever course they will. Resisting the temptation to enlarge on the metadramatic import of this juncture in the plot of *Macbeth*, let us observe that the Hamletian dilemma of involvement is here worked into a collision between a mental compulsion to act and the preservative forces which suppress individual initiative.

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[228] Cf. references to serpents in I.v (Lady Macbeth to Macbeth), III.ii (Macbeth on his enemies), and III.iv (Macbeth about the escaped Fleance).

[229] Jones, *Scenic Form...*, p. 207.

We have come nearer to an appreciation of the impact that the rich texture of concepts and images, intersecting, clashing or mutually sustaining, has on the dynamics of the action. Enmeshed in this texture, the two protagonists are faced with a dilemma. The two imaginative clusters, numerical and regenerative, yield two distinct projects of the future: one is offered Macbeth by Duncan, who promises to make him 'full of growing'. The Witches, who wind up their charms by repeatedly evoking the number three, in their turn present Macbeth with an incomplete triad, Glamis-Cawdor-king. Its completion presents itself in the form of a metaphysical necessity. This still leaves the would-be assassins with space in which to exercise their free will. Against this complex background spread in Act I, Shakespeare shifts attention to the mimetic counterpart of the dramaturgical repertoire and exploits the properties of the nocturnal setting, enlarging them to unprecedented dimensions.

4.1.3. The future in the instant

An author may give the audience an intimation of timelessness or temporal disruption yet he can only do so by employing the means he has at his disposal *as dramatist*. *Macbeth*, characteristically, immerses the audience in the dramatic present.[231] It contrasts with *Antony and Cleopatra*, for instance, as to the nature of the initial conflict. In *Macbeth*, this is a political and martial conflict, in the latter play an affective altercation and a cultural clash. This immersion in the actual creates curiosity in the audience about the outcome of the situation as it develops. In *Macbeth* the opening is very specific, with the characteristic tint of the supernatural, and yet at the same time it is ingeniously powerful in the dramatic effect it creates. *Macbeth* is arguably the quickest play to stir anxiety about the time. As early as the opening sequence, we are invited to take keen interest in the future. We might miss this or that word from the exchange between the three hags, yet one thing is unmistakable: the talk sounds almost pedestrian and is about concrete time, but this particular moment in time is presented as a rather chaotic tangle of events ('hurlyburly') where an outcome is to be anticipated with concern.

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[230] Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* [*On Interpretation*] (Chicago, London, Toronto & Geneva: Enc. Britannica Inc. & the University of Chicago, 1952). Cf. also my article 'The Earth's Bubbles and Slaughter's Pencil: *Macbeth* and the Philosophy of Imagination', in Wojciech Kalaga & Tadeusz Rachwał, eds., *Memory and Forgetfulness. Essays in Cultural Practice* (Katowice, 1999), pp. 101-2.

[231] On Shakespeare's art of beginning *in medias res* cf. Bluestone, *From Story . . .*, pp. 220-2.

FIRST WITCH *When* shall we three meet again,
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
SECOND WITCH *When* the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost, and won.
THIRD WITCH That will be *ere the set of sun.*
FIRST WITCH Where the place?
SECOND WITCH Upon the heath.
THIRD WITCH There to meet with Macbeth.
FIRST WITCH I come, Graymalkin!
SECOND WITCH Paddock calls.
THIRD WITCH *Anon.*

I.i.1-11

Criticism has often failed to find dramatic justification for this scene, 'the most striking opening scene in Shakespeare'.[232] Some found it 'poor and pointless', even un-Shakespearean, condemning it along with all the Hacate and cauldron stuff of Act IV (Granville-Barker).[233] However, the scene can be defended on at least the following levels, one of which is of special interest for us: (1) It sets the tone of threat against basic values; subverts the qualities of good and evil. (2) It provides the background for the next scene: the audience learns about the battle and Macbeth as, for reasons yet unknown, the focal figure. (3) It terms of time-economy, it shapes audience's anticipation by arousing suspense about the outcome of the battle. In addition, it contains an explicit hook-up to the dramatic future. This scene itself *is* a hook-up: it is as if the audience were making an appointment with Macbeth for the nearest future. The aroused expectation and interest largely make the extensive reporting of Scene I.ii not only tolerable but dramatically effective: The developing conflict will soon be resolved. Then Macbeth himself will enter and we shall witness an intriguing encounter. Yet what is most important, time henceforth becomes the focus of concern, both on the stage and with the audience. As the Cambridge editor rightly pointed out, 'The play's first word concerns time, a topic that will become increasingly important and is always more significant than place.'[234]

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[232] Braunmuller, ed., *Macbeth*, p. 102.

[233] Muir refers to the problem in the pertinent editorial gloss; cf. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Kenneth Muir (London & New York: Routledge, 1995 (1951)); in *3 King Henry VI* one can find a choric comment on this plight of being halfway through an undecided military conflict; II.v.

Let us now turn to reporting in order to see its function in the first two acts of *Macbeth*. Reporting here has to establish connections between at least four different areas of the represented world. Unlike that of *All's Well*, a play unique in many respects, the represented the topography in *Macbeth* is rather static if complex. A great deal of the dramatist's virtuosity becomes manifest through the way he handles it. The different areas are: the royal camp 'near Forres', the battlefield or battlefields offstage, Macbeth's castle and its vicinity, and the world in between: the heath. To connect them Shakespeare needs messengers, reports, and letters, all of them with their specific time quality or the claims that they make on dramatic time. As elsewhere, Shakespeare's use of messengers or letters is more than just this; he handles them so that he can convey meanings and deepen characterisation. In *Macbeth* messengers enter at line 18 from the beginning of the play, and this has a parallel in *Antony and Cleopatra*. The witches take up 12 lines, roughly analogous to the 10 + 3 lines of Philo's opening comment in the other play. By line 75 two reports have been delivered (by the Captain and by Ross). In the parallel scene in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the news is never heard due to Cleopatra's taunting and in line 57 the messenger is dismissed altogether. This is a striking contrast to King Duncan in *Macbeth*, who hangs on the lips of the messengers arriving from the battlefield. Besides the king's removal from the battlefield (and from Macbeth as its champion), a special distance, vaguely analogous to that between Alexandria and Rome, is retained between Duncan and Macbeth, and then between Macbeth and his wife.[235] Consequently, the messengers have a distinctive role to perform in shaping dramatic time.

The use of messengers helps Shakespeare to telescope the political events so that they can be compressed into the space of the opening act. Reporting is thus the underlying structure of Act I and the hook-ups answer to the disposition of the play's topography. Scene I.ii is made up of two reports from the offstage battlefield briefing Duncan on Macbeth's military exploits. Here Ross receives two orders: the execution of the traitor Cawdor and the transmission of the news of promotion to Macbeth. Both are hook-ups, the latter to the next scene, the former to Scene I.iv, where Macbeth and Banquo accompanied by Ross and Angus appear before the king. From here, all the party travels to Dunsinane, where Lady Macbeth is already awaiting them. We have already mentioned that Scene I.i not so much contains as simply *is* a hook-up to Scene I.iii, which in its first part largely fills up for the offstage business bestowed by Duncan on Ross.

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[234] Braunmuller, ed., *Macbeth*, p. 103.

[235] Macbeth's first journey is from the battlefield via the heath to the King, and the second from Duncan's castle (Forres) to his own castle (Inverness), where Lady Macbeth awaits him, impatient after receiving his latter, which broke to her the recent news of his encounter with the witches and of the promotion.

Telescoping is most obvious in Scene I.ii, where two reports follow one another without an intermission. What in the play seems to be one military conflict because of the proximity of the on-stage reports, in Holinshed's *Chronicles* is two or even three distinct campaigns.[236] Muir enumerates 'the defeat of Macdonwald's rebellion, the defeat of Sweno, and the defeat of Canute, who came with a new fleet to avenge his brother Sweno's overthrow'. He adds, '[t]he telescoping may be due partly to cuts'.[237] Yet one can explain the use of this time-shrinking device without resorting to the hypothesis of cuts. The so-called newsreel technique used to present political conflicts is found also in *Antony and Cleopatra*: Antony learns of his wife's rebellion against Caesar minutes before another report informs him of her death after a period of illness. These two instances illustrate the convention of messengerial report employed to provide political footage as background for the conflict of attitudes which the dramatist found more engaging. Nevertheless, the existence of this footage, despite its conventionalised form, ought to prevent any overhasty conclusions about the play's alleged downplaying of real time. The telescoping of events is not tantamount to erasing them; and in *Macbeth* the use of the 'newsreel technique' might have been prompted by the source, where reporting also glues events together. This is the case in the transition from Macdonwald's rebellion to the disembarkation of the Norwegian army in Scotland, 'Thus was iustice and law restored againe to the old accustomed course, by the diligent means of Macbeth. *Immediatlie wherevpon* woord came that Sueno king of Norway was arrived in Fife with a puissant armie . . .'.[238] The suspicion of cuts can only be voiced because of the improbability of one battle following upon another; and one would expect another messenger to enter at I.ii.25. Apparently Shakespeare's aim was *not* to evoke tension about the military conflict, no sooner begun than resolved. All attention is bestowed on Macbeth and his position with respect to events.

After the second report, Duncan sends Ross and Angus to Macbeth to greet him as Thane of Cawdor. Before they arrive, the witches wind up their charm to entice Macbeth and Banquo into their sinister presence. Then they deliver their 'greeting', which might cause us some trouble if we wanted to specify what kind of sequence it actually is. The greeting and the few words of prophecy hardly qualify as message-delivery and this sequence cannot perhaps be regarded as a reporting one, especially as the audience is referred to the future rather than the past or the present.[239] It does however radically modify the sense of the greeting from Duncan's messengers, who arrive at line 105. This particular manipulation of the narrative is not secondary to the meaning of time. First Duncan and then Macbeth suffer a dearth of knowledge, but while the audience shares in the king's 'briefing' on the current state of affairs by the messengers from the two battlegrounds, Macbeth in the heath scene has already dropped back. Throughout, Shakespeare deploys dramatic time in such a way that Macbeth keeps falling behind. The audience and the witches are privy to knowledge which Macbeth lacks. Of course this ignorance is soon temporarily assuaged and Macbeth is going to find out that he has already climbed onto a higher rung of the feudal ladder. The manner in which the finding out comes about is crucial. The lag between the witches (the Ariel-like 'couriers of the air') and the king's messengers, both parties delivering the same news or 'greeting', makes all the difference. Human means of the circulation of information prove inadequate when supernatural powers are at work. Duncan's line about the 'swiftest wing of recompense' has an ironic ring to it in this context (I.iv.16). Macbeth, who so far has spearheaded the military campaign, loses his firm grip on the situation, never to regain it. His dreadful recollections will keep his 'dull brain... wrought / With things forgotten', as he will continuously fall prey to illusions of ultimate control over his destiny. Only shortly before his death does he see through them.[240] Anxiety about the future develops into sore sickness after the assassination. When he finds out that Macduff has fled to England, Macbeth will be forced to admit that he is losing in his attempt to outrun time (IV.i.143). The dramatic shaping of the narrative in Act I sets off the hero's distressed dash to get a grip on the elusive future.

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[236] References to the three essential sources of *Macbeth*, Holinshed's *Chronicles of Scotland*, Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, and John Leslie's *De Origine, Moribus, et Rebus Gestis Scotorum*, are to the excerpts included as Appendices in the Arden edition of the tragedy by Muir (*op. cit.*).

[237] Muir, 'Introduction', p. xxxvii.

[238] Holinshed, *Chronicles*, in Muir, Appendix A, p. 169.

After the royal audience during which Duncan appoints his son, Malcolm, as successor, Macbeth departs expressing (publicly) the wish to be the messenger and bear his wife the news of the royal sojourn at their castle, 'I'll be myself the *harbinger* and *make joyful / The hearing of my wife* with your approach. / So humbly take my leave' (I.iv.45). The time-space between

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[239] The terminology proposed by the Hallets might cause some problems if we sought to apply it to the encounter with the Witches. It would be either a reporting or an interrogating sequence, depending on whether the propelling characters are the witches (reporting) or the two warriors (questioning them). The ensuing sequence with Ross and Angus has a similar character.

[240] His line at V.iii.1, 'Bring me no more reports; let them fly all,' is very characteristic of his defiant attitude.

