

# Idols of Nature: Causality of Fate and Baconian Philosophy in Shakespeare's Tragedies

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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Timo Uotinen, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date:

## Summary

This thesis is a philosophical reading of Shakespeare's tragedies through the philosophy of Francis Bacon. It seeks to explain the destructive and self-destructive actions that constitute tragedy—which are termed the causality of fate—and how that mechanism succeeds despite the fore-knowledge of such a mechanism, as testified by Macbeth, whose 'Bloody instructions which, being taught, return | To plague th'inventor.' In order to provide an answer to this problem the plays are analysed in terms of Bacon's Idols of the Mind. The thesis argues that there are four types of idol that mediate between perception and action. The Idols of (dis)semblance discuss agency, instrumental reason and the problem of appearance in *Richard III* and *Othello*. The Idols of Kindness analyses the socially destructive quality of the mercantile logic of reification as extended to a logic for a whole society in *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens*. These idols collectively defined as Idols of Nature represent ideas and images of nature and natural causality that suggest constraints to and determination of ethical activity. The Idols of Nature imply that epistemology has an effect on ethics and that our embodied consciousness has a necessary structure of ideology, although the contents of which are socially constructed. Thus the thesis provides a dialectical reading of tragedy that challenges simple constructivist or humanist interpretations.

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Note on referencing:

All Shakespeare quotations are from *The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor, and Stanley Wells, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), unless otherwise stated.

All Francis Bacon will occur in the body of the text will be abbreviated in the following manner in parenthesis and with page number:

<i>SEH</i> [vol number]	<i>The Works of Francis Bacon</i> , ed. by James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath, 14 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [orig. 1857-74] 2011)
<i>JSNO</i>	Francis Bacon, <i>The New Organon</i> , ed. by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
<i>UGNO</i>	Francis Bacon, <i>Novum Organum</i> , transl. and ed. by Peter Urbach and John Gibson (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1994)
<i>PFB</i>	Benjamin Farrington, <i>The Philosophy of Francis Bacon</i> , transl. by Benjamin Farrington (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press)
<i>OFB I</i>	<i>The Oxford Francis Bacon I: Early Writings 1584-1596</i> , ed. by Alan Stewart with Harriet Knight (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012)
<i>OFB IV</i>	<i>The Oxford Francis Bacon IV: The Advancement of Learning</i> , ed. by Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000)
<i>OFB VI</i>	<i>The Oxford Francis Bacon VI: Philosophical Studies c.1611-</i>

c.1619, ed. by Graham Rees,  
trans. by Graham Rees and  
Michael Edwards (Oxford:  
Clarendon Press, 1996)

*OFB XI*

*The Oxford Francis Bacon XI:  
The Instauration magna: Part II  
Novum organum and  
Associated Texts*, ed. and  
trans. by Graham Rees with  
Maria Wakely (Oxford:  
Clarendon Press, 2004)

*OFB XII*

*The Oxford Francis Bacon XII:  
The Instauration magna Part III:  
Historia Naturalis et  
experimentalis: Historia  
ventorum and Historia vitae &  
mortis*, ed. and trans. by  
Graham Rees with Maria  
Wakely (Oxford: Clarendon  
Press, 2007)

*OFB XIII*

*The Oxford Francis Bacon XIII:  
The Instauration magna: Last  
Writings*, ed. and trans. by  
Graham Rees (Oxford:  
Clarendon Press, 2000)

*OFB XV*

*Sir Francis Bacon: The Essayes  
or Counsels, Civill and Morall*,  
ed. by Michael Kiernan  
(Oxford: Clarendon Press,  
1985 [Reissued in 2000 as  
volume XV of this series])

# Philosophical introduction

Shakespeare's tragedies concern attitudes that are hostile to life itself. Protagonist characters like Romeo, Juliet, Othello, Antony, Cleopatra, and Brutus choose to commit suicide, while antagonists like Macbeth, Iago, Claudius, Richard III, Tamora, Aaron, and Edmund are killed for their villainy. Heroes like Hamlet, Titus, Cordelia, Coriolanus die at the hands of their enemies, while Lear and Timon just die. Death, whether chosen or not, arises from the circumstances presented in the tragedies. Paul A. Kottman has recently studied these conditions and reflectively argues that 'Shakespeare's dramas ... compel us to regard the social bonds on which we depend for the meaning and worth of our lives together as being, in spite of that total dependence, fully dissolvable.'<sup>1</sup> Life is the common bond that everyone shares—hostility towards it, towards others, is hostility towards oneself. This self-destructive hostility seems a paradox: how can we be caught in this hostile cycle?

To answer this I will solicit the aid of Shakespeare's contemporary, the lawyer, politician, natural philosopher, and Lord Chancellor for James I, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), whose most recognised work *The Novum Organum* (also, at the centre of my interest) was published in 1620—four years after Shakespeare died.<sup>2</sup> I will especially focus on Bacon's theory of the idols of the mind, which, as I shall argue, through their cognitively mediating activity not only enable but even perpetuate the hostile cycle of (self)destruction. But first we need to unpack this hostility to life and the cyclical structure that follows it.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul A. Kottman, *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare: Disinheriting the Globe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> In this thesis I treat Shakespeare and Bacon as two distinct thinkers and authors.

## Causality of fate in Shakespeare

How do characters get caught in this cycle of hostility? The simple answer is that hostility arises unwittingly from decisions without full knowledge of to where these decisions might lead. However, this suggestion that we are unaware of ethical causation is already challenged within the Shakespearean corpus. Macbeth has curious foresight into his own demise in his knowledge of machinations 'returning to plague th'inventor' (1.7.10). Similarly, Timon is warned about false friends and impending penury. Shylock famously lays the logic bare: 'The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.' (3.1.67-9) Thomas More, in the passage attributed to Shakespeare, rehearses this logic to the baying mob, admonishing them to reflect on their actions while they demand the expulsion of foreigners:

you had taught  
How insolence and strong hand should prevail,  
How order should be quelled. And by this pattern  
Not one of you should live an aged man;  
For other ruffians, as their fancies wrought,  
With selfsame hand, self reasons, and self right,  
Would shark on you, and men, like ravenous fishes,  
Would feed on one another. (Sc. 6.90-7)

Despite these prescient cogitations and warnings, the protagonists and antagonists of Shakespearean tragedy walk headfirst into their fate. In *The History of King Lear* Albany marks the implication of this logic: 'Humanity must perforce prey on itself, | Like monsters of the deep.' (Sc. 16.48-9)<sup>3</sup> All of these present a cyclical 'pattern' of ethical causation. By the 'causality/fate' connection I am reframing the longstanding philosophical debate about the apparent disjunction between free will and determinism in a more Baconian idiom, where appearances can hide essences. 'Fate' catches the drama of the drama of

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<sup>3</sup> References to the Quarto text *The History of King Lear* will be made to the running scene numbers whereas the Folio text *The Tragedy of King Lear* will be referred to with act and scene, both in accordance with the second edition of the Oxford Shakespeare.

Shakespearean tragedy, whereas ‘causality’ encapsulates the analytical, unveiling attitude of Baconian philosophy. The cyclicity of returning action that attends the causality of fate enhances both the sense of poetic justice as well as the mechanistic side of the causal chain.

This cyclical pattern has not gone unnoticed by critics. Stanley Cavell describes *King Lear*: ‘something the play shows is that disowned knowledge is not ignorance, not an absence, but the presence of something, say of the undone, of one’s hand in one’s undoing.’<sup>4</sup> Dympna Callaghan and Chris R. Kyle describe the violence of *Titus Andronicus* as ‘a cycle of mimetic violence’.<sup>5</sup> (Titus’ description of the pie scene is fitting: ‘Why, there they are, both baked in this pie, | Whereof their mother daintily hath fed, | Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred.’ 5.3.59-61) In *Measure for Measure* when Claudio is being taken in restraints he comments to Lucio: ‘Our natures do pursue, | Like rats that raven down their proper bane, | A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die.’ (1.2.120-2) Elizabeth Hanson explains: ‘Claudio’s point, of course, is simply that he is the author of his own misfortune’.<sup>6</sup> John Vyvyan, in his 1959 book *The Shakespearean Ethic*, also marks the causality of fate: ‘Brutus, we are told, “was Caesar’s angel”. Desdemona was Othello’s love. Duncan was Macbeth’s king, who had lately done him honour. Each of the three assassins was striking at his own good. He was striking at himself.’<sup>7</sup> More recently, Kottman elaborates on this fateful mechanism in terms of social interaction:

Like crimes and misdeeds that break a prior law or bond—such as Antigone’s burial of her brother, Oedipus’s murder of Laius, or Romeo’s slaying of Tybalt—acts of infidelity or betrayal are typically thought to bring down, or necessitate, some active ethical response. If the misdeed triggers

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<sup>4</sup> Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, updated edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. xv.

<sup>5</sup> Dympna Callaghan and Chris R. Kyle, ‘The Wilde Side of Justice in Early Modern England and *Titus Andronicus*’, *The Law in Shakespeare*, ed. by Constance Jordan and Karen Cunningham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 38-57 (p. 42).

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Hanson, ‘*Measure for Measure* and the Law of Nature’, *The Law in Shakespeare*, ed. by Constance Jordan and Karen Cunningham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 249-65 (p. 249).