Scenes I.iv and I.v is another precarious gap in Shakespeare's dramatisation. Duncan's 'Let's after him, / Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome' rounds off the scene. What follows in immediate onstage succession is Lady Macbeth reading Macbeth's letter. If we embrace the double time theory, then unmistakably Macbeth must have written his report of the encounter with the witches in the play's 'longer' time. This corresponds to the 13-line long dramatised interval between the departure of Macbeth at I.iii.156 and his re-entry at III.iv.14, during which Malcolm shares with the king his second-hand account of the execution of the former Cawdor. The problem is that this letter does not perform the conventional hook-up function. More unusual still, Macbeth soon appears in person preceded by two messengers.[241] There is an obvious demand for both foreshortening *and* extension. The transition between Scenes I.iv and I.v seems 'long', despite the practically seamless continuity, because Shakespeare needed to provide some onstage filler time for the offstage travel from Duncan's camp to Macbeth's castle. This cumbersome offstage interval was difficult to cover onstage: military operations were over and there was no sufficient reason to reintroduce the witches at this point. The natural choice was to build up characterisation. Lady Macbeth, like Cleopatra after Antony's departure, lives in a long-time capsule. She receives letters Macbeth has had no time to write. Moreover, Macbeth hastens to see her even though there is no particular reason why he should do so, having sent letters (note the plural form!) as well as messengers. Despite Lady Macbeth's words about 'catching the nearest way', apparently it did not rank supreme among the playwright's concerns.

In Scene I.v, after reading the letter and delivering her soliloquy ('Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be . . . '), Lady Macbeth sees the messenger arriving with the conventional haste. We learn that Macbeth himself is hurrying home following yet another messenger:

LADY MACBETH What is your tidings?
MESSENGER The king comes here *to-night.*
LADY MACBETH Thou'rt mad to say it.
Is not thy master with him? Who, were't so,
Would have inform'd for preparation.
MESSENGER So please you, it is true: our *thane is coming.*
One of my fellows *had the speed of him*;
Who, almost *dead for breath*, had scarcely more
Than would make up his message.
LADY MACBETH Give him tending;
He brings great news. [*Exit MESSENGER*]

I.v.30-9

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[241] Pütz uses this to illustrate his thesis that tempo is more significant than measurable duration; cf. Pütz, *Die Zeit . . .*, pp. 53-4.

In comes Macbeth and, having been enthusiastically greeted by his wife, confirms the messages she has just received, 'Duncan comes here to-night.' The construction of the sequence is then as follows: message (Macbeth's letter) — soliloquy — message (Macbeth's messenger) — soliloquy ('The raven himself is hoarse') — message (Macbeth in person). The in-between soliloquies are much longer than in the parallel sequence in *Antony and Cleopatra* and are delivered without any interruption. They are unequivocally related to the dramatic time needed for offstage actions, all of which serve the chief goal of concentrating the subsequent sequence in the confined space of Macbeth's castle. This is another difference with the spacious topography of the Roman tragedy.

Soon, the toing and froing ceases and there sets in for good the nefarious night which will dominate the play for the remainder of the action. As the commotion of the first act subsides, emotions thicken and the nocturnal atmosphere builds up. The onstage-offstage relationship, now played out in the much more constrained space of a single setting, consistently focuses audience attention on the inner life of the protagonists rather than the larger background. Appropriately, Polański's 1973 film version presents the relevant sequence as a series of voice-over monologues. Hence the odd impression that the momentous albeit furtive interview of Scene I.vii, which concludes Act I, is an offstage confidential business that we get the opportunity accidentally to overhear.

4.1.4. The present horror and the time, which now suits with it

Richardo Quinones in his analysis of *Macbeth* quotes Seneca's dictum: *Calamitosus est anima futuri anxius.*[242] Anxiety about the future is a characteristic feature of *Macbeth*, and not only as the protagonists' distinctive attitude. It simply makes up the essence of the play as a work of dramatic art. Anxiety about the future is a dramatist's predicament and Shakespeare makes his protagonists as well as the audience partake of it.

The extent to which the Weird Sisters are instrumental in producing this irresistible drive towards the future has already been discussed. In Scene I.vii, the Macbeth's further sustain this anxiety and give it new dimensions. The relevant lines are well known. Lady Macbeth falls under the influence of the rhetoric used in Macbeth's letter, where he confesses that he finds himself 'referred to the coming on of time'. In his asides Macbeth, tricked into taking promise for actuality, embraces the future as if it were only a step away. Mention has already been made about how important the lag of time is in the delivery of the news of promotion. By sending letters ahead of himself, Macbeth wants to prevent his wife from the ignorance that earlier caused him anguish (I.v.10-1). The ontological trick here consists in Macbeth having been conditioned, so to speak, to look beyond the present as if the prediction were to come true any moment. Lady Macbeth contracts from him the sense of imminent sovereignty, as in the following lines:

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[242] Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery*..., p. 355.

> Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
> Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
> Thy letters have *transported me beyond*
> *This ignorant present*, and I feel now
> *The future in the instant.*
>
> I.v.54-8

Their determination is marked by a flawed *kairos*, found also in *Lucrece*, where — as we recall — the opportune moment to do evil is a temptation too strong for Tarquin to withstand. Also in *Macbeth* the would be assassins are determined to seize the 'ill opportunity' that lends itself. The situation known from *Lucrece* is reworked dramatically. Macbeth himself makes his eerie kinship with Tarquin explicit:

> Now o'er the one half-world
> Nature seems dead,...
> ...Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
> Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
> ...thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
> ...take the present horror from the time,
> Which now suits with it.
>
> II.i.49

Yet there is an inevitable difference between narrative and dramatic renditions of an analogous situation. The play exploits similar circumstances so that they produce a mimesis of time's passing. In *Lucrece* the lengthy exchange between Tarquin and his victim effects a rhetorical standstill which, if brought onto the stage, would arrest the progress of the action altogether. We have seen that Tarquin's 'ravishing strides' by their 'stealthy pace' imposed a rhythm on the events (cf. above, Chapter 2). On Macbeth the moment exerts an almost physical pressure as he gropes for a justification of the deed. It seems to him that this near-tangible aura of unhurried premeditation is a characteristic of time itself, with whose innermost rhythms he finds himself powerless *not* to co-operate. By comparison, Antony's departure from Egypt is hasty, not to mention Othello's rashness in killing Desdemona. The regicide in *Macbeth* is a matter of expediency but never of haste, although it has to be done promptly if the whole design is not to misfire. Accordingly, there is enough dramatic time to show the arrival of Duncan by daylight with all due ceremony (I.vi). It is also in accord with the flawed *kairos* to commit the assassination at night. Time and space have to 'adhere'; they have to provide the right circumstances for the design to succeed. Lady Macbeth's directions to her husband, awash with ironic circumlocution, are that he should cling to the current necessities as tightly as possible.

LADY MACBETH To beguile the time,
Look like the time;...
...He that's coming
Must be provided for: and you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch;
I.v.63

In her imperatives 'time' is the realm of social intercourse. 'To beguile the time' is to 'deceive the world, delude all observers'.[243] It is foolish of Macbeth to elude the time and fly into the private sphere by, for instance, not attending the royal banquet. Finally Macbeth embraces this rhetoric: In Scene I.vii he returns the imperative saying to 'mock the time with fairest show' (I.vii.82). The implied meaning of 'time' here is retained throughout the play, so that finally Macduff announces the freeing of time (V.ix.21).

Macbeth and *Antony and Cleopatra* differ widely in the attitudes to time that their protagonists represent. Antony and Cleopatra would willingly sacrifice whatever future business awaits them for the sheer pleasure of living in the present. With the Scottish couple the reverse is true. The Macbeths pursue a project of a propitious future until it becomes clear that it is nothing more than an illusion. Lady Macbeth takes the 'business' of regicide in her hands (I.v.66), and in a most ambiguous, almost paradoxical utterance expresses a wish for the sun to conceal its light; a wish which will soon reveal its intense and bitter irony.

MACBETH My dearest love,
Duncan comes here *to-night*.
LADY MACBETH And when goes hence?
MACBETH *To-morrow*, as he purposes.
LADY MACBETH O, *never*
Shall sun that *morrow* see!

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[243] Muir, ed., *Macbeth*, p. 32.

The ironic fulfilment of Macbeth's desire ('if the assassination / Could trammel up the consequence') will indeed effect a halt in the progress of time; the past will stay with the assassins. Whether or not Macbeth is the murderer even before he kills Duncan, as Sypher argues, one thing is certain: the killing has produced a 'synopsis' of his existence and he will find it impossible to shake himself free from the trap of moral distress. This is time's revenge: it keeps the murderers spellbound and overwhelmed, an effect which anticipates the completion of the political intrigue in *The Tempest*.

Let us repeat the observation already voiced that in *Macbeth* there is initially an intimate connection between the protagonist, the narrative structure, and dramatic time. The wishes that the couple make, ironically come true: time ceases to flow, night does not turn into day; political rebelliousness and mental infanticide foul up the regenerative progress. With the assassination they fall into a self-destructive temporal trap, dramatised in the poignant scene following the murder (II.ii). Macbeth's hands will never be clean, he will sleep no more, and his mind will forever dwell and feed on the frightful images of bloodshed.

This shocking idea of a sunless day becomes intelligible in view of its correspondence with the so-called cloaking imagery that sustains the antagonism between the nature of the couple's plotting and the orderly temporal background. Shakespeare's decision to submerge the remainder of the play in never-ending night has a clear moral sense but is quite absurd in terms of the usual diurnal cyclicity. It is not only the victim who never gets to see the morrow; neither do the transgressors nor the world around them.

ROSS ... by the clock, 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,
When living light should kiss it?
II.iv.6

The significance of this for the dramatic imitation of the real clock is obvious, and the problems arising therefrom have already been touched upon.[244] With the violation of the temporal order, time indeed has ceased to flow. Temporal deixis is thus violated to emphasise moral judgements. A sunless day signifies stoppage of time's progress. The wish for Duncan's speedy 'dispatch' imaginatively as well as mimetically annuls time and any project of future prosperity. The future becomes radically unattainable since Lady Macbeth's 'never / Shall sun that morrow see!' means that the very progress of time will be suspended. Accordingly, the usual short-term references are missing except for a few insignificant examples. Finally tomorrow loses all meaning whatsoever and becomes a meaningless syllable in a manner reminiscent of the quibbles in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Macbeth's 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' soliloquy reaches beyond mere time-reference. The 'morrow', which at the beginning of the tragedy has a deictic sense and generates an illusion of concrete time, gradually loses this dramatic function. This common short-time specification is employed to produce a poetic effect. Macbeth's soliloquy nihilistically disclaims any sensibility of a future time reference.

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[244] Interestingly, although it assumes particular significance within the time construction of the drama, the extended night was suggested by one of the sources. In Holinshed we can read about this mighty disturbance in nature: 'For the space of six moneths togither ... there apperred no sunne by day, nor moone by night in anie part of the realme ...' Holinshed, *Chronicles*, in Muir, Appendix A, p. 166.

Yet we ought not to carry the idea of timelessness too far. 'I pray you, remember the porter', says the porter himself. De Quincey was right in perceiving the knocking on the gate as a moment which resuscitates the action. This resuscitation is double, existential as well as dramaturgical and supporters of poetic-philosophical and dramatic interpretations of the porter-passage can easily be reconciled. In Scene II.ii the dramatic stasis is broken by the knocking which reminds us of time's incessant progress.[245] Besides this, the knocking and the prolonged devil-portering have clearly also a dramatic function to perform. They help to take the murderers off the stage and simply give the actors precious time in which to prepare for the next scene (a point raised by Raysor).

There are no reasons to suspect that in Act II Shakespeare meant to transport the audience to a realm outside time. Although time references as such are of minor importance, there is no doubt that the passing of time rather than narrative chronology is the chief concern. For the most part of Act II the action moves slowly, and stage time is nearly coextensive with narrative time. A great deal of effort went into retaining the action's continuity, which is manifest in the way the knocking on the castle gate blends the two adjoining scenes (II.ii.60-II.iii.16), a rare effect in Shakespeare. Clock-references (such as that in II.i.2) represent one of the ways to accentuate time's passing, but by no means the most important. Like Hamlet readying for an assault on Claudius (*Hamlet*, III.ii.379), Macbeth becomes eerily sensitive to the synchronicity between time and the deed to be perpetrated. Apart from the bell sounding at II.i.61-2, and the repeated prolonged knocking at the gate, other auditory signals make time's presence almost palpable.[246] Lady Macbeth interprets an owl's shriek as 'the fatal bellman' chiming Duncan's parting knell, thereby repeating Macbeth's association from the previous scene between the bell and the summons of the murdered 'to heaven or to hell' (II.i.64). All these effects create more than an aura of horrific complicity. They sustain, against the hopes and illusions cherished by the assassins, the meaning of time as a human dimension impregnated with positive values and forever bearing the stamp of man's deliberate activity. What I have earlier identified as 'flawed *kairos*' points to the fundamental ambiguity of Opportunity, the subject of Lucrece's lengthy fulmination. To paraphrase Macbeth's words, time summons man to heaven or to hell, suspending the world's action for a flash of frightful deliberation, and for the audience yielding moments of riveting suspense.

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[245] Pütz also sees a possibility of reconciliation (cf. *Die Zeit...*, p. 131).