<sup>7</sup> John Vyvyan, *The Shakespearean Ethic* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p. 27.



no further deed as its social or ethical consequence, it risks not appearing as a misdeed at all. Indeed, our inherited ways of responding to such transgressions—inasmuch as our responses to misdoings imply an understanding of how the deed constitutes a *misdeed*—for the poetics of our ethical life and thought: revenge, punishment, or forgiveness. We might say that when our actions appear to others as acts of betrayal, criminality, or infidelity, their meaning—their ethical stakes, so to speak—are in great part illuminated by the reaction or reactions they set in motion. ... Moreover, our inherited ways of responding to misdeeds—taking revenge, inflicting punishment, or offering forgiveness—constitute ways of understanding, reinstating, or reelaborating the social bonds that were broken by the transgression.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the triggering of the causality of fate requires a perceived transgression and inherited customs delineate the causal response. Yet this social causation, while quite accurate, does not capture adequately the uncannily fateful aspect of this mechanism.

A century before Kottman's astute description none other than A. C. Bradley spoke at length on this phenomenon. He saw it as an 'inscrutable power', that 'frightened men and awed them. It made them feel that man is blind and helpless, [a] plaything'.<sup>9</sup> Being 'frightened' and in 'awe' this mechanism is beyond the control of those who experience it. Moreover, as they are 'blind and helpless', this power is something imperceivable, not mere causation. Here is Bradley's description of the causality of fate:

We see a number of human beings placed in certain circumstances; and we see, arising from the co-operation of the characters in these circumstances, certain actions. These actions beget others, and these others beget others again, until this series of inter-connected deeds leads by an apparently inevitable sequence to a catastrophe. The effect of such a series on imagination is to make us regard the sufferings which accompany it, and the catastrophe in which it ends, not only or chiefly as something which is caused by them. This at least may be said of the principal persons, and, among them, of the hero, who always contributes in some measure to the disaster in which he perishes.<sup>10</sup>

For Bradley, this ('[t]han men may start a course of events but can neither calculate nor control it') constitutes 'a tragic fact'.<sup>11</sup> Bradley makes '[t]wo statements ... regarding the

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<sup>8</sup> Kottman, *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare*, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Bradley, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Bradley, p. 31. However, 'Shakespeare's idea of the tragic fact is larger than this idea [of an inscrutable power] and goes beyond it; but it includes it' (p. 26).

tragic fact as [Shakespeare] represents it: one, that it is and remains to us something piteous, fearful and mysterious; the other, that the representation of it does not leave us crushed, rebellious or desperate.<sup>12</sup> From these Bradley, negatively, adduces two contradictory qualities of this tragic power:

From the first it follows that the ultimate power in the tragic world is not adequately described as a law or order which we can see to be just and benevolent—as, in that sense, a “moral order”: for in that case the spectacle of suffering and waste could not seem to us so fearful and mysterious as it does. And from the second it follows that this ultimate power is not adequately described as a fate, whether malicious and cruel, or blind and indifferent to human happiness and goodness: for in that case the spectacle would leave us desperate or rebellious. ... Such views contradict one another, and no third view can unite them; but the several aspects from whose isolation and exaggeration they spring are both present in the fact, and a view which would be true to the fact and to the whole of our imaginative experience must in some way combine these aspects.<sup>13</sup>

Bradley describes the tension the spectator experiences when encountering this ultimate power in its paradoxical appearance. Bradley’s ‘power’ evokes ‘fear’ and ‘mystery’, on one hand, hence it cannot be a ‘moral order’ as that would imply a systematic goodness that would not elicit such reactions of unpredictability. Nor, on the other hand, can it be rightly described as just ‘fate’ because such external determinism pluck at the sense of freedom and thus compel us to ‘desperation’ or ‘rebellion’. Taken together there is an implication of agency and moral unpredictability in Bradley’s ‘power’. He elaborates on this jarring conjunction by linking his idea about the moral order to his adjacent idea of fate:

this view seems quite able to do justice to those aspects of the tragic fact which give rise to the idea of fate. They would appear as various expressions of the fact that the moral order acts not capriciously or like a human being, but from the necessity of its nature, or, if we prefer the phrase, by general laws—a necessity or law which of course knows no exception and is as ‘ruthless’ as fate.<sup>14</sup>

The ‘moral order’ implies causal necessity (as Kottman above delineated). Bradley expands the social causal necessity into a force of nature that is as indiscriminate as fate.

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<sup>12</sup> Bradley, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Bradley, p. 40-1.

<sup>14</sup> Bradley, p. 49.

The phrase 'causality of fate' comes from the philosopher J. M. Bernstein's reading of the young Hegel's 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', where among other topics Hegel discusses *Macbeth*. For Bernstein, the causality of fate is a social, ethical, and mythical punishment or, as Bernstein puts it, 'an ethical logic of action and reaction: to act against another person is to destroy my own life, to call upon myself revenging fates; I cannot (ethically) harm another without (ethically) harming myself.'<sup>15</sup> Bernstein's 'causality of fate' aptly describes Bradley's 'ultimate power', perhaps due to their shared Hegelian roots. I gravitated towards this idea because it combines human agency with a seemingly supernatural causation. The question of how do we and—if we are to give Shakespearean characters the semblance of life akin to ours—the dramatic pro- and antagonists get caught in the cycle of hostility is recapitulated: why do we not perceive the causality of fate as part of our actions until it is already in effect?

## Bacon's Idols of the Mind

This is where we return to Bacon: I suggest that there is a cognitive blindspot that enables the hostility to life to work by occluding the causality of fate to us. This blindspot stems from what Bacon terms the Idols of the Mind: they are what prevent us from perceiving the world or nature as it is. Although Bacon's theory of the idols provide an analytic tool to unpack the causality of fate in Shakespeare, the process of actually addressing this cognitive blindspot goes beyond the mere application of Bacon's idols. The reading of Shakespearean tragedy informs the interpretation of the idols of the mind. Therefore, I have renamed the idols that directly address the causality of fate in Shakespeare's tragedies collectively as the Idols of Nature. The reason for the renaming is that the idols have gone through the dialectical process, where the reading of Bacon and Shakespeare side by side mutually

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<sup>15</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', *Early Theological Writings*, transl. by T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), pp. 182-301; J. M. Bernstein, 'Love and Law: Hegel's Critique of Morality', *Social Research*, Vol. 70, No. 2, 2003, 393–432 (p. 394).

inform each other and, moreover, the Idols of Nature discussed in this thesis are a combination of Bacon's idols of the mind. The role of the mind is central to Bacon's grand project of renovating knowledge. In the Proemium to the Great Instauration (or Great Renewal), Bacon

became aware that the human intellect is the source of its own problems, and makes no sensible and appropriate use of the very real aids which are within man's power; the consequence is a deeply layered ignorance of nature, and as a result of this ignorance, innumerable deprivations. He therefore judged that he must make every effort to find a way by which the relation between mind and nature could be wholly restored or at least considerably improved. (*JSNO*, 2)

There are many things noteworthy here: the patriarchal use of 'man' is something I will tackle towards the end of this thesis; the ambiguity of 'nature'—what Raymond Williams called 'perhaps the most complex word in the language'<sup>16</sup>—will be addressed momentarily. What is crucial now is that the mind is a central and active part of cognition. As 'the relation between mind and nature' suggests, 'the human intellect' is the mediator between how things are and how they appear to us. Thus, our ethical reading of Shakespeare as guided by Bacon revolves around the problem of epistemology.

Bradley links epistemology to ethics, thought to action: 'The tragic world is a world of action, and action is the translation of thought into reality.'<sup>17</sup> Bradley brings this observation, with particular reference to *Macbeth*, back to the causality of fate:

Everywhere, in this tragic world, man's thought, translated into act, is transformed into the opposite of itself. His act, the movement of a few ounces of matter in a moment of time, becomes a monstrous flood which spreads over a kingdom. And whatsoever he dreams of doing, he achieves that which he least dreamed of, his own destruction.<sup>18</sup>

As noted above, *Macbeth* is aware of the phenomenon that returns his actions to their author; yet there appears a disjunction in that particular thought with regards to his

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<sup>16</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, rev. edn (London: Flamingo, 1983), p. 219.

<sup>17</sup> Bradley, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Bradley, p. 42.

actions. Something blocks Macbeth's apperception, the introspection of his self-consciousness.

The idols of the mind are for Bacon the main impediments for our perception:

The idols and false notions which are now in possession of the human understanding, and have taken deep root therein, not only so beset men's minds that truth can hardly find entrance, but even after entrance obtained, they will again in the very instauration of the sciences meet and trouble us, unless men being forewarned of the danger fortify themselves as far as may be against their assaults. (*SEH IV*, 53)

Notably Bacon seems to mix metaphors to describe the idols: arboreal 'deep roots' that prevent 'entrance' to a structure or place, which then present a hostile animus with the necessary activity and movement for 'assaults'. He is at pains to describe how the idols work due to their various and mutable forms. He continues:

There are four kinds of *illusions* which block men's minds. For instruction's sake, we have given them the following names: the first kind are called *idols of the tribe*; the second *idols of the cave*; the third *idols of the marketplace*; the fourth *idols of the theatre*. (*JSNO*, 40; original emphasis)

Jardine and Silverthorne at places use 'illusion' instead of 'idol' as used in the Spedding, Ellis, and Heath translation. Translating the Latin *idola* as 'illusions' is both useful and problematic: useful as a quick shorthand translation to convey a sensual misperception or misunderstanding; problematic in that the modern sense connotes a momentary trick as in that of a magician which downplays the crucial 'deep rooted' presence of the *idola*. The religious connotations of 'idol', which may seem archaic to the modern reader, are pertinent here as they inhabit the same foundational place of faith or belief present in the modern subject.<sup>19</sup> For Zagorin '[Bacon's] examination of the idols stands out as his most significant and original contribution to the philosophy of the mind, with little if any

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<sup>19</sup> The choice to use the word 'idol' to describe mental prejudices is linked to Bacon's criticism of the state of philosophy (in contrast to mechanical arts): 'Philosophy and the intellectual sciences, on the contrary, stand like statues, worshipped and celebrated, but not moved or advanced.' (*SEH IV*, 14) Significantly, this locus can be inhabited by any unchecked 'belief' from scientism to commodity fetishism.

precedent in the work of prior thinkers.<sup>20</sup> To qualify these descriptions a brief overview of the individual idols is in order.

The *idola tribus*, idols of the tribe 'are founded in human nature itself and in the very tribe or race of mankind.' (SEH IV, 54) They arise from the sensorial limitations inherent to humans and the imagination's power to gloss over these limitations: 'human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.' (SEH IV, 54) 'False mirror' here means 'distorting mirror'.<sup>21</sup> This idol is about our sensuous embodiment, that our senses compared to other creatures filter the outside world on a limited spectrum.

The idols of the cave 'are the illusions of the individual man. For ... each man has a kind of individual cave or cavern which fragments and distorts the light of nature.' (JSNO, 41) These are errors of the human mind that arise from the individual's personal inclinations. They refer, of course, to Plato's allegory of the cave, in which humans see only shadows generated by an artificial light completely unaware of the true world outside the cave. However, whereas Plato depicted the cave as the inability of the sense-bound human to see the world as it truly is (thus being analogous to Bacon's idols of the tribe), for Bacon the cave is an allegory for the inevitable individuation of human beings. The idols of the cave stem 'from each man's peculiar nature both of mind and body; and also from education and custom, and the accidents which befall particular men.' (SEH IV, 433) We inhabit 'the caves of our own bodies' (SEH IV, 433), which are moulded by individual life experience, by a person's history.

The illusion created by language pertains to the third error of the human mind, namely the *idola fori*, idols of the marketplace. These are 'the biggest nuisance of all' for Bacon because of the general belief that 'reason controls words' but the opposite is also true as reason is often confounded by words (JSNO, 48). The name refers to human

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Zagorin, *Francis Bacon* (Chichester, West Sussex: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 82.

<sup>21</sup> OED false, adj., adv., and n. 12a.

exchange and particularly to the obstruction to understanding deriving from language. For Bacon the obstruction is not a matter of having more precise definitions because the words are inherently divorced from the nature they are describing. 'Plainly words do violence to the understanding, and confuse everything; and betray men into countless empty disputes and fictions.' (*JSNO*, 42) This emptiness results either from words naming non-existent entities or from naming real things but in an ambiguous and confusing manner. The ambiguity of language, 'is complex and deep-seated, being caused by poor and unskilful abstraction.' (*JSNO*, 48-9) The cause for this kind of abstraction stems from original sin and particularly the loss of Adamic language that had an exact correspondence with words and their referents.<sup>22</sup>

The final distorting prejudice corresponds with the main focus of Bacon's critical project: the false philosophies enabled by the *idola theatri*, idols of the theatre. These 'have immigrated into men's minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration.' They are named after the theatre 'because in [Bacon's] judgment all the received systems are but so many stage-plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion.' (*SEH IV*, 55) Bacon is not necessarily being hostile to theatrical practice itself as John L. Harrison comments: 'The dramatist is allied with the poet and against the deductive philosopher' because the dramatist is allowed to present fictitious worlds, whereas philosophers are not.<sup>23</sup> However, Bacon's critique is not only directed towards 'deductive philosophers' but all uncritically 'received' thoughts: 'Neither again do I mean this only of entire systems, but also of many principles and axioms in science, which by tradition, credulity and negligence have come to be received.' (*SEH IV*, 55)

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 125-6.

<sup>23</sup> John L. Harrison, 'Bacon's View of Rhetoric, Poetry, and the Imagination', *Essential Articles for the study of Francis Bacon*, ed. by Brian Vickers (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1968), pp. 253-71 (p. 265).

Bacon presents most fully his theory of the idols in the Book I of the *Novum Organum*, whereas the second book focuses on the inductive method. However, as Paolo Rossi noted in the mid-twentieth century that, in the history of philosophy, Bacon's 'whole *œuvre* was reduced to the second book of the *New Organon*.<sup>24</sup> More recently, Dennis Desroches has picked up on this lop-sidedness of reception with his interpretation of Bacon as a theorist of science by emphasising Book I over the practicalities of Book II.<sup>25</sup> The readings of the idols, too, when taken up at all, have been subordinated to the inductive method as a means to achieve objectivity, where one central characteristic particular has been side-stepped. Peter Urbach's sentiments presents us with the general view with which the theory of the idols has been received:

Bacon's doctrine of the idols is one of the most famous parts of his philosophy. The idols were "fallacies of the mind of man" or "false appearances", mental attitudes of a certain kind, which needed to be "cleared away" and "purged", before the business of science could be started properly.<sup>26</sup>

With an acknowledgment of the prominence of the idols, Urbach present them as obstacles or diseases to be removed. This sentiment is echoed by most critics. Gaukroger writes: 'They must be purged before anything remotely resembling logical processes can even begin.'<sup>27</sup> Some critics have suggested that the eradication of the idols would lead to a Lockean 'tabula rasa'.<sup>28</sup> However, the implicit problem with this view is made explicit in Solomon's description of the stakes of removing the idols: 'For [Bacon], natural

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<sup>24</sup> Paolo Rossi, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, transl. by Sacha Rabinovitch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. xiv.

<sup>25</sup> Dennis Desroches, *Francis Bacon and the Limits of Scientific Knowledge* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 90. Desroches says: 'As such, we are given to think the importance of Book I in a new light—if Book II discusses the mechanics of [Bacon's] method, Book I marks the theoretical provenance of that mechanics.'

<sup>26</sup> Peter Urbach, *Francis Bacon's Philosophy of Science* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987), p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 121. Rossi, *From Magic to Science*, pp. 162-3, says the same in a Christian vein: 'Bacon's theory of the idols is based on the assumption that the existing relation of man's mind to nature is not what it should rightfully be. This assumption is consistent with his religious beliefs, his conception of Christianity, and his ideal of the reform of knowledge. ... The struggle against the false images in the mind of man has become a means of redemption. Man must be purified to receive again the true images of things and the New Logic is the way of purification'.

<sup>28</sup> Urbach, *Bacon's Philosophy of Science*, p. 84. Urbach himself argues against this.



philosophers must eliminate the biological, psychological, sociological, and pedagogical forces that particularize their minds in order to achieve natural philosophic truth'.<sup>29</sup> To achieve this is anything but Solomon's 'temporary self-distancing': it is the 'elimination' of what makes us human.

This idea of the removal of the idols is clearly contradicted by Bacon with a full description of the idols in *De Augmentis*, rewritten after the *Novum Organum*:

Now idols are imposed upon the mind, either by the nature of man in general; or by the individual nature of each man; or by words, or nature communicative. The first of these I call the Idols of the *Tribe*, the second Idols of the *Cave*, the third the Idols of the *Market-place*. There is also a fourth kind which I call the Idols of the *Theatre*, superinduced by corrupt theories or systems of philosophy, and false laws of demonstration. But this kind may be rejected and got rid of: so I will leave it for the present. The others absolutely take possession of the mind, and cannot be wholly removed. (*SEH IV*, 431)

This is the central oft side-stepped characteristic mentioned above: the idols 'cannot be wholly removed'. (Though some critics do admit this despite continuing with the language of purging.<sup>30</sup>) This is very clear in Bacon describing the first three idols as different kinds of 'nature'. We cannot remove ourselves from the bodies that both make us human and individuals; nor can language, our main communicative medium, be removed with its words—not even by carrying a bag of things as Swift satirises on the floating island of Laputa in *Gulliver's Travels*.

And the yet, the language of removing the idols is, too, clearly stated in Bacon: 'that which is the *remedy* for this evil ... is in most cases unable to *cure* it'; 'the understanding thoroughly *freed* and *cleansed*'; 'with a religious care to *eject*, repress, and

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<sup>29</sup> Julie Robin Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making: Francis Bacon and the Politics of Inquiry* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 109.