[246] Pütz has no doubts about this function of the sounds and noises which give to Act II of *Macbeth* its very specific colouring, cf. *ibid.*, p. 130-1.

4.2. Fatalistic time in the climax in *Romeo and Juliet*

4.2.1. The yoke of inauspicious stars

Our next concern is to see how the tragic climax grows out of the action that precedes it. Except for what thematically sets apart a tragedy of desire from a tragedy of power (such as *Richard II* or *Macbeth*), *Romeo and Juliet*, as we shall see, is notable in the pace of its action. Also, since its *tragic* denouement has been called in doubt, we have to be sensitive to elements that help to bring it about. The observation that *Romeo and Juliet* follows the pattern of a comedy rather than that of a tragedy is, as we shall see, erroneous. A time analysis discovers here a genuinely tragic resolution achieved by the characteristically Shakespearean co-operation between structural-mimetic, figurative and conceptual devices.

About the time-scheme of *Romeo and Juliet* Mable Buland has the following to say,

> The action of *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1596) has a definitely marked duration, extending merely from Sunday morning to Thursday morning. The exact references to time were evidently used only to gain a momentary effect, for no care has been taken to make them consistent. Shakespeare indicated that Juliet drinks the potion early on Tuesday evening, he stated that the effect is to last for two and forty hours, and he showed that she awakes at the expected time in the early morning. If we wish, we may figure out that only thirty-two hours have elapsed, but it is probable that Shakespeare never took the trouble to compute the time; certainly no audience ever did. The period of 'forty hours at the least', with the same arrangements for the taking of the potion and the awaking, are given in the novel *Romeo and Julietta* in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, while in Brooke's poem the interval during which Juliet sleeps is elastic.[247]

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[247] Buland, 'The Presentation...', pp. 107-8.

The scene in which Romeo kills Tybalt is a violent follow-up to the death of Mercutio. It also distinctly marks the structural division between two halves of the action. I have chosen for analysis the potion-sequence, in which Friar Laurence's scheme unexpectedly helps to bring to a headlong resolution the catastrophic sequence that those two deaths set off.

Structurally and thematically *Romeo and Juliet* gives an impression of having an intrinsic relation to 'the nature of time'. This impression is not misleading; it arises out of the many ways in which the play draws attention to time's manifestations and its operation in the world. We shall first be concerned with figures of time and the iconographic motifs anticipating and generating the tragic climax. The rhetoric of the first half of the play invites us to anticipate the fatal acceleration of the finale.[248] The Prologue gives us clear hints about the intended tragic outcome and its 'causes'. In a sense it gives the game away and focuses our attention on the 'how' rather than the 'what'.[249] As Lloyd Davis puts it, 'With the lovers' deaths announced from the start, audience attention is directed to the events' fateful course'.[250] This 'how'-tension (*Wie-Spannung*) is constantly aided by the extensive use of temporal deixis. Not for a moment are we allowed to forget that time is running out or how fast it is passing.[251] To make this concern conspicuous, Shakespeare created a precedent in specifying a temporal limit for the dramatic action: 'The fearful passage of [the] death-mark'd love...Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage' (*The Prologue*, 9-12).

Naturally, *The Prologue* has to leave some aspects of the catastrophe in obscurity. The audience shares in the perplexity of the Friar, who is eventually called upon to give a lucid explanation. In his summarising narrative (V.iii), where the whodunit question is put, Friar Laurence delivers a brief testimony. Indeed, what he has to say is little more than what the audience already knows from the start.[252] He speaks of unlucky coincidences (cf. his 'unlucky Fortune', V.ii.17), and of 'untimely accidents' that point to an envisioned but unattained happy timing which would have ordered the events differently: 'the time the potion's force should cease', 'the prefixed hour of [Juliet's] waking'.[253] Friar Laurence, a figure nobler than his counterpart in the source narrative,[254] may well doubt whether his personal failings led to the muddle ('if aught in this / Miscarried by my fault'). If he were at all to blame then it would be perhaps only for an over-optimistic belief that time would conform to man's plans and predictions. As things stand, his matter-of-fact account leaves us wondering about the deeper causes of the calamity. These have to reach beyond mere coincidence, which on its own can never produce a tragedy. Just how much Shakespeare leaves the question begging is confirmed by the doubts raised by many critics whether, far from being a model tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy at all. But the deeply rooted romantic vision of the play should not debar us from taking the right perspective on the type of time at work here. It is claimed that if it were not for the death of one of the characters, the play could take a comic turn almost any time before the last scene. Some even go so far as to argue that the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is constructed on a comic plan.[255]

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[248] On the operative role of imagery in *Romeo and Juliet* as one of the elements foreshadowing the tragic finale cf. Pütz, *Die Zeit*..., p. 145. Clemen argued that the play was the first to attach temporal significance to metaphors (Clemen, *The Development*...pp. 81 ff.). For us it is also important that this imagery is essentially related to representations of time.

[249] On two basic types of tension, one focused on the outcome (*Was-Spannung*) and the other on the process leading to it (*Wie-Spannung*) cf. Pütz, *Die Zeit*..., p. 15.

[250] Lloyd Davis, '"Death-marked love": Desire and Presence in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 49 (1996), p. 57.

[251] A very broad and exact computing was done by Tom F. Driver, who found '103 references to the time of the action' and '51 references to the idea of speed and rapidity of movement'; cf. his article 'The Shakespearean Clock: Time and the Vision of Reality in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (1964), pp. 364-5.

[252] This speech is cut altogether from the 1988 BBC production by Alvin Rakoff.

> The final scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, — argues Martha Rozett — although tragic in outcome, are comic by nature inasmuch as everything hinges on accidents of timing. Capulet's unreasonable insistence on an early marriage date, the wholly unprepared-for plague which prevents Romeo from receiving Friar Laurence's letter, and the Friar's tardy arrival at the tomb are all examples of timing gone awry, as is the way Juliet awakens a mere twenty-five lines after Romeo dies, an interval so ironically brief as to be reminiscent of the comic near misses in *A Comedy of Errors*.[256]

This comparison between *Romeo and Juliet* and comedy may be valid, yet it also paves the way for disregard of the haunting uneasy premonitions, mostly Romeo's, of an impending doom. These hardly permit the play to qualify for a comedy.[257]

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[253] All quotations from the play are taken from Brian Gibbons' New Arden edition (London & New York: Routledge, 1980).

[254] Shakespeare's source was Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*, or 'The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet written first in Italian by Bandell ...' of 1562. References (by line numbers) will be made to the extracts attached as Appendix II to Gibbons' edition of the play.

[255] Cf. Martha T. Rozett's contention in her article 'The Comic Structures of Tragic Endings: the Suicide Scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), pp. 152-64.

[256] *Ibid.*, pp. 154-5.

[257] Rozett stresses 'Romeo's passivity and immaturity' (*ibid.*, p. 155), which however are not the only traits of his 'personality'. In the final scenes (as in the Mercutio-Tybalt affair, for that matter) he is anything but passive.

Allegedly, *Romeo and Juliet* is nothing more than a dramatic illustration of 'star-crossedness' which seals the protagonists' fate. It is a play — argues Iwasaki — in which 'the idea of Occasion or Chance is...dramatically employed for a tragic climax' and with great poignancy.[258] Certainly, the source narrative enforces this interpretation; we can find there passages such the following: 'The blyndfyld goddesse that with frowning face doth fraye, / And from theyr seate the mighty kinges throwes downe with hedlong sway, / Begynneth now to turne.'[259] However, we must beware lest we make too much of this impersonal factor. Tragic time almost by definition is existential and personal.[260] Kastan, who regards as contradictory coincidence and tragic time, gives his view a philosophical underpinning by importing Heidegger's idea of human time: directional, irreversible, and finite.[261] An interpretation putting tragedy down to mischance side-steps the human factor conducive to the catastrophe. In *Romeo and Juliet* the human factor has concrete forms and manifestations: 1. the feud between the two clans; 2. Romeo with his belief in the inauspicious influence of the stars or fate; 3. unsuitable messengers; 4. the immaturity of Juliet as a bride; 5. Friar Laurence's death-counterfeiting schemes, and — last but not least — 6. the overhasty marriage (the age of the bride put aside) — all these instruments help to prepare the calamitous conclusion. Unfortunately, only some of them have been considered significant for the idea of time in the play. More troubling still, the role of the emblematic, man-adverse, Time-Death alliance, has also been overlooked.

The feud or the 'ancient grudge' entraps the lovers before they have been able to realise the danger. At the ball, they are fearful of their momentous encounter. Their reciprocated affection is accompanied by apprehension. The very infatuation — its meaning fully grasped in the broader context of the conflict of the households — seems to be a curse set by spiteful fate:

JULIET My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known *too late*!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathed enemy.

I.v.137

One should not underestimate the operative value of such passages, which foreshadow the fatal mistiming of the last scene. Before the encounter, Romeo himself expresses misgiving, yet without a clearly conceived reason. The juxtaposition of 'too early' and 'too late' points to the pattern in which ill timing plays a significant part:

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[258] Iwasaki, *The Sword...*, p. 23.

[259] Brooke, *Romeus and Juliet*, 910 ff. Cf. Romeo's anguished 'O, I am fortune's fool' (III.i.138).

[260] David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (Hanover & New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1982), p. 79.

[261] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

BENVOLIO ...Supper is done, and we shall come *too late*.
ROMEO I fear, *too early*: for my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his *fearful date*
With this night's revels and expire the term
Of a despised life closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of *untimely death*.
But He, that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail! On, lusty gentlemen.
I.iv.106

Death then, not Chance or Occasion, has to lead our way to the meaning of time in *Romeo and Juliet*.

The last act consistently sustains this early anticipation of a catastrophe. Evoking dramatic irony, Shakespeare plays with the sentiments and expectations of the audience. In Scene V.i, Romeo wakes shaking off a dream in which Juliet finds him dead. Still, he looks forward to good tidings from Verona. Balthasar arrives hastily and informs him of Juliet's death. This shatters all hope. The audience hears Romeo's defiance of the stars and the decision to commit suicide is not long in coming. Characteristically, it is all but viciously rash: 'O *mischief*, thou art *swift* / To enter in the thoughts of desperate men!' This is one of many utterances that sustain the mood of pessimism and determinism introduced early on in the play.[262] All of them are 'beats' whose rhythmic occurrence leads us continuously on to the resolution. The double action of death and haste builds up an aura of fatalism, which has come to typify the story of the star-crossed lovers. The protagonists' fatalistic bent is part of the price that has to be paid for Brooke's story ever to become tragedy rather than a record of unlucky coincidences. Has not Romeo been a pessimist before the horizon around him begins to cloud? After all, despite his attempts to cheer himself up, the fantasy of his formidable dream has been the product of *his* idle brain, 'I dreamt my lady came and found me dead' (V.i.6). More chillingly still, in his dream Romeo goes inside his corpse, 'Strange dream, that gives a dead man leave to think!' And perhaps most shocking of all is the near-necrophiliac sequel, 'And [Juliet] breathed such life with kisses in my lips, / That I revived, and was an emperor.' I do not see why we should hesitate to give the well-deserved name of morbidity to the atmosphere evoked by a large chunk of the play's imagery. The pervasive stench of death has not been fumigated even by studies such as that by Ronald Knowles, focused on the play's carnivalesque motifs. Also, it seems important to note to what extent the carnivalesque is overcome by the cadaverous.[263]

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[262] The early indications of the tragic are more significant than 'proleptic notes', as Knowles calls them. Davis speaks here of the scepticism of romantic union ('Desire and Presence...', p. 58).

4.2.2. Love-devouring death

The association of time and death can boast an ancient emblematic pedigree. No other commonly shared ideas, even if worked into stunning philosophical insights, can ever replace the rich imaginative potential of death-related tropes and emblematic motifs which a dramatist has on hand when writing a tragedy. We have already mentioned the iconographic combination of death and time. Iwasaki devotes to this theme a chapter of his book entitled 'Time and Death'.[264] However, as in the case of the carnivalesque, the outcome is rather disappointing. The author touches upon a great number of motifs. First, the figure of Saturn the Reaper has imaginatively combined Time and Death. Another common depiction is the Dance of Death which is meant to illustrate, among other things, the equality of all men in the presence of death, the confrontation of the living with the dead, and — further still — the moral of *memento mori.*[265] These ideas accentuate the universal subjection of all living creatures to the inexorable action of Death, the mythological Reaper. Iwasaki concentrates on the meaning of Death which is emblematic of time's unpredictability, stressing its Christian provenance. Though effectively present in *Measure for Measure*, for instance, this idea has little to do with the idiom of *Romeo and Juliet*. We have to discriminate between the Christian unpredictability of the summons to a moral reckoning and the essentially non-Christian view that unpredictable Death is the common Leveller instead of a moment of passage to afterlife or, in a carnivalesque version, a principle of regeneration.[266] This distinction can hardly be overemphasised.