<sup>30</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 118: 'The internal impediments go to the core of the question of the natural philosopher, because the persona of the natural philosopher, and the very possibility of pursuing natural philosophy, are intimately tied up with the mastery of the passions, and such mastery is largely possible because the "Idols of the mind" have been identified and (where possible) remedied.'

as it were *exorcise* every kind of phantasm' (*SEH IV*, 433, 69, 30; my emphasis).<sup>31</sup> How should we understand this contradiction? I suggest that Bacon is either talking speculatively when discussing the removal of the idols or he lapses into the *idola fori* (as many critics have in following him on this point) in discussing something that can never exist. Unlike critics before me, I take Bacon seriously when he indicates that the idols of the mind can never be wholly removed. In this thesis, I follow the implications of the unremovability of the *idola*, on one hand demonstrating that they represent one of the few things we can consider to actually be human nature (yet, in that they only point to the form rather than normative content of that human nature) and on the other, arguing that the idols allow for the possibility of freedom to exist in an otherwise determined world—this is the Baconian side of applying Bacon's theory to Shakespearean tragedy.

With this in mind, let us momentarily turn to the loadbearing word *idola*. Bacon's technical term 'idol' bears a lot of meaning embedded in it pertinent to reading Shakespearean tragedy as a product of imagination. Significantly, the Latin root *idolon* can mean both 'apparition' and 'ghost' as well as 'image' stemming from two Greek words: *eidōs* ('that which is seen, form, shape, figure', 'sort, particular kind or nature') and *eidolon* ('image, phantom', 'an image reflected ... in a mirror', 'idea', 'likeness').<sup>32</sup> *Eidos* suggests the mental equivalent of something concrete, material; whereas *eidolon* implies an immaterial,

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<sup>31</sup> However, Anthony Quinton, 'Bacon', *Renaissance Thinkers*, ed. by Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 113-204 (p. 154) suggests a different way of seeing the idols, which properly contextualises the language of removal: 'scientific hypotheses are imaginative constructions, as spontaneous as works of art at their best, and that their origins in general or particular deficiencies of the human mind are irrelevant to their validity. If that is so, there is no need to uproot the idols; the method of science is used not to replace them but to make a rational selection from the competing theories they induce us to put forward.' Similarly, Zagorin, *Bacon*, p. 36 formulates the task as 'overcoming' the idols rather than the 'removing'.

<sup>32</sup> *OED*, 'idol' n.; 'idolon', *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968); 'eidōs' and 'eidolon', Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 8<sup>th</sup> edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897). Many critics tend to focus on one or the other Greek root. Here is Zagorin, *Bacon*, p. 82: '[Bacon's] Latin term, "idola," from the Greek *eidola*, did not mean false gods but phantoms, fictions, fallacies, delusive images, and what he called false ideas ("notiones falsae").' Compare this with John C. Briggs' focus on *eidōs* in his "'The Very Idea!'" Francis Bacon and E. O. Wilson on the Rehabilitation of *Eidos*', *Francis Bacon and the Refiguring of Early Modern Thought: Essays to Commemorate The Advancement of Learning (1605-2005)*, ed. by Julie Robin Solomon and Catherine Gimelli Martin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 89-108.

supersensible aspect. Ernst Cassirer, in his study of *eidos* (εἶδος) and *eidolon* (εἶδωλον) in Plato's dialogues, elaborates on this:

*Eidos* and *eidolon*—two terms that descend from the same linguistic root, that unfold from one basic signification of to see, *ιδεῖν* [to see, to look], and that imply for Plato, in the specific meaning he gave them, two essentially different directions, two 'qualities' of seeing diametrically to one another. In the one case, seeing possesses the passive character of sensible sensations, and only strives to take up and copy an external sensuous object; in the other case, it becomes free vision, the grasping of an objective figure that can, however, fulfill itself in no other way than in an intellectual *act* of configuration.<sup>33</sup>

This recalls Smith's phenomenal description of 'the in-between' and the subject – object dialectic. Moreover, the freedom – determinism tension is strikingly present in the two senses on *idein*. *Eidos* as a sensible figure evokes the material world, whereas *eidolon* as an ideal (as in 'idea') image evokes the philosophical counterpart of materialism, namely idealism. This corresponds with Bacon's programmatic yearning to know the material universe while acknowledging the idealist mediation of the idols. But here also lies the affinity with Shakespeare as Cassirer indicates to us:

the conflict between *εἶδος* [*eidos*] and *εἶδωλον* [*eidolon*] is placed before us, no longer in the domain of nature, but in the domain of *art*. For art raises the claim to hold up before us a 'second nature'; however, in this a renewed breaking takes place; a doubly reflected, thoroughly *mediated* image of being created.<sup>34</sup>

While the Platonic disdain for art is present here, Cassirer touches on an important connection between Bacon and Shakespeare, nature and art: art creates a 'thoroughly mediated image'. If literature, as claimed above, is the domain of interpretation then art is the domain of mediation. Shakespearean tragedy is thus, I propose, a special object of study about the nature of mediation and, in this case particularly, the ethical mediation of the idols of nature.

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<sup>33</sup> Ernst Cassirer, 'Eidos and Eidolon: The Problem of Beauty and Art in the Dialogues of Plato', *The Warburg Years (1919-1933): Essays on Language, Art, Myth, and Technology*, transl. by S. G. Lofts with A. Calcagno (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 214-43 (p. 218). Brackets and emphasis in original. My thanks to Joel White for suggesting this text to me.

<sup>34</sup> Cassirer, 'Eidos and Eidolon', p. 228. Brackets and emphasis in original.

## Nature, Idealism, and ideology

The idols complicate the already complex concept of nature. By itself 'nature' can refer to various things. Raymond Williams distinguishes 'three areas of meanings' that overlap: first, 'the essential quality or character *of* something'; second, 'the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both'; and thirdly, 'the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings.'<sup>35</sup> There is a tension explicit in the latter two areas of meaning, namely whether humans are part of nature or not. It is an implicit tension in first one as in perception the *idola tribus* wants to mix their own human nature with that it is observing, hence the anthropomorphising tendency of human perception. Indeed, the shared quality of all Baconian idols is that they distort all three areas of meaning. It is this complexity that is the theme of my thesis. Moreover, the complexity that is added to as any *description* of an 'essential quality' has a *prescriptive* element to it as 'the inherent force which directs'.

With the reinvigoration of topos of nature, so too must we reconsider how we know these things and whether we actually access nature or an idol of it. In order to do justice to what we are studying, I do not want to simplify the concept of nature but to explore it in its full ambiguity. That ambiguity is part of what makes it such an efficient concept.<sup>36</sup> The need for interpretation stems from this: our existence as singular finite beings whose perception is mediated by the mind and with that mind we make sense of that which we perceive. 'The interpretation of nature' is the phrase that repeats itself in

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<sup>35</sup> Williams, *Keywords*, p. 219. Original emphasis.

<sup>36</sup> I follow Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', *Notes to Literature I*, transl. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 1-23 (p. 15), on this: 'If science and scholarship ... reduce what is difficult and complex in reality that is antagonistic and split into monads to simplified models and then differentiate the models in terms of their ostensible material, the essay, in contrast, shakes off the illusion of a simple and fundamentally logical world, an illusion well suited to the defence of the status quo.' Adorno hints at such a contradiction present in Bacon, when marking that Bacon established an empirical 'method' akin to a rational one, by marking, in an aside, that Bacon was an 'essayist' too (p. 9).

the subtitles of Bacon's works: *The New Organon; or, True Directions concerning The Interpretation of Nature; The Masculine Birth of Time or Three Books on the Interpretation of Nature*.<sup>37</sup> Bacon's use of 'interpretation' brings for the modern reader a, perhaps, surprising connection between the putative roots of modern science and the practice of literary study—which, if anything, is the study or even science of interpretation. The interpretive activity, giving an explanation or exposition, stems from the Latin root verb *interpretārī* meaning 'to explain, expound, translate, understand' and is intrinsically connected to the noun *interpretēs* denoting 'an agent, explainer, expounder, translator, dragoman'.<sup>38</sup> The onus is on the mediating agent, scientist or critic, between the mind and the object of study. In the first aphorism of the *Novum Organum—Aphorisms on the Interpretation of Nature*, no less—Bacon declares, 'Man is Nature's agent and interpreter' (*JSNO*, 33). In other words, we use the mind to make sense of what the mind presents us. This presentation is given to us in experience.

The presented complexity of the world is still frustrated by the idols present in the medium. Hence, again, the complexity denoted by compounded metaphors arises as Bacon describes the universe as a labyrinth and experience as a forest:

the universe to the eye of the human understanding is framed like a labyrinth; presenting as it does on every side so many ambiguities of way, such deceitful resemblances of objects and signs, natures so irregular in their lines, and so knotted and entangled. And then the way is still to be made by the uncertain light of the sense, sometimes shining out, sometimes clouded over, through the woods of experience and particulars; while those who offer themselves for guides are (as was said) themselves also puzzled, and increase the number of errors and wanderers. (*SEH IV*, 18)

Despite Bacon's caveat, I employ him as guide to the forests of experience presented to us by Shakespeare, following his disguised offer in the *Novum Organum*: 'the part I take upon myself is not that of a judge, but of a guide.' (*SEH IV*, 52) As a savvy labyrinth guide, Bacon

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<sup>37</sup> These instances are from *SEH IV*, 37; *PFB*, 61. *Valerius Terminus: of The Interpretation of Nature* is a third example (*SEH V*, 215).

<sup>38</sup> *OED* 'interpretation' n. 1 a; 'interpret' v.

points to the embodiment of sensory mediated experience in referring to the ‘eye of human understanding’.<sup>39</sup> The labyrinthine ‘universe’ presents itself in sensory experience as a forest where the light of the senses only intermittently provide illumination. Guido Giglioni disentangles the ‘wide range of meanings’ in Bacon’s image of the forest:

it denotes a repository of information about the world, which the human mind needs to process in order to reach a more dependable view of things ... ; it signifies the very process through which the mind is trained in order to become accustomed with the real nature of things, far from all fanciful constructions ... ; it represents means of deferring epistemological resolution while the mind is still involved in the activity of discovery ... ; it suggests a sense of creativity, associated with situations of ‘unfinished’ cognition ... ; finally, it represents a constant stimulus to combine individual cognitive efforts towards a collective attainment of truth[.]<sup>40</sup>

But what is cognition in this metaphor? It would seem to be the person trying to find its way in the forest; however, presuming coherence in the usage of metaphors, let us return to the mirror metaphor (that Bacon often deploys) that we last saw with *idola tribus*. In the *Masculine Birth of Time*, Bacon asks:

But do you suppose, when all the approaches and entrances to men’s minds are beset and blocked by the most obscure idols—idols deeply implanted and, as it were, burned in—that any clean and polished surface remains in the mirror of the mind on which the genuine natural light of things can fall? (*PFB*, 62)

Here, the mind, with its distorting idols, is represented by a mirror that is hit by ‘the genuine natural light of things’. I suggest, following Hegel and Kant, that cognition—as both perception and apprehension, the action and faculty of knowing<sup>41</sup>—is the light hitting the mirror.<sup>42</sup> Hence, in the forest metaphor it is the light enabling the person to move.

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<sup>39</sup> Bacon’s writing is guarded and hence is could be rightly described as ‘labyrinthine’ itself. Zagorin, *Bacon*, p. 14, suggests that Bacon’s likely homosexuality is behind this: ‘[i]f this was the case, it might throw light on certain elements of his labyrinthine personality that are also reflected in his writings.’

<sup>40</sup> Guido Giglioni, ‘From the woods of experience to the open fields of metaphysics: Bacon’s notion of *silva*’, *Renaissance Studies*, 28 (2014), 242-61 (p. 243).

<sup>41</sup> *OED* ‘cognition’ n. 1 a and b.

<sup>42</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977), also uses the light metaphor: ‘it is not the refraction of the ray, but the ray itself whereby truth reaches us, that is cognition; and if this were removed, all that would be indicated would be a pure direction or a blank space.’ (p. 47) I read this in conjunction with Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University

The interaction with and in light, the in-between of *inter* is that from which knowledge rises for Bacon. Relatedly, ‘the in-between’ is what Bruce R. Smith finds ‘touching’ in Shakespeare. In his phenomenal reading, Smith is pondering ‘the in-between’ of the toucher and the touched which ‘defies the rational mind’: ‘[n]either the rational mind nor the feeling body can get at it; neither the rational mind nor the feeling body account for the whole, for the phenomenon.’<sup>43</sup> In philosophical terms, Smith is describing the subject – object dialectic. It is precisely this ‘in-between’ that for Bacon requires *interpretation*: ‘The art which I introduce with this view (which I call *Interpretation of Nature*) is a kind of logic’ (*SEH IV*, 23; original emphasis). Interpretation as a ‘logic’ points towards his method of induction. In other words, there is an inherently psychological aspect to Bacon’s natural epistemology due to the idols.<sup>44</sup> This epistemological landmark pre-empts Kant’s so-called Copernican turn according to which our mental faculties do not simply adapt to perceived objects but inversely, ‘objects must conform to our cognition’.<sup>45</sup> This, I propose, is what the distorting activity of the *idola* means.

Bacon’s differentiation of appearance and essence, or rather the distorted image and ‘the genuine natural light of things’, coincide with Kant’s separation of *phenomena* and *noumena*.<sup>46</sup> This separation of appearance and what the thing is in itself is underlined by Bacon: ‘For no man can rightly and successfully investigate the nature of anything in the thing itself; let him vary his experiments as laboriously as he will, he never comes to a

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Press, 1998), linking intuition and concept, or sensory content and thought: ‘Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.’ (pp. 193-4)

<sup>43</sup> Bruce R. Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. xviii.

<sup>44</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon*, pp. 103-4, 120-1.

<sup>45</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 110.

<sup>46</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 347: ‘Appearances ... are called *phaenomena*. If, however, I suppose there to be things that are merely objects of the understanding and that, nevertheless, can be given to an intuition, although not to a sensible intuition ... then such things would be called *noumena*. (Original emphasis) Kant further clarifies the noumenon: ‘The concept of the noumenon is ... not the concept of an object, but rather the problem, unavoidably connected with the limitation of our sensibility’ (p. 380). Hence, my inference of essence coinciding with noumena can be misleading for someone who believes that we have direct access to essence. Immensely helpful in reading Kant’s technical language is Howard Caygill’s *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

resting place, but still finds something to seek beyond.’ (*SEH IV*, 17) Not only does Bacon anticipate Kant but also anticipates Hegel’s criticism of Kant, where the positing of a limit to knowledge (what we can know and what we cannot know) is already a form of knowing what is beyond that limit.<sup>47</sup>

Another significant proto-idealist element present in Bacon is his seeing the mind both as a problem with its idols and, with inductive logic, as something to solve that problem. What is presupposed here is what Hegel describes as ‘cognition as an *instrument* and as a *medium*’—this idea was touched upon with the mirror-light metaphor. Here Hegel is actually criticising Kant as one who distinguishes between that dual cognition and sees himself apart from it, taking for granted that cognition ‘and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*.’<sup>48</sup> In my reading of Bacon, he does not clearly differentiate himself as the interpreter, the in-between, and, moreover, his seeming confused metaphors (the mutable plant that blocks mental structures and attacks, the labyrinth, the forest) describe Bacon’s subject more as one caught within cognition than standing aloof from it. Here is the beginning of reflective thought that leads Hegel onto his notion of dialectics that is his description of experience.<sup>49</sup> Hegelian dialectics describes the process of the interrelatedness of subject (its knowledge) and object within cognition: a difference noted in the object changes the subject’s concept of it, thus changing their mutually dependent relationship which is sublated (destroyed and preserved in a different

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<sup>47</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 381, says that noumena ‘designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition and leave open a space that we can fill up neither through possible experience nor through the pure understanding.’ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, transl. by A. V. Miller (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1969), p. 127, gives his famous retort: ‘Something, as an immediate determinate being, is, therefore, the limit relatively to another something, but the limit is present in the something itself, which is a something through the mediation of the limit which is just as much the non-being of the something. Limit is the mediation through which something and the other each as well *is*, as *is not*.’ (Original emphasis)

<sup>48</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> ‘*Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it*, this *dialectical* movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called *experience*.’ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 55.



form) into a new relationship.<sup>50</sup> This mechanism is present in what Cassirer above describes in the relationship of *eidos* and *eidolon* as a ‘thoroughly mediated image’. Building on the ‘dual cognition’, Hegel describes the mind constantly working on a double level, simultaneously from two different standpoints, where the ‘natural consciousness’ comes across phenomena and an ‘observing consciousness’ that reflects on that.<sup>51</sup>

To be clear, I am not proposing Bacon to be an idealist in philosophical sense—he is a materialist—but he has a metaphysical, proto-idealist aspect to his materialism. Nor am I, with my current knowledge, suggesting that Bacon’s theory of idols had a major influence on Kant’s Copernican turn or Hegel’s dialectics; though there is unquestionable evidence that Kant and Hegel both read at least some Bacon, both saw him as a significant empirical thinker.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, my idealistic emphasis to the materialist Bacon comes from the impossibility of eradicating all of the idols—at best they are merely ‘hard to eradicate’ (*SEH* IV, 27). Qualitatively, the idols

are either artificial or innate. The artificial idols have entered men’s minds either from the doctrines and sects of philosophers or from perverse rules of proof. The Innate idols are inherent in the nature of the intellect itself, which is found to be much more prone to error than the senses. (*JSNO*, 18)

Bacon partakes in the nature – culture debate: the two artificial ones stem from cultural, external influences, whereas the innate ones are derived from what can be termed human

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<sup>50</sup> If this relationship is simply and purely cognitive, i.e. without contact to the material world, than this can be considered merely idealist or subjective. However, there is a strong tradition materialist reading, beginning with Marx, that insists on a material basis for experience (whether criticising or re-reading Hegel), which is present in a lot of (if not all) 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy that espouses Marxist links (many of whom consider themselves (anti)Hegelian), like Benjamin, Lukács, Adorno, Horkheimer, Derrida, Foucault, and Althusser.

<sup>51</sup> Hegel goes through this process in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (pp. 46-57).