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[263] Ronald Knowles, 'Carnival and Death in *Romeo and Juliet*: a Bakhtinian Reading', *Shakespeare Survey*, 49 (1996), pp. 69-84 (This article was reprinted as Chapter 3 in Ronald Knowles (ed.), *Shakespeare and Carnival. After Bakhtin*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998.) Knowles may be right in seeing in the Nurse an embodiment of 'the carnivalesque embrace of existence' (p. 75); still he has to admit that 'carnival surrenders to tragedy at the close', 'the festive is finally superseded by the counter-carnival triumph of death' (p. 78). In my opinion Knowles gives ample treatment to how the motif of death as lover (*ibid.*) transcends, subverts, and stifles the carnivalesque.

[264] *The Sword...*, pp. 32-49.

[265] Knowles, who also analyses Danse Macabre, emphasises its 'anti-carnivalesque view of music, dancing and love' ('Carnival and Death...', p. 83).

Despite, then, the iconographic (and proverbial)[267] blending of Time with Death the meaning of the union remains rather obscure. Moreover, the employment of Time the Devourer in a tragedy of desire seems to lack an emblematic precedent. Many passages not only contain imagery which doggedly and disquietingly penetrates the idiom of the play, they also establish the intimate connection between death and desire that lies at the foundation of the tragic resolution. Due to the on-stage deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt Death's presence becomes palpable.[268] This does not, however, prevent the characters from indulging in death imagery which is applied to nearly all situations and evoked in nearly every scene of the play. Of interest to us, however, are only those examples where death and desire contribute to an effect of figurative anticipation. This begins as early as the opening scene, with Sampson talking about the cutting off of maidenheads (I.i.23-5). Later on, it takes the Friar a while to persuade Romeo that banishment is not death; and the audience has a fresh memory of Juliet's similar disquietude when bewailing Romeo's exile to Mantua.[269] The macabre image of Death as lover is first conjured up at the end of the feast scene in Juliet's: 'If [Romeo] be married, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed' (I.v.135). Here begins the portentous blurring of the dividing line between love and hate, attraction and repulsion, the principle of growth and the principle of destruction. If, runs Juliet's reasoning, she has fallen for an enemy of her clan, she is doomed. She takes up the motif of marriage to Death after Romeo's killing of Tybalt, 'I'll to my wedding bed, / And death, not Romeo take my maidenhead' (III.iii.135 ff). Capulet in a similar way anticipates Romeo's horrid metaphors and quibbling when lamenting over Juliet's seeming-dead body.

CAPULET [*Addressing Paris*]...
O son, the night before thy wedding day
Hath Death lain with thy wife. There she lies,
Flower as she was, deflowered by him.

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[266] Knowles finds an advocate of the carnivalesque idea of death in Friar Laurence, quoting his lines at the beginning of II.iii. Earth ('tomb') and body ('womb') sustain and reproduce one another (*ibid.*, p. 76).

[267] Commentators on Sonnet 19 quote Tilley, 'Time devours all things'; and Golding's Ovid, 'Thou tyme, the eater up of things, and age of spyghtfull teene destroy all things' (Book XV, ll. 258-9, in Booth, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Appendix 2).

[268] We ought not to forget also the offstage death of Lady Montague (V.iii.210); cf. Kastan, *Shapes of...*, p. 89.

[269] 'Some word there was, worser than Tybalt's death, / That murder'd me: I would forget it fain' (III.iii.108).

Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir;
My daughter he hath wedded. I will die,
And leave him all: life, living, all is Death's.
IV.v.35

Romeo's dream in Mantua is itself anticipated in the parting scene of Act III:

JULIET O think'st thou we shall ever meet again?
ROMEO I doubt it not; and all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.
JULIET O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb:
Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale.
III.v.51

Shortly afterwards, Juliet portentously prevaricates in the presence of her mother, 'Indeed I never shall be satisfied / With Romeo, till I behold him — dead —' (III.v.94). To this pattern of gruesome foreshadowing contribute also her uneasy premonitions when parting from her mother on the Tuesday night. Further, it is impossible to ignore her morbid soliloquy delivered before drinking off the potion.[270] And here is how Romeo strengthens the bond between Thanatos and Eros: 'Well, Juliet, I will *lie* with thee tonight' (V.i.34). Predictably, two scenes later, we encounter the eerie courtship between Love and Death. Before Romeo enters it he apostrophises the tomb as a man-devouring monster:

Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death,
Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth,
Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open,
And, in despite, I'll cram thee with more food!
V.iii.45

In the same vein, he threatens Balthasar:

By heaven, I will tear thee joint by joint
And strew this *hungry* churchyard with thy limbs.
V.iii.35

All this wordplay and imagery are very symptomatic, and the examples quoted, perhaps not the most startling, do not exhaust the rich repertoire of motifs that evoke the fusion of love and death. In their contribution to the tragic dynamics, they are of primary significance. In view of the above, the role of coincidence and mistiming seems far less important than that of the adversity and deep-running affinity between time and desire. 'Time' — argues Davis — 'allows desire to be acted out but also threatens its fulfilment, by either running out or not stopping'.[271] But in *Romeo and Juliet*, desire and time co-operate to bring about a catastrophe.

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[270] To this list we could add the wordplay on 'death' from her Phoebus soliloquy in III.ii: 'Galop apace, you fiery footed steeds.'

Romeo's servant in Scene V.iii gives voice to our anxieties when he says, 'I do beseech you, sir, have patience: / Your looks are pale and wild, and do import / Some misadventure.' One sees in Romeo's response to the news a feature which he shares with some of Shakespeare's other tragic heroes: the desire to embody, or identify with, the properties of time itself, which is instrumental in producing the tragic outcome. This conclusion is perplexing: Romeo wishes to become Death/Destiny incorporate, and indeed his lines evoke a fairly intimate relationship.[272] Feeding the tomb with Paris' body, Romeo casts himself in the role of his own undertaker. 'Death,' — he says, addressing the corpse — 'lie thou there, by a dead man interr'd'. In bizarre accord with these representations is the following shocking image, employed by Romeo when he addresses the body of his ostensibly departed bride:

> Ah, dear Juliet,
> Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
> That unsubstantial Death is amorous,
> And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
> Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
>
> V.iii.101

All these lurid passages weave a consistent pattern that prepares an anti-comic resolution. The morbid build-up causes the audience to anticipate nuptials set in the tomb instead of the above-ground marital union, or rather reunion, that conventionally resolves comic plots.

4.2.3. Most miserable hour that e'er time saw

The next task is to undertake an analysis of the referential-mimetic background of this complex iconographic and figurative representation. We have mentioned the characteristic extended temporal deixis. Tanselle argues that ‘the numerous time references do more than merely provide a timetable for the plot’.[273] There is no doubting this. ‘Their unusual frequency and specificity’ — he continues — ‘would indicate that they are especially important to Shakespeare in this play and that they are used in other ways than as the calendar.’ This is also true insofar as the frequent occurrence of time specifications justifies inferences about meanings other than literal. But to what extent they bear such meanings remains to be seen. As we shall see, there are interesting non-referential uses of the time lexicon in *Romeo and Juliet* which have to be analysed before we finally tackle the representation of time in more concrete forms. There are examples, for instance, of the use of very casual vocabulary, such as ‘hour’ and ‘day’, in a poetic rather than dramatic manner.

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[271] 'Desire and Presence...', p. 59.

[272] Of course in the first half of the play the role was assumed by Tybalt (cf. his challenge in Act I, 'Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death'). But, significantly, Tybalt is slain by Romeo.

In a meticulous analysis of the offstage and onstage lives of the characters in the play, Anthony Brennan computes the number of lines relating to a person’s presence on the stage or their absence from it. Of special interest are passages where a joint action of mimesis and reference clearly indicates a character’s sense of time. A model example is Scene II.v, in which Juliet impatiently awaits the return of the Nurse from her errand. The girl’s soliloquy addresses mental time, which of course reflects her anxious anticipation. The general idea is well known, developed at length by Rosalind in *As You Like It*, where she remarks that ‘[Time] trots hard with a young maid between the contract of her marriage and the day it is solemnized: if the interim be but a se’nnight, Time’s pace is so hard that it seems the length of seven year’. Drawing on similar motifs (‘Love’s heralds should be thoughts, / Which ten times faster glide than the sun’s beams’) the passage from *Romeo and Juliet* is significant further in that it represents time also by its own length, or onstage duration. Theme corresponds with mimesis.

After the Nurse’s arrival, by ‘stringing out the report’, as Brennan calls it, and by trying Juliet’s strained patience in so doing, Shakespeare brings forth the significant contrast between the ways the two generations in the play experience time.[274] A similar sequence is staged in Scene III.ii. Juliet is found musing over the interval between the tedious present and the much-wished-for consummation of her marriage. The Nurse rushes in and breaks the news of Tybalt’s death and Romeo’s banishment. Brennan aptly remarks that there is no obvious reason why Shakespeare should stage another report of events the audience has just witnessed. Accelerate the action it does not. On the contrary, Shakespeare apparently brings to the fore the discrepancy between Juliet’s time of solitary longing and the rushing-on time of events over which she has no control. This makes Brennan speak of

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[273] Tanselle, ‘Time in . . .’, p. 350.

[274] Cf. Brennan, *Onstage and Offstage Worlds . . .*, p. 214.

'a structural pause and a redirection of the drive and focus of the play', but he falls short of identifying the time quality that accompanies this shift.[275] One misconstrues this shift of emphasis at the turn of Acts III and IV if one sees it as a structural pause. The psychic quality of lived time hardly matches the accelerated pace of events. As Brennan's computation demonstrates, feeling comes into focus rather that acting. In other words, Shakespeare sets scenes depicting prolonged mental anguish against a precipitating framework of shortened duration.

Scene IV.v is one of such moments; Juliet is found dead on the day she was to be married to Paris. The lamentation over her body practically effects a stasis, which is embedded in the context of the short time of the potion sequence. For the dramatic mimesis of time, 'day' and 'hour' have distinct meanings and functions, whereas rhetorically it is of no great importance which of them is used as their poetic and expressive role is defined by the context. Lady Capulet's image of time's drudgery does not in any direct way match Capulet's personification of a virulent, wrack-bringing agent. Only genuine temporal specifications add up to a time-scheme. The pretence of Juliet's death, unlike that of Hero in *Much Ado*, is marked by a tragic flaw: the parents are not to see their daughter alive again.

The passage is a dramatic realisation of the rhetoric that subordinates time's units to personified Time (cf. above 2.1.1), a process that severs them from their referential function. Apart from that, it is a dramatic realisation of the otherwise well-known motif of death through childlessness. There seems to be space for abundant use of the imagery of destructive time, such as wintry barrenness with Death nipping the buds of youth (reminiscent of Sonnet 5).

CAPULET *Death* lies on her like an *untimely* frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.
NURSE O lamentable *day*!
LADY CAPULET O woful *time*!
IV.v.28

Lady Capulet's invective makes time's operation almost tangible through the emotive association of time's pilgrimage with maternal toil:

LADY CAPULET Accurs'd, unhappy, wretched, hateful *day*.
Most miserable *hour* that e'er *time saw*
In lasting labour of *his pilgrimage*!
IV.v.43

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[275] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

The audience witness here a moment of tragic stasis, more radically disassociated from its dramatic placement than Lucrece's drawn-out lamentation, which, as we have seen, is justified by the larger narrative context. Nor can this poetically extended moment be called 'longer time', as proposed by Tanselle. These tropes, especially coming in such abundance, stimulate contemplation and empathy rather than arouse tension. This dramatic deceleration consists not only in the fact that there is no offstage action to precipitate events. The rhetoric effects a compression of existence into a ball of temporally indefinite experience. The lived time of the characters is to be aesthetically savoured and related to personal attitudes but it cannot be projected onto the oncoming events. Time references may be as numerous here as anywhere, yet in their poetic, non-deictic use, they fail to perform the strictly dramatic function of stirring up anticipation. On the contrary, occurring at a moment of unexpected acceleration (the speeding on of the wedding), they intensify the impression of a sudden, unexpected and uncalled-for temporal halt. If any dramatic function at all is involved it is indirect and consists in a mimetic foreshadowing of the catastrophe. Moreover, the on-stage stasis drives home its symbolic and meta-tragic meaning as 'the absence of meaningful futurity'.[276] Pertinently, albeit cruelly, lifeless statues will be erected to perpetuate the story.