<sup>52</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 108; G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on History of Philosophy: Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, vol. 3, transl. by E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press/Bison Books, 1995), pp. 170-88. Kant even went so far as to add a Baconian epigraph (from the preface to the *Great Instauration*) to second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (p. 91). However, to Paolo Rossi, *From Magic to Science*, p. xiv, Bacon ‘was, in fact, responsible for a new intellectual attitude to science which the Enlightenment and Kant—and later the positivists—maintained.’ Dennis Desroches, *Limits of Scientific Knowledge*, p.2, would go as far as replace Bacon for Kant as ‘our contemporary’.

nature. A lot is at stake on this division:<sup>53</sup> namely, which of Bacon's idola are artificial or innate? Spedding suggests that the idols of the Theatre contain both of the artificial ones and that the rest (Tribe, Cave, and Marketplace) are innate (*SEH I*, 139, fn 1). While I do agree on the large lines of Spedding's division, my reading of each idol argue for the presence of an artificial element in each one—this is something to which we will return.

However, my current point is the converse: there is a strong innateness present in all of them. This is due to a significant overlap of the idola. People as individuals are susceptible to doctrines, philosophies, bad proofs; these philosophies are formulated with language; language forms the tribe; language in its inherent ambiguity is open to manipulation by individuals. Again, this is something to which we will be returning.

Nevertheless, the idols are a constant presence as Bacon admits:

The first two kinds of idols can be eliminated, with some difficulty, but the last in no way. The only strategy remaining is, on the one hand, to indict them, and to expose and condemn the mind's insidious force, in case after the destruction of the old, new shoots of error should grow and multiply from the poor structure of the mind itself, and the result would be that errors would not be quashed but simply altered; and on the other hand, to fix and establish for ever the truth that the intellect can make no judgement except by induction in its legitimate form. (*JSNO*, 19)

This is effectively Bacon's mission statement for the *Novum Organum*, proper induction can counter-act the idola. Importantly, the idols are permanent fixtures in the mind, even the artificial ones due to their mutability in arboreal form. Because of this permanence, I read Bacon with a proto-idealist inflection: anticipating Kant's Copernican turn (and not too long after the actual Copernican revolution), idols actively conform objects to our cognition. Or, because Bacon was still a materialist, he would put it that idols *transform* objects *in our* cognition. They are part of the cognitive structure.

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<sup>53</sup> The operative word is the Latin 'Adscititia', which Jardine and Silverthorne translate as 'artificial' and Spedding, Ellis, Heath have as 'adventitious'. To me it would seem to be derived from the Latin noun 'adscitus' meaning 'acceptance' or 'reception', thus denoting a received idol. If I am correct on this, 'Adscititia' as things, thought-patterns received comes close to the second-nature sense of cultural inheritance—cultural presented as natural.

The question of ‘Why Bacon?’ has already received some form of an answer yet I need to answer the extended and more specific version: why read Shakespeare with Bacon *now*? There has been a return to nature in Shakespeare studies of late. On one hand, external nature has made a strong contribution in the form of Shakespearean ecocriticism, for example in the works of Gabriel Egan, Randall Martin, and Robert N. Watson where human interaction with the natural world is studied with regard to climate change and ecological crises with the concept of the Anthropocene underlining that interaction.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, ecofeminism has combined ecological points of view with the critique of in the works of people like Carolyn Merchant, Sylvia Bowerbank, and Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe more recently, where Bacon has played an important role in linking the domination of nature to social domination.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, (internal) human nature has made a resurgence with work on—and often combining—cognitive, evolutionary, and humanistic approaches to Shakespeare from people like Mary Thomas Crane, Philip Davis, Neema Parvini, Marcus Nordlund, Joseph Carroll, and Andy Mousley.<sup>56</sup> This thesis has strong implications for this return to nature though I cannot, for the sake of brevity, take these various and varied arguments on individually and fully. Nevertheless, this return to nature has been accompanied with a criticism of theory, especially the anti-humanist stance of cultural materialists. The clearest example is Jonathan Dollimore, who criticised

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<sup>54</sup> Gabriel Egan, *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Randall Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Robert N. Watson, *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989); Sylvia Bowerbank, *Speaking For Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe, *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

<sup>56</sup> Mary Thomas Crane, *Shakespeare’s Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Philip Davis, *Shakespeare Thinking* (London: Continuum, 2007); Neema Parvini, *Shakespeare and Cognition: Thinking Fast and Slow through Character* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Marcus Nordlund, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Love: Literature, Culture, Evolution* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007); Joseph Carroll, *Reading Human Nature: Literary Darwinism in Theory and Practice* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011); Andy Mousley, *Re-Humanising Shakespeare: Literary Humanism, Wisdom and Modernity*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

the universalism attached to humanist arguments. The debate revolving around essentialism and social constructivism revived the 80's debate around theory and brought back, amongst others these critical points: 1) return to a premodern materiality (Egan); 2) return to character study (Parvini, Nordlund); 3) return of universals.

Although this debate has somewhat subsided, it has not gone away. Going beyond Shakespeare studies, Kate Soper's analysis in the mid-nineties broadly divided modern arguments about nature into either 'nature-endorsing' or 'nature-sceptical' positions— notably without the presumption that this division 'reflect[ed] some simple antithesis between a 'green' and a 'postmodernist' politics.<sup>57</sup> These two perspectives, for Soper, are

centrally concerned with questions about nature and appearing to share certain prescriptive positions in common, but [are] driven by quite contrary impulses: the one concerned with the limits of nature, and with our need to value, conserve, and recognize our dependence upon it; the other concerned to remind us of the cultural 'construction' of nature, of its role in policing social and sexual divisions, and of the relativity and ethnocentric quality of our conceptions about it.<sup>58</sup>

The central issues here reside in the authority given to nature and whether that concept includes human activity. In terms of Bacon, I view the nature-endorsing perspective as the heirs of Book II of *Novum Organum* with a yearning to present a positive/positivist account of nature, whereas the nature-sceptical position emphasises the fallibility of our perception and the idols of Book I. This is a simplification of their positions yet it also offers a possible mediation between these positions. As the idols cannot be removed we cannot ever fully know nature as it is, whether internal or external, but this does not say there is no nature nor that we should not know it as well as we can. I suggest that the problem about the multifaceted concept of nature, at least with regards to this thesis, boils down to two conceptual pairings: determinism – freedom and nature – culture.

Returning to the three critical points: first, Gabriel Egan makes a comment of immediate importance to our concerns:

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<sup>57</sup> Kate Soper, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Soper, *What is Nature?*, p. 7.

because of Charles Darwin's discovery of evolution, we now have sound reasons for supposing that our innate mental tools for modelling reality are in fact pretty accurate, since we inherited them from our ancestors. From an evolutionary point of view, it is far more simple and efficient for a brain to represent the world as it is than to impose distortions upon the modelling; and by this reasoning a number of philosophical Gordian knots may be cut.<sup>59</sup>

Egan uncharacteristically succumbs to the anthropomorphising idol of the tribe, forgetting that what the human eye registers as visible light is only a small band of the electromagnetic spectrum or that human hearing only picks up a certain range of frequencies—the Gordian knot is missed rather than cut. It must be said that Egan is only making the point that our senses can provide an adequate 'modelling of reality' but the actual Gordian lies in more in what we discussed above as interpretation. The second issue of character study is a more complex issue that I touch on in my methodological section; however for my current points it is sufficient to point out that this matter deals with the representation of reality or relation of art to world in which it is interpreted. The first two points revolve around the issue of differentiating nature from culture, an issue that is underlined by the necessity of interpretation. However, these points are implicit in the final issue of universality. The problem with describing something as universal with regards to human nature is that it also serves as a prescription thus making how things *are* equivalent to how they *should be*.<sup>60</sup> This is a function of what I call the idols of nature. A universal does not conceptually allow for any exception: something either is universal or it is not. The differentiation of a statistical universal from an absolute universal, as suggested by Marcus Nordlund, is a misrepresentation of the concept of universality—it is the wrong word.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Egan, *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory*, p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> There are differences, however, with regards to how universals might influence action depending on what the content of the universal is and what authority is behind it. For example, a statement from a behavioural scientist 'all humans are greedy' could be used as a justification for someone's greed. On the other hand, if a biologist decrees that 'all humans are mortal' it does prescribe that all humans will and must die—at some stage. A prescription is not an ethical imperative, unless someone chooses to make it one. The problem I am describing here is exactly the erasure of human freedom and agency in the language of universals.

<sup>61</sup> Nordlund, p. 10.

Thus the crucial difference with determinism attributed to nature is that it does not allow any deviation or freedom, whereas cultural or social determinism does allow for the possibility of freedom, the possibility of change. The naturally determined necessity of eating, breathing and defecating (or more precisely, intake and expulsion of nutrients and particles), is different from the social determined necessity of reproduction—not everyone can or wants to have children. This difference highlights the importance of the nature-sceptical point of view, which stems from the inextinguishability of the idols of the mind. Moreover, the non-removability of the idols means there is no escape from ideology.

My focus on the idols bring to the fore a mostly unengaged tradition within Bacon and Shakespeare studies of the mind's mediating role in action or, more specifically, the idealist roots of ideology. Only the literary-minded writers on ideology, like Terry Eagleton and David Hawkes, find its roots with Bacon whereas the more politically focused critics look back only as far as the post-French Revolution coiner of the term 'ideology', Antoine Destutt de Tracy.<sup>62</sup> Hawkes and Eagleton specifically mention Bacon's *magnum opus*:

In Francis Bacon's *Novum Organon* [sic] (1620), the originally religious concept of 'idolatry' is adapted into a fully secular theory of false consciousness.

If we can speak any longer of 'ideology' at all, it must be in the manner of Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*, which argues that some of the 'idols' or false notions which mystify humanity have their roots deep in the mind itself.<sup>63</sup>

Eagleton underlines the embeddedness of the *idola* in the mind. Furthermore, there is an overlooked strain of philosophy and sociology that echoes and develops this idea especially and link it to action. The sociologist Karl Mannheim tentatively suggests that

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<sup>62</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 2007); David Hawkes, *Ideology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), p. 28-33; Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 4-5). Thompson does mark that 'de Tracy inherited [an Enlightenment faith] from Condillac and Bacon.' (p. 30) Yet the philosophically geared reader *Mapping Ideology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1994), makes no mention of Bacon.

<sup>63</sup> Hawkes, *Ideology*, p. 31; Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 161. However, neither critic delves that deep into Bacon: Hawkes only discusses the idols for under two pages, whereas this quotation from Eagleton is the only mention of Bacon.

Bacon's theory of the *idola* may be regarded to a certain extent as a forerunner of the modern conception of ideology. The "idols" were "phantoms" or "preconceptions" ... these are sources of error derived sometimes from human nature itself, sometimes from particular individuals. They may also be attributed to society or to tradition. In any case, they are obstacles in the path of true knowledge. There is certainly some connection between the modern term "ideology" and the term as used by Bacon, signifying a source of error. Furthermore, the realization that society and tradition may become sources of error is a direct anticipation of the sociological point of view. Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that there is an actual relationship, directly traceable through the history of thought, between this and the modern conception of ideology.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, if there was a direct relationship from Bacon's idols to ideology, Bacon would not be thought as a simple empiricist. Moreover, as Mannheim points out, Bacon's interpretation of nature has a deeply embedded proto-sociological character. Mannheim's observations are echoed by Max Horkheimer, who 'views Bacon's critique of naïve sense certainty and his reflections on the various factors that distort perception and hinder the attainment of useful knowledge—his theory of the "idols"—as the first step in the development of a theory of ideology.'<sup>65</sup> A few decades later, in the 60's, the German hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer in his seminal work *Truth and Method* also emphasises the ideal part of Bacon to the empirical:

His real achievement is, rather, that he undertakes a comprehensive examination of the prejudices that hold the human mind captive and lead it away from the true knowledge of things. Bacon's famous doctrine of the "prejudices" first and foremost makes the methodical use of reason possible.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, transl. by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1936), p. 55. Mannheim argues for two different types of ideology, a particular and a total one. For a critique, see Max Horkheimer, 'A New Concept of Ideology?', *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, transl. by G. Frederic Hunter, Matthew S. Kramer, and John Torpey (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), pp. 129-49.

<sup>65</sup> John Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 95. Elsewhere Max Horkheimer, 'Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History', *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, transl. by G. Frederic Hunter, Matthew S. Kramer, and John Torpey (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), pp. 313-88, marks that Bacon '—in contrast to views widely held today—must be given due regard as a thinker who first brought many of the seminal ideas of modern philosophy to the fore.' (p. 336)

<sup>66</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, transl. revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd edn (London: Continuum, 1989), p. 344.

Bacon's theory of the mind with its pre-emptive description of ideology belies the traditional 'father of empirical science' that permeates the history of ideas. Moreover, it also impacts the ideology critique of theory's heyday in literature which drew from Louis Althusser's ideological state apparatuses.

Ideology is a nebulous concept as Žižek points out:

'Ideology' can designate anything from a contemplative attitude that misrecognizes its dependence on social reality to an action-orientated set of beliefs, from the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure to false ideas which legitimate a dominant political power.<sup>67</sup>

Dollimore gives a succinct definition of ideology:

In its most direct sense it refers to a system of illusory beliefs held in the state of so-called false-consciousness, beliefs which serve to perpetuate a particular social formation or power structure; typically this power structure is itself represented by that ideology as *eternally* or *naturally given*—i.e. as inevitable, immutable.<sup>68</sup>

Dollimore calls this description the cognitive view of ideology. However, he gives a strange further description: 'This, roughly, is the view of ideology as a process of conspiracy on the part of the rulers and misrecognition on the part of the ruled'.<sup>69</sup> Rough, indeed: this is to believe that someone is always knowingly creating a false representation of the world.

While such cynical politicians do exist, this gives a simplistic view of ideology as a conspiracy, a consciously and cynically sculpted world view—the ideology of the supervillain cabal or the brave resistance that lines their hats with tin foil. The far more dangerous and subtle form of ideology is that those in power actually believe their ideology as truth, meaning, for them, it is no ideology at all.

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<sup>67</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology', *Mapping Ideology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 1-33 (pp. 3-4).

<sup>68</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, reissued 3rd edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. 9.



Returning to Bacon, there are two related points to etymology of *idola*. Firstly, ‘theatre’ and ‘theory’ share an etymological root in *θεᾶσθαι* [theasthai] ‘to behold, view, contemplate’ sharing deep affinities with *idein*. While Bacon’s legacy—or perhaps more correctly, that of Baconianism—has focused on his empiricism, natural history, and induction,<sup>70</sup> Dennis Desroches has challenged this Baconian focus on practice, offering instead a reading of Bacon as a *theoretician* of science.<sup>71</sup> As Desroches argues critical commentary has tended to privilege Book II of *Novum Organum*, which elaborates on Bacon’s inductive method, over Book I (which focuses on the idols of the mind) as the locus of scientific influence.<sup>72</sup> Conversely, Desroches underlines the importance of Book I to the theoretical aspect of Bacon’s project—stressing the ‘to see’ meaning of the Greek word *theoria*.<sup>73</sup> On a similar note, both Julie Robin Solomon and Perez Zagorin argue for the importance of the idols for the modern concept of objectivity.<sup>74</sup>

Secondly, Bacon, ‘dwelling purely and constantly among the facts of nature, withdraw[s his] intellect from them no further than may suffice to let the images and rays of natural objects meet in a point, as they do in the sense of vision’ (*SEH* IV, 19). Desroches points out that ‘early usages in English of the word ‘fact’ associated it with ‘an action, deed, a thing done or performed’, the very definition of the Latin *factum*.’<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, Desroches uncovers a particularly Baconian, now obsolete sense, which ‘states that a fact is ‘an action cognizable in law’, and given the degree to which this understanding of fact seems to operate entirely otherwise to the definition with which we are most familiar, it

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<sup>70</sup> Antonio Pérez-Ramos, ‘Bacon’s legacy’, *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. by Markku Peltonen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 311-34, provides a clear overview of Bacon’s reception from Descartes to the nineteenth century.

<sup>71</sup> Dennis Desroches, p. 1-5. Chapter 1 of the book (pp. 9-85) is where Desroches quite persuasively dismantles the different forms of Baconianism.

<sup>72</sup> Desroches, p. 86.

<sup>73</sup> Desroches, pp. 5, 90.

<sup>74</sup> Perez Zagorin, ‘Francis Bacon’s Concept of Objectivity and the Idols of the Mind’, *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 34 (2001), 379-93; Julie Robin Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making*. Zagorin, ‘Objectivity and the Idols’, p. 390 argues against Solomon conceiving Bacon’s objectivity as ‘disinterestedness’ or ‘cognitive self-distancing’ suggesting instead that it is rather ‘a reorientation, redirection and widening of the mind, the achievement of new clarity and a rectified perspective’.

<sup>75</sup> Desroches, p. 94.

seems clear that there is more to Bacon's call for a recourse to the 'facts of nature' than would at first appear.<sup>76</sup> Unlike Desroches' focus on theorizing Bacon, this suggests an implicit link not just between sight and action ('The eye wink at the hand', *Macbeth* 1.4.52) but also, again, between knowledge and action, epistemology and ethics. A 'fact of nature' then implies a mode of behaviour.

## Speculative Aesthetics

There are two aspects to my philosophical approach (as there are two distinct thinkers involved): aesthetic and speculative. These two are intertwined and lean on each other, as indeed do my readings of Shakespeare and Bacon. An overtly simplified starting point would be to assign Shakespeare as an aesthetic object and Bacon as speculative (guiding) subject. But this would hide my active role as the interpretative critic lending voice to both and the fact that Bacon gives me the sight to read the aesthetic as Shakespeare provides the ethical content of speculation. Or as A. L. Subbotin puts it: 'The theme of the "Idols of the Mind" acquires in Shakespeare's hands a social ring that we do not find directly either in the *Novum Organum* or in Bacon's other writings.'<sup>77</sup> My aesthetic reading boils down to a formalist and phenomenal interaction that is modified by a speculative approach stemming from imagination and a particular take on history. Yet my speculative aesthetics is inseparable from epistemology and ethics and their representations.

The aesthetic aspect is derived from the threefold architectonic of the Kantian system that builds on his three critiques: *The Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In the terms of this thesis, the first deals with epistemology, the second with ethics, and the third with aesthetics—this, it must be noted, is a huge simplification of the three seminal works of modern philosophy. In

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<sup>76</sup> Desroches, pp. 94-5.

<sup>77</sup> A. L. Subbotin, 'Shakespeare and Bacon', *Soviet Studies in Philosophy*, 3:1 (1964), 13-23 (p. 16).