4.2.4. Nothing slow to slack this haste

Davis's observation that 'the drama alternates between instants of passion, when time seems to stand still, and inevitable returns to the ongoing rush of events', is mimetically confirmed by the action itself, as we have seen. However, haste is also addressed thematically.[277] Initially, Romeo is shown languishing in the pangs of unrequited love (I.i.161), his hours lengthened by amorous longing. With the prospect of reciprocity, 'tomorrow' begins to measure the tempo of the action. The urgency evoked in the balcony scene in II.i. is symptomatic. From here on the detrimental nature of haste is repeatedly accentuated.[278] Juliet provokes haste but at the same time evokes natural time, 'This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, / May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet', and warns against love that is 'too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden' (II.ii.116 ff). Romeo, in whom impulsiveness is soon seen to be a feature of character, sounds ominously rash in his interview with the Friar:

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[276] Kastan, *Shapes of...*, p. 89.

[277] 'Desire and Presence...', p. 60.

[278] The word 'haste' is used 15 times ('hie' — 8 times); and 'tomorrow' 15 times (for comparison, in *Richard II* the former accounts for 7 uses, and the latter for 3 uses). Expectedly, in *Much Ado*, with its analogous next-day-wedding plot, the respective figures are 4 and 14.

ROMEO Amen, amen, but come what sorrow can,
It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
That *one short minute* gives me in her sight.
Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
Then *love-devouring death* do what he dare:
It is enough I may but call her mine.

II.vi.3

He is obviously keen to trade 'one short minute of bliss' for the 'long love' of the monk's advice. Ironically, as well as scrupulously, one short minute of an exchange of joy is all the couple will in fact enjoy. From now on the audience will sadly partake of exchanges of anxiety and mourning rather than amorous rapture. The 'exchange of joy' between the couple is intruded upon by concrete time with the necessity of Romeo's banishment impressed on it.

From a different angle, Romeo's vision of happiness is at least more moderate, more humble, and more observant of the fickleness of fortune than that of an Othello. Yet the Friar calls for moderation and patience, and supports his advice with the idiom of the self-consuming passion (cf. above, Chapter 2.1). Ideally, the future develops as a process instead of shooting like a rocket. The Friar takes a long-term, theological perspective rather than the immediate one typical of the new philosophy and modern times.

FRIAR LAURENCE These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
Which as they kiss consume. The sweetest honey
Is loathsome in his own deliciousness,
And in the taste confounds the appetite.
Therefore love moderately; long love doth so.
Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.
[*Enter Juliet somewhat fast and embraces Romeo*][279]

II.vi.1-15

As Juliet's entrance mimetically confirms, the admonition of temperance is doomed to go unheeded, and the Friar himself is fated to act against it. Worldly wisdom says 'to keep time in all' (*Othello*, IV.i.92; ironically, it is Iago's advice), and this particular saw, *festina lente*, develops its own individual story in the play. It seems that the course of the action disproves such wisdom inasmuch as traffic with relentless mundane necessities is earthlings' daily bread. The Friar's own schemes are put in disarray by chance and misfortune, as circumstances enforce compliance with the racing tempo of events. It is the Friar, who having three hours to get to the Capulets' tomb in Act V, fails to make it on time, being overtaken by Romeo and his post-horses. The catastrophe he sought to prevent comes to illustrate the truth of the aphorism.

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[279] This extended stage direction comes from Quarto I. The word 'tardy' at the end of Friar Laurence's speech is most startling. 'Tardy' means slow, too slow, belated, etc.; the meaning of the line should then be: to be too hasty means to expose oneself to the hazard of forceful slowing. Hence the hasty turns up late, so to speak; i.e. fails to achieve the desired goal on time.

Rashness inevitably militates against moderation. Criticism has seen this clash as one of two time senses. As one of the critics puts it: 'part of the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* stems from the fact that the sensible and prudent have no place in a world of impetuous and passionate creatures'.[280] It cannot be denied that this conflict of attitudes, that of the young and that of the old, is auxiliary to the catastrophic ending.[281] But one ought not to overrate its meaning. In the initial stages the young are 'hot' and intemperate (cf. Juliet's soliloquy, when awaiting Romeo, 'Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,' III. ii.). But then their rashness is outdone by their elders. Romeo and Juliet try to intervene, attempting in vain to prevent this double acceleration. The 'older generation' — here of primary importance are Friar Laurence and Capulet — has a busy hand in the calamitous finale. The Friar meddles in affairs of life and death.[282] It is he who brings in the time limit for the plan to be played out in. He also employs as a messenger one of his brethren, inept for the task, because it is against the rules of the order for a Franciscan monk to travel alone (cf. V.ii).

Yet the young generation, and especially Juliet, has a special inner sensitivity and insight into time's *subjective* value. The so-called relativity of time frequently finds utterance.[283] It is Juliet who twice relativises the pace of time on personal attitude, as in

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[280] Rozett, 'The Comic Structures...', p. 156.

[281] 'Just as there is nothing casual about the time in *Romeo and Juliet*, so would it be more accurate to say that the leisureliness of the time of the older generation forms a background which makes the tragedy of haste even more tense by contrast. The older generation is part of the tragedy, too, however, since it becomes ineffective and doomed to failure when forced to act with the speed of youth'; Thomas G. Tanselle, 'Time in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (Autumn 1964), p. 361.

[282] In her article Rozett is largely concerned with the motif of feigned death and the ensuing resurrection in Shakespeare (the ruse is used in five comedies and romances), and *Romeo and Juliet* is here treated as one particular application of the general scheme. Little attention, however, is paid to the broader context provided by the imagery of Death and the Friar's ineffectual and hazardous game against it.

[283] Cf. Juliet in the balcony scene: 'I must hear from thee every day in the hour, / For in a minute there are many days: / O, by this count I shall be much in years / Ere I again behold my Romeo!'

JULIET At what o'clock to-morrow
Shall I send to thee?
ROMEO At the hour of nine.
JULIET I will not fail: *'tis twenty years till then.*
I have forgot why I did call thee back.

II.ii.167

Of course, 'twenty years' exceeds Juliet's modest age. This reference fits with other non-mimetic uses of time specifications. As we remember, the nurse can tell Juliet's age to the minute; but Juliet, symptomatically, cannot recall her decision of seconds ago. What thus comes to the fore is a total immersion in the present. By the same token, the union in marriage cannot be put off because the couple seem unable to relate to lengths of time exceeding one day. In the passage already mentioned, from the beginning of Scene II.v, Juliet's waiting for the news stretches time. The idea there expressed of thoughts travelling faster than sun-beams, and therefore being more appropriate messengers, is another bitter anticipation of Act V, where Friar Laurence's letter fails to reach Romeo.[284]

Capulet's decisions, too, contribute to the many unfavourable semi-coincidences. Yielding to the pressure of Paris, who is as rash as Romeo, Tybalt, and Mercutio, Capulet acts against his better judgement which tells him that Juliet is too immature to make a bride (I.ii). First the repeated mention of Thursday as the day appointed for the wedding (III.iv through IV.i) hammers it home. Against this is cast the Friar's counter-scheme, which initiates the potion sequence. This scheme is peculiar in that it consists in putting off the seemingly inevitable, in gaining time by attempting to halt its natural progress. The Friar's explication of how the potion operates has a remote parallel in Macbeth's time-halting soliloquy (*Macbeth*, I.vii.1 ff). The counterfeit death has the aim of 'jumping the life to come'. The word 'surcease' appears in both speeches:

FRIAR LAURENCE ...And this distilling liquor drink thou off;
When presently through all thy veins shall run
A cold and drowsy humour, for *no pulse*
Shall keep his native progress, but surcease:
...
The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
To paly ashes, thy eyes' windows fall
Like death when he shuts up the day of life;
Each part, depriv'd of supple government,

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[284] In the latest Hollywood film adaptation the problems of communication are translated into contemporary context: the Friar sends Romeo a fast registered letter (as 'post-haste dispatch'), which is not delivered because of Romeo's temporary absence from his camper in Mantua. Before he arrives, the postman's note gets carried away by the wind.

> Shall stiff and stark and cold appear, *like death*,
> And in this *borrow'd likeness of shrunk death*
> Thou *shalt continue two and forty hours*,[285]
> And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.
>
> IV.i.94

The action gains its fatal momentum with Juliet's acquiescence to her father's will, which follows her agreement to go along with the Friar's scheme. In Scene IV.ii (Tuesday night), on Juliet's return from the Friar, Capulet decides to advance the date of the wedding. This of course throws the Friar's scheme in jeopardy. Capulet's decision outpaces Friar Laurence's scheme and necessitates the use of a hasty messenger.

We shall now return to an earlier theme with the aim of capturing the nature of the outstanding mixture of figurative and pedestrian representations which make time almost tangible. We have mentioned the rigorous observance of clock and calendar time. The plot is, to quote McGinn, 'dated throughout with a most exact attention to hours'.[286] On the basis of his meticulous study of the numerous time-references alone, Tanselle concludes that 'time is one of the chief concerns of the play'.[287] The Arden editor suggests that this fact intimates something essential in the authorial design. 'This is consistent with his [Shakespeare's] concern to impose a firm overall dramatic structure on the loosely episodic *novella* of Brooke's version (the action of which he has compressed from a period of nine months to a few days).'[288] All these observations fail to address the main issue, that is, the dramatic effectiveness of the scheme. The importance of this problem is all the greater due to the incoherencies which seem to undermine the efficacy of a tight temporal scheme in the first place.

Contrary to common opinion, the events of Act V do not produce the catastrophe, thanks to which the title of the play has become synonymous with foredoomed love. The question of how lives could have been saved 'if only...', makes no sense, nor was it Shakespeare's concern. This is not to say that the events in their actual sequence have no 'meaning'. On the contrary; however, one has to glean it from the more general features of the representation of time in the play. Certainly, Friar Laurence *should be able* to reach the tomb on time. He has three hours to get there before Juliet wakes. Yet he comes late. Why? And why is he in such a hurry in the first place? Strangely, this question hardly ever gives critics pause. We take it for granted that the Friar has to get there before Romeo. But this clearly cannot be the Friar's motivation as he has no idea that Romeo has received word of Juliet's death and is now speeding back to Verona driven by a suicidal intent. Nor are we expected to believe that it is. Instead, a more sophisticated motive is given, which fits the larger theme of the consuming time very well. Juliet is a 'Poor living corse, closed in a dead man's tomb!' She has to be wrenched free from Death's embraces.

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[285] This designation of 'two and forty hours' is the major crux of the play's time-scheme, as we recall from Buland's introduction.

[286] Quoted by Gibbons, 'Introduction', p. 54. On the importance of the time-scheme in *Romeo and Juliet* cf. also Jones, *Scenic Form...*, p. 56.

[287] Tanselle, 'Time in *Romeo and Juliet*', p. 351.

[288] Gibbons, 'Introduction', p. 54.

One is left to pure speculation about the causes of the Friar's delay, yet this offstage slip is clearly not the point. Has he already dropped us a hint in one of his aphorisms? 'Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.' It is certainly no coincidence that one of the critics used his words to describe his calamitous belatedness (cf. above, a quote from Rozett's article). Furthermore, the reason for Romeo not receiving the letter from Verona is extraordinary: the plague. Should we spy here yet another bite of omnipresent 'cormorant' Death snapping away at life's tissue?

Conclusions to Chapters 3 and 4

It is characteristic of Shakespearean comedies, some notable exceptions notwithstanding, that they locally elaborate on time-related *topoi*. The copiousness of time-thematic intrusions is strangely at odds with their relative dramatic insignificance. *As You Like It* offers many relevant examples of such thematic padding, a phenomenon that could be called mimetic temporal diegesis: Jaques' account of Touchstone's contemplation of the dial (II.vii.12 ff.); Jaques' *theatrum humanae vitae* set piece ('All the worlds a stage'; II.vii.139 ff.); the exchange between Rosalind-as-Ganimede and Orlando (III.ii.194 ff.). A more universal thematic motif to be developed for the purpose of dramatic precipitation is hidden behind the outward rhetoric flourish used as a means of time-spending. On the other hand, *All's Well* is almost all time-mimetic, as the tightly woven dramatic fabric helps to convey a temporal theme (that of Occasion), only to question its soundness in the resolution. Both these comedies contain an outstanding meta-dramatic potential in that they raise the awareness of the response to the temporal quality of the stage business.

Measure for Measure, being a problem comedy where the theme of augmentative time is more consistently woven into the dramatic fabric, may be treated as an exception. Where the lives of one's nearest and dearest are at stake there is no time to waste on language games such as those encouraged by the leisurely, albeit crude, sylvan environment of *As You Like It*. Shakespeare availed himself of the imagery of natural growth and decomposition whenever he sought to represent the dynamics of both good and evil as well as to deepen the motivation of characters. *Othello* is here a very conspicuous example and shares many motifs with *Measure for Measure*. At no time ought we to forget that imagery, especially occurring early on in a play's action, performs a specific dramatic function. Images of conceiving, breeding, and hatching commonly make up for the mimetic deficiencies of stage-time, for lack of time to show an action in its 'real' duration; the time, for example, during which Iago's 'muse' labours to deliver a catastrophe.

Comedies offer a more mimetic treatment of time than tragedies. Dramatic traffic underscores the existential value of time. What comedies do bring forth thematically is Occasion and Necessity, both played mimetically against a verbally sustained duration. In *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like It* language is shown as a potential corrupter of time. Language encourages characters to miss or waste opportunities, intoxication by the smoke of words being a temptation too strong to resist. Rhetoric and time-defying poetry are juxtaposed with the mimetic vibrancy of a passing occasion or of a pressing necessity. Hence the importance of temporal deixis and short-term specifications to effect tight sequential hook-ups.

Thus, in an unresolved bind, the comedies show forth time to be lived and enjoyed; their dramatic nerve, the intrusion of suspense and precipitation, bursts any self-contented verbal detachment. Sometimes, as is the case in *All's Well*, the pursuit of the comic reunion, the sole goal of the dramatic movement, collapses and must be relegated to an undramatised future. This makes us aware of how self-reflexive Shakespeare's art is on the issue of time as well as that of dramatic creativity as such. It is no coincidence that the 'purest' of comedies, *Love's Labour's Lost* — which not only lacks a narrative source but seems to be devoid of a conventional plot as well — addresses head-on the meta-dramatic question of the discrepancy between plot time and playing time. This is also a play which boldly thematises — through the medium of comic preoccupation with words — ill-advised negligence of time. The climactic breaking-in of the offstage reality is a potent mimetic *coup de théâtre* due to its sweeping meta-dramatic impact. It demonstrates that the relation between onstage and offstage action is one between real and imaginary time, a relation which is crucial for most of the tragedies. The hasty messenger is time's comic impersonation, the summons of on-rushing actuality.

In many comedies, set pieces (emblematic or otherwise) openly thematise time without precipitating the action. This feature is relatively absent from the tragedies. The image of the seeds of time in *Macbeth* evokes no tableau and — crucial as it is — is mentioned as if in passing. No wonder that in search of its obscure origin, scholars have delved into the beginnings of Neoplatonism.

The ghastly obstetrics of time in *Othello* and the temporal orthopaedics in *Hamlet* are also novel and provoking images that disseminate idioms auxiliary to the climax. *Antony and Cleopatra*, for instance, is exceptional in its iterative evoking of Fortune. Emblematic background, however, is never extensively elaborated on, as if by so doing the dramatist would risk giving his game away. Curt reference is preferred to extensive verbal processing, which would hamper the mimetic effectiveness of the motif.

Even if we accept Horst Breuer's view of the essential kinship between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in that they both present temporal disintegration, its experience is attained with the help of classic short-term anticipation. The powerful imaginative effect Beckett's drama produces on the audience is achieved in part through its dismantling of the conventional next-day reference. That time specifications in *Waiting for Godot* fail to work is one thing; that their placement is largely, albeit deviously, conventional is another. It is not accidental that in his study of the dramatic tension Pütz repeatedly refers to *Macbeth* and *Waiting for Godot* in order to illustrate his point: that there is no drama without the joint action of anticipation and completion, the difference being that the experimentalist frustrates our desire for completion while the classic is at pains to fulfil it.[289]

There is, it seems, in both the tragic and the comic modes of time-thematisation (despite the difference mentioned: the comic mode being that of local thematising and the tragic that of penetrating idiom), a common feature: preconceptions tested in the heat of dramatic action. A yardstick for such testing is the dramatic mimesis which — in its turn — has its own devices for bringing time into focus, especially by the multiple application of time deixis as a species of temporal hook-ups. Tragedies establish a firm groundwork of augmentative or generative time whose dynamic rendition is the function of time imagery or time conceptualisation. Here *Othello* is both a notable exception as well as partial confirmation in that it effectively uses organic imagery for the purpose of dramatic precipitation, and yet lets the villain seize and penetrate this domain of generative temporality. Other tragedies shun such utter destructiveness and negativity and spare generative time from corruption. In them, generative time provides a relatively stable riverbed, into which human time pours acceleration and precipitation. Neglect of life's necessities as well as any kind of temporising are presented as potentially ruinous. Here however *Romeo and Juliet* stands out due to its 'comic' plan of marital culmination and the dominating next-day scheme of anticipation which is also characteristic of comedy. Shakespeare allows his characters to tamper with this scheme, speed on events, and tragically foreclose the consummation. Concrete time is brought to a sudden halt to give way to a poetically elaborated and celebrated stasis. During this stasis however nature does not seem dead, as is the case in the second act of *Macbeth*, simply because 'great creating nature' (cf. *The Winter's Tale*, IV.iv.88) is hardly allowed to come into play. With the prominent position of concrete time, natural time is relegated to a minor position, though at no time allowed to fade into absence, and is applied to build up the necrophiliac imaginative anticipation of the climax.

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[289] Brennan states that 'Shakespeare was working on techniques in which Beckett came to specialise' (*Onstage and Offstage Worlds*..., p. 9).

In other tragedies, the long duration of the plot poses challenges of a different nature. In *Richard II*, to give an example, a dramatic rendering of history unavoidably involves discrepancies between the factual, or at least historically documented, 'raw material', and its stylisation. That a transition from the factual-historical to the dramatic naturally entails omission and 'telescoping' seems obvious enough,[290] yet the fact has not stopped some scholars from making 'findings' about Shakespeare's unrealistic handling of time. But concern with Shakespeare's 'technique' ought not to cashier other aspects. Observing technical anomalies does not help us to a better understanding of a play's idiom. In history-based tragedies next-day hook-ups are largely purposeless. However, Shakespeare does use short-time references to effect the type of sequential homogeneity which we proposed to call a short-time unit. We find examples in the Pompey sequence in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in the exposition of *Richard II*, and in the Duncan sequence in *Macbeth*. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the climactic local precipitation unit, the potion sequence, arithmetically implausible as it is, is perfectly successful mimetically because the consistent use of short-time references brings the action to a headlong resolution. In *Richard II*, clock time is severed from living time. Unlike Macbeth, Richard does not even get a chance to take arms against the generative potential of time, which becomes his enemy as soon as it proves serviceable to his opponents ('now hath time made me his numbering clock'; cf. Richard's entire soliloquy on time at V.v.41-61). In *Antony and Cleopatra* polity time and natural time are separated topographically and no groundwork dynamics is established which would unite both domains.

Another element for comparison can be found in the potential for impersonation. Growth, lineage, and continuation along with parentage and procreation form a very stable framework and shape the actual idiom of the tragedies of power. The equation king = time, that can be detected in *Richard II*, is also characteristic of *Macbeth*. In both plays, this formula suffers complication and distortion in the course of the action: in *Macbeth*, assassination and usurpation effect a temporal stasis. As a further consequence of its initial stifling, natural time is dissipated and assaults Macbeth in many different shapes and figures. In *Richard II*, the monarch's ineptitude brings on political upheaval. In the former tragedy, the usurper, despite his success in clearing his way to the throne, fails to embody or represent time, instrumental in the accession to power of the rival dynasty of Banquo. In the latter, time is gradually disembodied from Richard and finally seized and impersonated by the usurper. In both, we observe the process of the protagonist's increasing alienation from time. Both heroes challenge time and race against its progress, and both are eventually defeated. The male protagonist of *Antony and Cleopatra* is doubly removed from time. In Antony's world, Caesar impersonates Fortune, and Cleopatra time as the principle of regeneration and unhampered dynamism. Antony's personality is torn in two as he hesitates which of them to cling to.

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[290] Cf. for instance Peter Saccio's book *Shakespeare's English Kings. History, Chronicle, and Drama* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 20 ff.

As I tabulate these general observations I become increasingly convinced that any definite summary would contradict this study's fundamental assumption, which is to treat dramatic time as a live tissue rather than a glazed exhibit. One can only stalk this phenomenon by means of a dynamic *Auseinandersetzung*, rather than by frigid codification. Hence the proposal to replace a conventional final recap with a renewed approach to dramatic time that will hopefully offer us a widened outlook.

5. Time's multi-drama: A meta-dramatic reading of *The Tempest*

5.1. The time 'twixt six and now

A cursory glance at *The Tempest* might suggest that problems with which we have been concerned so far are not relevant to this play. The observance of the unity of time renders its construction relatively simple, especially if compared to the extravagant uses of time and place in the other romances. This apparent simplicity cannot imply that our approach will be futile. On the contrary, our analysis will show that this romance or tragicomedy occupies an outstanding position also with regard to its handling of time.

I am well aware that there are many possible readings of *The Tempest* as a meta-drama. Indeed, it is almost impossible to withstand this temptation. I have not encountered a consistent interpretation focused solely on dramatic time in *The Tempest*, and more specifically on how the play exposes and dismantles the dramatic artifice.[291] Since Shakespeare lets us peep at a dramatist's tricks of the trade, an investigation of his handling of time in *The Tempest* will appropriately round off our pursuits.

The Tempest, writes Buland, 'which is like the *dénouement* of the ordinary tragi-comedy, has the duration of its action so closely marked, and is so well within the unity of time, that the hours between two and six in the afternoon are made to comprise the entire action'.[292] Hence the frequent use of clock time for temporal reference. Already in the second scene of the play the audience is informed of the exact time:

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[291] A conventional interpretation of *The Tempest* can be found, for instance, in Douglas Peterson's *Time, Tide, and Tempest* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1973), pp. 218 ff. Although it is not uncommon to see Prospero as Shakespeare's self-image, it is definitely more out of the ordinary to see this character as a *dramatist* (as indeed we can to a lesser extent see an author in Titus, Hamlet, Iago, and other Shakespearean protagonists). Scholars, even those expressly dealing with time, Quinones and Kastan to mention but two, usually give a brief overview of the play's moral concerns.

PROSPERO What is the time o'th'day?
ARIEL Past the mid season.
PROSPERO At least two glasses. The time 'twixt six and now
Must by us both be spent most preciously.

I.ii.239[293]

Unlike the befuddled survivors newly ousted from the civilised world, the magus and his airy messenger have a remarkably acute awareness of how fast time flies, combined with a need to measure it. Evidently, Shakespeare the dramatist allowed the development of his plot to be constrained by a temporal limitation similar to the pressure under which his Prospero toils to accomplish his task. Not for a moment is the audience allowed to forget how long the action has lasted already or how much time is left until the completion — of both the action and Prospero's plan, these two being coextensive. In Act V, we are repeatedly reminded that three hours have already elapsed (V.i.136, 186, 223).[294] At this point, this remarkable temporal watchfulness is assessed.

PROSPERO Now does my project gather to a head:
My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and time
Goes upright with his carriage. How's the day?
ARIEL On the sixth hour; at which time, my lord,
You said our work should cease.

V.i.1-5

Time has been reckoned with the utmost precision, and Prospero is apparently satisfied with his perfect timing.

The Tempest, of course, almost completely lacks references to the next day,[295] which in itself is exceptional. The duration of the action is measured — in accordance with the short-clock scheme — in hours, or 'glasses'.[296] Just like the clock in the forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, this intrusion of time reckoning can be regarded as a remarkable importation of an exterior time sense, that of the audience, onto the texture of drama. The prevailing references to the clock might suggest that the preoccupation with time in *The Tempest* is chiefly technical or functional, directed by the neo-classical conventions for temporal unity.[297] In compressing the duration of the action to three hours Shakespeare may be thought to be trying to outstrip the classics. Yet, this compliance with the rule is not a factor extraneous to the action and its meaning. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, the Prologue sets the limits for the running time of the performance. However, the 'two hours' traffic of the stage' does not prescribe any constraints for the plot. These arise dynamically from within the action: the period of forty-odd hours for the operation of the potion is contrived by one of the characters. Not so in *The Tempest*. Here the duration of the action is 'co-extensive with' — as Schanzer puts it — the running time of the performance. This sounds almost un-Shakespearean. However, this duration is intrinsic to the action, reflected in both its rhythm and imagery. James Robinson, in his illuminating essay, gave the following formulation to the unique awareness and self-reflexivity of the play: 'the time of *The Tempest* is very much of the nature of *The Tempest*.... In short, time is a central element of the form and meaning of the play.'[298] Be it mockery of the classics, as Schenzer sees it, or a tribute to them, Shakespeare's strategic decision to comply with the unity of time has a meta-dramatic meaning especially if it is regarded from the perspective of Prospero's quasi-providential design.[299] In this sense, Shakespeare's experimentation with dramatic time sheds new light on the problems and ideas that have concerned us so far.

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[292] Buland, 'The Presentation...', pp. 128-9.

[293] The source for all quotes from *The Tempest* is Frank Kermode's Arden edition of 1954 (New York & London: Routledge, 1994).

[294] The only suggestion of a longer time can be found in the log-bearing scene in which Ferdinand mentions Miranda's pity of him toiling so much. Yet even here she reminds us of the amount of time for her father to remain busy with his task (III.i.21).

[295] The one exception appears as the action nears its close.

[296] The tempo of both sub-plots is rapid; both Caliban and Miranda speak of a short, half-hour span of anticipation (cf. III.i.91 and III.ii.111). Antonio and Sebastian put off the assassination of Alonso until 'tonight'.

5.2. Dost thou forget?

Whenever the unity of time is strictly observed, a large amount of the past has to be made present, i.e. a chunky past-story has to be made to bear upon the events that are dramatised. For the dramatised present to be understood and to evoke dramatic tension, events leading up to it have to be disclosed as causes of what is actually shown. This making present of the past is conventionally carried out in the form of a narrative. 'Well, Syracusian; say in brief *the cause* / Why thou departedst from thy native home, / And *for what cause* thou cam'st to Ephesus'; with these words such a narrative is introduced in *The Comedy of Errors* (I.i.28), which, too, is constructed according to the neoclassical recipe of temporal unity. However, there are considerable differences between this play and *The Tempest*, where the mimetic negotiation of the relevance of the past does not allow for a stilted diegetic inset.

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[297] Cf. Ernest Schanzer, 'Shakespeare and the Doctrine of the Unity of Time', *Shakespeare Survey* 28 (1975), pp. 57-61.

[298] James F. Robinson, 'Time and *The Tempest*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 63 (1964), p. 255.

[299] Schanzer sees in Prospero a dramatist obsessed and harassed by the unity precept ('Shakespeare and the Doctrine...', p. 60).

Pütz mentions three basic ways in which the past can be carried over into the represented action. The narrated back-story (*erzälte Vergeschichte*) comes out of *the past*, the dramatic prehistory as a state of affairs (*Vorgeschichte als Zustand*) emerges from *the present*, and the actualised prehistory (*aktualisierte Vorgeschichte*) sets out with a strongly emphasised intention directed towards the future.[300] But the exposition in *The Tempest* defies any clear-cut classification. It introduces the past in all the three ways although one tends to notice mostly the first. Prospero begins with a lengthy account that takes us back almost his entire lifetime. The exceptional character of the 'occasion' created by the tempest is underlined by, among other things, this narrative retrieval of the past. In *The Tempest*, unlike in *The Comedy of Errors*, wrenching the past from 'the dark backward and abysm of time' is not a smooth process. Instead, it becomes a piece of dramatic business of its own. Prospero repeatedly alerts Miranda's faltering attention, then forcefully and frenziedly wrestles his version of the past against the forgetfulness of Ariel and Caliban. The continual refreshing of Caliban's memory resembles Pavlov's conditioning, a sort of guard-keeping over the past that consists in repeated reinforcement. 'I must / Once in a month recount what thou hast been, / Which thou forget'st' (I.ii.261), are Prospero's words to Ariel. These forcible strategies evoke skepticism about the retrievability of the past, which puts a damper on the moral import of the master-plan. As Prospero's battle for the reinstatement of the past assumes Hamlet-like proportions, the here and now (in sharp contrast to the unbearable duration of Ariel's past imprisonment in the cleft oak) becomes the more palpable. In seizing the transient Opportunity, whose outward manifestation is the passing of his brother's ship near the island, Prospero has to struggle against the laws of 'mental' time which allow the past to fade to non-entity. This meta-dramatic aspect of *The Tempest* consists in the mimetic staging of the deficiencies of the audience's retentive reception, a constitutive element — as we have seen in Chapter 1 — in the deployment of the temporal unity in a drama.

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[300] Pütz, *Zeit...*, pp. 194-5.

5.3. Th'occasion speaks thee

The time of the action is critical and exceptional both artistically and existentially. 'It is the hour and minute, we learn, in which a whole time in this world is to be revealed, understood, and brought to resolution,' writes Robinson, and continues, 'the time of *The Tempest* is like the time of drama which is like the time of life'.[301] *The Tempest* can be regarded as a dramatic mimesis of Occasion.

In Prospero we can see the likes of the time-meddling friar from *Romeo and Juliet*. He is also running a race against time, time in the most common form defined by the position of the sun and the amount of sand in an hourglass. At the same time, Prospero transcends such subjection to time in that 'his prescience' lets him sense the fleeting opportunity that he cannot let pass. Here we recognise the Occasion known from *All's Well* and *As You Like It*. Prospero is determined not to miss the gift of Fortune and redeem time that seemed to him irretrievably lost (the analogy between Prospero's and Ariel's imprisonment in static time is striking).[302] But not only for Prospero is the island now a land of opportunities. The survivors too have their hopes of seizing Opportunity by the forelock. This makes us alert to three subplots in *The Tempest*: a plot of desire, with Miranda and Ferdinand, and two miniature dramas of power (that of the Trinculo group and that of the courtiers). As we shall see, both power subplots revolve around the idea of Occasion.

The idea of fortune helps Shakespeare combine the temporal restriction of the action with Prospero's master-plan, where concern with and about time is vital. He is convinced that fortune *now* smiles at him and has given him power over enemies:

> By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune,
> (Now my dear lady) hath mine enemies
> Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
> I find my zenith doth depend upon
> A most auspicious star, whose influence
> If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
> Will ever after droop.

I.ii.178-84

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[301] Robinson, 'Time and the Tempest...', p. 257.

[302] Cf. Kermode's note to I.ii.183 (Kermode, ed., Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, p. 21). The editor gives a parallel quote from *Julius Caesar*, IV.iii.216 ff. The marine lexicon ('tide', 'sea', and of course 'tempest') contains an important symbolic meaning suggestive of man's subjection to the decrees of fate (Fortune), thus of the essential contingency of existence. This symbolism is of course very distinctly articulated in *Antony and Cleopatra*; cf. Michael Lloyd, 'Antony and the Game of Chance', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 61 (1962), pp. 548-54. *The Tempest* also contains many relevant passages.

'The most pressing antagonist of Prospero is time itself,' writes Robinson.[303] This pressure is represented by the 'political' subplots of treason. The behaviour of Antonio and Trinculo should amaze us as foolishly carefree, even incomprehensible taking into account their miserable position as helpless castaways. This narrow vision is, of course, deliberately built into those plots. The bigger picture involves Prospero's perspective and the audience's judgements, both somehow encompassed by the overall dramatic-providential design. The villains seem to have retained a misplaced and corrupt sense of opportunity which lends the power subplots a near-tragic thrust. It is Antonio who with the words 'th' occasion speaks thee' seeks to persuade Sebastian to take ill advantage of the sleep of their companions. This situation is reminiscent of many dramatic turning points from earlier plays, where the vulnerability of sleep prompted the alternative between life and death, deliverance (in *As You Like It*) or damnation (in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*). 'The scene of the intended assassination of Alonzo and Gonzalo' — wrote Coleridge — 'is an exact counterpart of the scene between Macbeth and his lady, only pitched in a lower key throughout, as designed to be frustrated and concealed....'[304]

Prospero, however, understands Opportunity differently from the two villains, Antonio and Sebastian. There being good and bad occasions, the attitude to time is essential. Prospero has humbly waited for his occasion all the years spent on the island; now he is anxious not to miss it. Antonio and Sebastian share with other Shakespearean villains the illusion of the unlimited availability of time, of time's total serviceability to whatever ends they please. A peculiar idiom suggestive of a desire for absolute control and subjection of others serves to express this: 'For all the rest,... / They'll *tell the clock* to any business that / We say *befits the hour*' (II.i.282-5).[305] These are reverberations of the Machiavellian philosophy of fitting means to ends rather than harmonising life with the rhythm of time. In the same spirit, Caliban wants to take advantage of Prospero's nap in Scene III.ii. This is a comic version of the wasted occasion motif. Lured by 'glistering apparel' his human companions are unable to seize the opportune moment, they waste precious time in dispute (III.iii.247) and in consequence suffer Prospero's retaliation, so that finally he is proud to announce, 'At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies' (IV.i.262). Due to the potentially tragic narrowness of viewpoint, the two political subplots revolve around an utter neglect of reality, of the broader context of the present situation. With the exception of the grieved Alonso, whose position liberates him from any political ambitions or resentment, the survivors (Gonzalo with his vision of an utopian commonwealth not excluded) are preoccupied with their several schemes of how to seize and keep power. Both the drunkards and the noblemen betray here the typical villainous forgetfulness of the outward circumstances they are in, dreaming their respective dreams of 'royal sway and masterdom'. Luckily, one might say, Prospero has control over this catastrophic potential in the two groups carried away by their utopian or treasonous fantasies.

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[303] Robinson, 'Time and *The Tempest*...', p. 259.

[304] Quoted by Kermode, ed., *The Tempest*, p. 53.

[305] Kermode finds a parallel in *All's Well*, I.ii.38, where the King reminisces about Bertram's father, whose honour was 'clock to itself'. Yet there is a large discrepancy between these two ideas as the latter bespeaks an intuitive discernment of the exigency of the moment rather than an indiscriminate pursuit of egotistic goals.

Ferdinand partly belongs to this political sub-motif, yet he has a principal role to play in the plot of desire. Here occasion has a distinct meaning known from the comedies rather than tragedies. The couple's 'fair encounter' (cf. III.i.74) is celebrated by the masques, where the imagery of organic growth finds its rightful use in expression of the following blessings:

JUNO Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,
Long continuance, and increasing,
Hourly joys be still upon you!
Juno sings her blessings on you.
CERES Earth's increase, foison plenty,
Barns and garners never empty;
Vines and clust'ring bunches growing;
Plants with goodly burthen bowing;
Spring come to you at the farthest
In the very end of harvest!
Scarcity and want shall shun you;
Ceres' blessing so is on you.

IV.i.106-17

However, the festivities have to fight for stage time with the dramatic necessities occasioned by the other sub-plots. The music and the masques, lifting the viewers out of the current of events, clash with the heightened awareness of clock time. Once more, dramatic tension prevails over poetic duration.

PROSPERO [*Aside*] I had forgot that foul conspiracy
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
Against my life: *the minute of their plot*
Is almost come.

IV.i.139

Meta-dramatically, this is a reminder that a festive insertion of this kind always performs a function delineated by a larger dramatic context. An analogous situation takes place in *The Winter's Tale* (IV.iv). Laroque's comment, 'Every festival is by definition circumscribed within a period of limited time laid down in advance,'[306] does not apply to such moments of *intrusion* which are both arbitrary and necessitated by the preceding course of action rather than a rhythm intrinsic to the festive celebration. Laroque himself later admits that Shakespeare 'was out as much to subvert as to make use of the festive codes and schedules', and that the strongest voice ultimately is given to 'the internal organisation of the play and the particular dramatic genre to which it belongs'.[307] Prospero disrupting the masque out of necessity is how Shakespeare's validates and illustrates his licence as dramatist. We have commented on this arbitrariness when analysing the climax in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Of course, in *The Tempest* the combination of tragic and comic plots makes this temporal licence inevitable as well as giving it a cogent mimetic context.

The events on the island are ambiguous; on the one hand, they are real albeit miraculous, on the other, from Prospero's perspective, they are predestined. His intervention lends them a quasi-realistic nature as they are orchestrated in accordance with a preconceived plan of action. The confinement of the island resembles that of the theatrical stage itself as the temporal constraints of Prospero's plan are those imposed by the conventions of performance. The dreamy quality of the insular setting, and of all that it contains, is repeatedly evoked. The spotlessness, even refinement of the survivors' attire after the storm acts as a further reminder of the deliberate artificiality of the situation. The purpose of such sartorial finesse, demanded of actors when donning their on-stage personae, is to accentuate further the histrionic aspect of the spectacle-as-occasion. To paraphrase Robinson's view quoted above, the tempest and *The Tempest* are simultaneous occasions to celebrate.[308]

5.4. Correspondent to command

To explore analogies with the tragedies a little further, let us imagine an Ariel waking the old Hamlet before Claudius poisons him or Duncan before Macbeth runs his dagger through him. Or let us imagine another Ariel who as Friar Laurence's messenger delivers to Romeo the vital letter despite the plague and other hurdles likely to detain or delay a human courier. These considerations enlighten us upon the nature of the licence that Shakespeare took when weaving the dramatic texture of *The Tempest*. They also open for us possibilities of a fuller appreciation of its meta-dramatic significance.

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[306] Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive*..., p. 220.

[307] *Ibid.*, pp. 228, 236.

[308] The idea of the stage as a sundial, misapplied by Guy Hamel — in my view — to a study of *Richard III*, is perfectly applicable to *The Tempest*, due to the latter play's meta-theatrical consciousness of time passing. Cf. Guy Hamel, 'Time in *Richard III*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 40 (1988), pp. 41-9.

A seldom-considered anomaly of *The Tempest* is the lack of messengerial devices such as letters, messengers, post-horses, etc. The straightforward reason, the confinement of Prospero's island, points to another meta-dramatic aspect. The confines of the setting are parallel to the 'wooden O' of the enclosed stage, whose boundaries the plays always seek to transcend. Then there are the services of Ariel, who is correspondent to every command of his master (cf. I.ii.297), and on whose instrumentality and omnipresence Prospero's omnipotence is largely dependent. Not only is Ariel a swift attendant; he is indispensable as the conveyor of information without which Prospero would not be able to co-ordinate events as successfully as he does. He is 'an embodiment' of Prospero's power as magus and artist, 'an expression of Prospero's dramatic power', as Robinson puts it.[309] Prospero's endearing '*My* brave spirit!' may have more than one meaning. Ariel's unlimited availability, swiftness, and invisibility make him a perfect messenger, an incarnation of Juliet's wish that messengers travelled at the speed of thought, 'Before you can say "come" and "go", / And breathe twice and cry "so, so". At the same time Ariel is an utter impossibility, and herein lies his meta-dramatic meaning. His *raison d'être* is the drama-shaping intent. (The way Prospero communicates with him is tell-tale.) Ariel *is* the dramatic inspiration released from its physical encumbrance, from the confinement to the here and now that spells the sacrifice of creativity on the platform of the verisimilitude of man's intrinsic spatiotemporal constraints. Ariel has the power to build up and resolve dramatic tension as well as to connect the multiple loci of the represented world. His operation makes the letter and the human messenger expendable, whereas the other plays would be unthinkable without them. Moreover, his very presence makes us aware that messengers are arbitrary, if necessary, devices. Unrealistic even if human, indispensable for a realistic representation which Ariel overtly defies, they always at some point fail to cover up for the underlying dramatic design. However, Ariel never ceases to be a messenger and never dissolves into pure thought; his service does not dehumanise Prospero into some kind of demigod.

It is appropriate that in the Epilogue Prospero should ask the *audience* for liberation, for release from the 'art's spell' that binds him, liberation that he himself has just granted to Ariel. Taking into account the moral dimension of time in the play, his appeal for an equal measure of mercy with which he pardoned his wrongdoers is more than justified.

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[309] Robinson, 'Time and *The Tempest*...', p. 266.

5.5. The powers, delaying, not forgetting

The ideas of providence and grace have already been mentioned. They seem to penetrate to the innermost meaning of the action and the structure of *The Tempest*. We have seen that this play can itself be regarded as Occasion. Prospero's scheme does not merely redeem the represented time. In projecting an artistically modified time sense onto the audience, it provides an alternative resolution to the tragic catharsis.

Prospero assumes the dimensions of a master-orchestrator of events, dishing out penitence and absolution in a manner that is not unlike that of the Duke from *Measure for Measure*. Although there is no semi-resurrection scheme in *The Tempest*, Prospero also puts his fellow creatures through a purgatory. Alonso, for instance, like Isabella, is initially misinformed and has to suffer the impact of his son's death before they are reunited after the Judgement (cf. Ariel's theology in III.iii.75). The spell cast by Prospero on the castaways is, too, symbolic. All the characters in his power are 'spell-stopp'd' (V.i.61) until after the pardon and reconciliation. His words, 'Let us not burthen our remembrance with / A heaviness that's gone' are reminiscent of the King's reconciliatory lines from *All's Well*. There, however, such an appeal was annulled by the current of unrequited wrongs. On Prospero's magic island, the power to do wrong is arrested by Art: drawn swords are stayed in mid-air, arms lose strength when they are about to deliver a blow, and would-be victims wake before mischief strikes.

Time seems miraculously redeemable, if not reversible. Once more, we discover a meta-dramatic dimension on top of a moral one. In his comedies, Shakespeare strains verisimilitude in order not to burden the conscience of his characters with any real guilt. Various schemes cause time to stand still, as it does during the timeless night of evil in *Macbeth*, and to await redemption. In *The Tempest*, where the comic pretence is lifted, we are able to intuit the potentially tragic irreversibility of time, to catch a glimpse of the intimate relation between time's progress on the one hand, and good and evil on the other. Most important of all, however, we are able to sense the meaning of dramatic time, which, despite offering these precious insights, remains infinitely redeemable in the renewable commerce of live performance.

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Jacek Mydla

Dramatyczny potencjał czasu u Szekspira

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem rozprawy jest rola sposobów przedstawienia czasu w konstruowaniu akcji dramatycznej. Wstępnie odróżnia się naśladowanie przepływu czasu od językowych sposobów przedstawienia i konstrukcji czasu. Zasadnicza teza wyjściowa brzmi, iż tzw. czas przedstawiony w dramacie służy budowaniu napięcia dramatycznego o różnym charakterze i natężeniu.

Wykorzystano rozwiązania proponowane w literaturze anglosaskiej (tezy Emrysa Jonesa o operatywnej, tj. dramatycznej wartości elementów świata przedstawionego), poszerzone o podstawowe dla problematyki czasu kategorie wypracowane w literaturze niemieckojęzycznej: kategoria „napięcia dramatycznego" (Pütz), podwójności zapowiedzi i realizacji, czasowej niepełności świata przedstawionego.

Proponuje się odmienne od dotychczasowego potraktowanie pewnych klasycznych zagadnień: jedność czasu, podstawowa jednostka akcji dramatycznej (sekwencja) wraz z kluczową kategorią ogniwa („mostku", *hook-up*) oraz stosunek pomiędzy akcją (*mimesis*) i narracją (*diegesis*). Uwagę skupiono na współdziałaniu językowych elementów przedstawieniowych i ekspresywnych (ikonografia, retoryka, filozofia itd.) z elementami mimetycznymi akcji dramatycznej, takimi jak: stosunek świata bezpośrednio przedstawionego do świata pozascenicznego (*onstage and offstage worlds*), rola posłańca (kuriera) i listu, czasowa wartość mowy scenicznej.

Praca składa się z pięciu rozdziałów. Rozdział pierwszy, wstępny, precyzuje pojęcie czasu w odniesieniu do dramatu. W rozdziale drugim podejmuje się próbę ukazania różnorodności językowych przedstawień czasu w utworach poetyckich Szekspira, w sonetach i poemacie *Lukrecja.* Czas jako źródło tematyki utworu wchodzi w interesujące związki wyższego rzędu z zasadą konstrukcji dzieła. Kolejne dwa rozdziały podejmują bezpośrednio problematykę wartości czasu w odniesieniu do konstrukcji akcji dramatycznej. Przeprowadzono analizę tematyczno-operatywną wartości czasu w wybranych dramatach: *Stracone zachody miłości* i *Wszystko dobre, co się dobrze kończy* jak również *Makbet* oraz *Romeo i Julia.* Pracę wieńczy rozdział poświęcony *Burzy* jako meta-dramatowi. Bibliografia zawiera obszerny dział zawierający pozycje dotyczące problematyki czasu u Szekspira.

Czas jest niezbywalnym budulcem akcji. Z jednej strony czas staje się wielopostaciowym elementem świata przedstawionego. Wszystkie formy przedstawiania czasu otrzymują konkretną funkcję i wartość zależnie od ich usytuowania w sytuacji dramatycznej (sekwencji). Ponadto czas wywiera doniosły wpływ „zewnętrzny" jako czynnik regulujący mimetyczną stronę dramatu. Funkcja dramatyczna pozostaje w ścisłym związku z czasem dramatycznym wyznaczanym przez swoisty rytm akcji, tj. przez dynamiczne współdziałanie wszystkich dających się wyodrębnić składowych dramatu.

Charakterystyczna dla Szekspira jest wyostrzona świadomość czasowych ograniczeń akcji dramatycznej. Świadomość ta nadaje tematyczną doniosłość komediom, które eksponują czaso-

wość języka, a w szczególności dialogu scenicznego i poezji. W tragediach Szekspir czerpie obficie z różnorodnych możliwości personifikacji czasu oraz wykorzystuje wiele motywów związanych z tzw. czasem organicznym, tj. czasem charakteryzującym zachodzenie procesów naturalnych. Są to również wątki często przewijające się w jego poezji. Motywem wspólnym jest egzystencjalna wartość czasu w odniesieniu do uwarunkowań narzucanych zarówno przez rzeczywistość społeczną i historyczną, jak i przez biologiczną naturę człowieka.

Jacek Mydla

Das dramatische Potential der Zeit bei Shakespeare

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Rolle die verschiedener Zeitdarstellungsmodi spielen in der Konstruktion der dramatischen Handlung. Man unterscheidet einerseits die Imitation des Zeitverlaufs (zeitliche Mimesis) und andererseits sprachliche Arten der Zeitdarstellung und Zeitkonstruktion. Die sogenannte repräsentierte Zeit im Drama hat die Funktion, dramatische Spannung von verschiedener Art und Intensität zu erzeugen.

Bei der Analyse wurden Untersuchungsergebnisse englisch- und deutschsprachliger Literaturforscher verwendet; unter anderen, Emrys Jones' Konzeption der operativen (dramatischen) Leistung der repräsentierten Welt sowie Pütz' These über die Doppelheit von Vorgriff und Verwirklichung.

Manche klassische Probleme der Dramakritik werden neu betrachtet, wie z.B. die Zeiteinheit, die Grundeinheiten der dramatischen Handlung (Sequenz), die Begriff des dramatischen „Kettenglied" (eng. *hook-up*), und das Verhältnis zwischen direkter Handlung (Mimesis) und Erzählung (indirekte Handlung, Diegesis). Im Mittelpunkt der Analyse steht die Wechselwirkung von sprachlichen und expressiven Darstellungselementen (wie Ikonographie, Rhetorik, Philosophie usw.) sowie mimetischen Bestandteilen der Handlung, szenisch-präsentierten und außerszenischer Handlung wie auch die Funktion des Botes und des Briefes, die zeitliche Dimension szenischer Sprache.

Die vorliegende Arbeit besteht aus fünf Kapiteln. Kapitel 1 betrachtet die Zeitbegriff im Drama. Kapitel 2 stellt die mannigfaltigen sprachlichen Darstellungsmodi der Zeit in poetischen Werke Shakespeares dar, und zwar in den Sonetten und in der epischen Dichtung *Lucrece*. Thematisierte Zeit wird hier auf höheren Stufen mit dem Konstruktionprinzip der dramatischen Handlung verbunden. Es werden thematisch-operative Untersuchungen über die Bedeutung der Zeit in ausgewälten Dramen Shakespeares vollzogen: in Komödien *Love's Labour's Lost*, *All's Well That Ends Well* und Tragödien *Macbeth* und *Romeo and Juliet*. Kapitel 5 behandelt das Drama *The Tempest* als ein Meta-Drama der Zeit.

Die Bibliographie am Ende der Dissertation enthält ein umfassenden Teil mit Publikationen zum Thema der Zeit in Dichtung und Dramen Shakespeares betreffend.

Die Zeit in Dramen Shakespeares ist ein unübertragbares Baumaterial der Handlung. Einerseits wird die Zeit zu einem vielfältigen Element der dargestellten Welt der Dramen. Alle Formen der Zeitdarstellung spielen eine konkrete Rolle und ihre Leistung hängt von ihrer Lage in der Handlung ab. Außerdem wird die Handlung durch die Zeit als einem äußerlichen Faktor beeinflußt, der den mimetische Aspekt des Dramas reguliert. Die dramatische Funktion wird mit der dramatisch-präsentierten Zeit verknüpft. Die dramatische Zeit hängt von der dynamischen Wechselwirkung aller zu unterscheidenen Dramateilen ab.

Shakespeare war sich der zeitlichen Begrenzungen der dramatichen Handlung vollkommen bewußt. Diese Bewußtsein verleiht den Komödien eine charakteristische thematische Tragweite. Die Komödien stellen die Zeitlichkeit der Sprache dar. In seinen Tragödien macht sich Shakespeare die verschiedenen Möglichkeiten der Zeitpersonifikation zunutze. Außerdem benutzt er viele Motive des sogenannten organischen Zeitbegriffs. Die Komödien als auch Tragödien Shakespeares stellen das Motiv der existentiellen Bedeutung der Zeit angesichts der sozialen, historischen und biologischen Bedingungen des menschichen Lebens dar.

BUS

Front cover design: Michał Oracz
Based on motifs
from Hollar's Long View of London
and George Wither's emblems

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Barbara Konopka

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ISSN 0208-6336
ISBN 83-226-1166-8

Published by
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
ul. Bankowa 12B, 40-007 Katowice
www.wydawnictwo.us.edu.pl
e-mail: wydawus@us.edu.pl

First impression. Edition: 200 + 50 copies. Printed sheets: 11.0. Publishing sheets: 15.0. Passed to the Printing House in April 2002. Signed for printing in August 2002.
Price 21 zł

Making up: Pracownia Składu Komputerowego
Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
Printing and binding: „PRODRUK" s.c.
ul. Gliwicka 204, 40-862 Katowice

nr inw.: BG - 311169
BG 311169
PN 2055

ISSN 0208-6336
ISBN 83-226-1166-8