Kantian terms: the first critique studies the Faculty of cognition and applies Understanding to Nature; the second focuses on the Faculty of desire where Reason is enacted on Freedom; the third critique is about the Feeling of pleasure and displeasure with the Power of judgment making sense of Art. Crucially, it is in the realm of the aesthetic where epistemology and ethics meet, as Kant says: ‘the power of judgment makes possible the transition from the domain of the concept of nature to that of the concept of freedom.’<sup>78</sup>

There are ‘two key senses’ to aesthetics that emerge in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: ‘The restricted sense is that aesthetics is the study of beauty in art and nature. More generally, though, it refers to the whole process of human perception and sensation – ideas about the body, imagination and feeling.’<sup>79</sup> The latter comes from Alexander Baumgarten’s use in the mid-18th century and stems from ancient Greek *αἴσθησις* [aisthesis] meaning ‘sense perception, sensation, perception’.<sup>80</sup> This aesthetic approach holds within it the reading of Bacon as a proto-Kantian philosopher in the sense that he anticipated idealist philosophy, which is why I have emphasised the central mediating role of the mind in perception and knowledge.

This is at the root of my philosophical reading particularly of plays and characters. This works simultaneously on two levels: first, the characters demonstrate a self-aware consciousness (that often is explored in soliloquies), where the two standpoints of Hegelian consciousness might question themselves as designated by the rhetorical term hypophora, where the dramatic tension is built within the character. Characters are thus presented *as if* they were alive—more on this in our discussion on speculation. The second level is between the play and its putative audience, the reader and interpreter (which Brecht

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<sup>78</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. by Paul Guyer, transl. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 80-3.

<sup>79</sup> John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas, ‘The new aestheticism: an introduction’, *The New Aestheticism*, ed. by John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 1-19 (p. 11)

<sup>80</sup> Joughin and Malpas, p. 11; *OED* ‘aesthetic’ n. and adj.; and ‘aesthesis’ n. denoting ‘[t]he perception of the external world by the senses’, the first instance of which is in 1601.

exploited with the *Verfremdungseffekt*). Not only is the audience aware of watching a play but Shakespeare's plays often demonstrate a self-awareness with meta-theatrical comments and, again, in the soliloquy with either talking directly to the audience or merely with the vocalisation of thoughts—on paper this is rarely distinguished but a crucial element of the performer's craft.<sup>81</sup> Thus artworks can have life-like qualities, with dramatic characters presenting the paradox of Shakespeare's cat: observed at any given moment characters are both alive and artistic constructs.

This is important in order to appreciate the relevance of our guide. Following the literary theorist Andrzej Warminski, Desroches argues that such a dialectical model (based on negativity) is necessary for renovating Baconianism. Indeed he maintains that 'there is already a model of the negative—a dialectic—at work [in Bacon], one that signals precisely a sort of "hyper-reflexivity"'.<sup>82</sup> This idea of negativity is Hegelian: 'the determinate negation' (or 'nothingness') is the non-identity between subject and object, where the two concepts do not match each other, hence the determination to renew them.<sup>83</sup> The source for Desroches' negativity comes from 'the nothing/great dichotomy' of Bacon's legacy 'that Bacon himself inaugurated'. In contrast, my sense of negativity arises from the *idola*, the 'false' and 'distorting mirror' of the mind. The awareness of sensory mediation points Bacon away from the mere acceptance of sensory data as true, to seek truth by other (inductive) means—this 'pointing away' is the negative moment inherent in the idols.

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<sup>81</sup> One is tempted to ponder meta-critically of the addition of extra level but that would be merely transposing the same process to the standpoint of the thesis and its reader. Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a depiction of the progression of standpoints as steps in a ladder to more complex forms mediation.

<sup>82</sup> Desroches, pp. 23-4.

<sup>83</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 51. My explanation happens, for Hegel, on the level of sense-certainty: 'in sense-certainty, pure being at once slips up into what we have called the two "Thises", one "This" as "I", and the other "This" as object. When we reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*: I have this certainty *through* something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the "I".' (p. 59; original emphasis)

Bruce R. Smith proposes such a phenomenal way of reading: 'I shall be paying attention, just as Bacon advises, to "the variety of common phenomena, which have not been certainly understood or carefully examined and considered."'84 Like Bacon and Smith, I also focus on experience in and of the plays and indeed on 'common phenomena', especially those that are perceived as 'natural'. Premised in this is that there is a subject that experiences and an object that is experienced. Phenomena are what the subject experiences: sensory perception, apperception and intraception. On a methodological level, the object is Shakespeare. But, as Smith marks, there is an ambiguity here regarding the referent of 'Shakespeare', which can be: 'The Historical William Shakespeare' (THWS), 'the Collected Works of William Shakespeare' (CWWS), 'William Shakespeare as Author' (WSA), and 'William Shakespeare as Cultural Icon' (WSCl).85

Hence, my phenomenal approach is grounded on CWWS whose author is dead—and needs to be so to free the text from the cult of the author. The ghost of the author(function) is not fully exorcised as I do acknowledge the historical period of the texts' cultural composition as well as the subsequent centuries of editorial work. With this acknowledgement I wish to keep open avenues of interpretation instead of barricading them with authoritative biographical debris that create imaginative cul-de-sacs. By eschewing authority I take an intentionally formalist step. However, it must be said, although I choose to inhabit this high street of despair, I do not want to impede anyone choosing a cul-de-sac as I can certainly appreciate the calm and security such a place provides.

A phenomenal approach brings the onus from the author to the reader. The event of reading (in the very broad sense) always happens in that moment of reading. This is what Barthes indicates when acclaiming the death of the author: 'there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*. ... The reader

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<sup>84</sup> Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare*, p. xv; *JSNO*, 51.

<sup>85</sup> Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare*, p. xi.

is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but its destination. ... the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.'<sup>86</sup>

Foucault counters Barthes' dismissal of the author to argue for a role that the author can yet play: 'the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society.'<sup>87</sup> Although admitting this, the name of the author and what it designates or describes still creates problems to us. Foucault provides an apt example: 'if we establish that Shakespeare wrote Bacon's *Organon* and that the same author was responsible for both the works of Shakespeare and those of Bacon, we would have introduced a [further] ... alteration which completely modifies the functioning of the author's name.'<sup>88</sup> This kind of alteration has already occurred as particularly the editors of *The Oxford Shakespeare* have added collaborations (like *Sir Thomas More*) and co-authors (such as Middleton, Fletcher, and, more recently, Marlowe) to an expanded Shakespearean corpus. This alongside both Barthes and Foucault displace the author as the poetic subject in the plays. Yet I do not wish to veer into the Foucauldian sheer discoursevisation of the subject: social construction needs a natural base.

Richard Wilson rightly suspects the link of the modernistic elision of the author to the myth of the universal Bard. Wilson suggests a turn towards a non-authorial intention: 'It is only by attending to [the] material discursivity that Shakespearean language can be de-mystified of its irrational mystique and restored to its true scenario, which is the

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<sup>86</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image – Music – Text*, transl. by Stephen Heath (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), pp. 142-8 (pp. 145, 148).

<sup>87</sup> Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard, transl. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113-38 (p. 124). Foucault summarises: 'the "author-function" is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy.' (pp. 130-1)

<sup>88</sup> Foucault, 'What is an Author?', p. 122.

author's society.'<sup>89</sup> Though 'the author's society' plays a crucial part in the phenomenal approach I am here proposing, my underlying focus is on the subject here and now, the reader and myself, the critic. To this extent, I side with Barthes and with Wimsatt and Beardsley who declare that the aesthetic work does not belong to the author nor to the critic: it 'belongs to the public.'<sup>90</sup> However, before I venture to unpack this curious link between the subject and the public in the speculative part of my philosophical approach, I have a couple things to say about the aesthetic part.

The formalist focus on the text in front of me stems from my cultural detachment from the Bardic tradition, which is enforced by Barthes and Foucault and aligns with anti-biographical tradition born out of Wimsatt and Beardsley's 'intentional fallacy'. Moreover, I am drawn to what Jonathan Gil Harris terms the 'democratic approach' of I. A. Richards and William Empson that attends to 'the formal ambiguities of the text and the experience of the reader' open to anyone 'with the text in front of them.'<sup>91</sup> (This approach links to the 'public belonging' mentioned above.) However, aesthetics including formalism has, since the advent of theory, been considered opposed to politics.<sup>92</sup> As Grady elaborates in 2009, '[f]or many recent radical critics, art has been understood either as a version of ideology, or as an irrationalist practice through which contemporary Postmodernist critics have undermined rationality.'<sup>93</sup>

Going against the traditional sense of aesthetics that focuses on beauty and unity, Hugh Grady follows Walter Benjamin and Adorno in establishing what he calls an 'impure

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), pp. 18-21.

<sup>90</sup> W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review*, 54 (1946), 468-88 (p. 470).

<sup>91</sup> Jonathan Gil Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 14.

<sup>92</sup> Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>93</sup> Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics*, pp. 1-2.

aesthetics' that also looks at ugliness and disunity.<sup>94</sup> Grady is part of the rehabilitation of aesthetics, that coincides with the philosophical turn of Shakespeare Studies, cemented by John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas in their 2003 collection *The New Aestheticism*. Joughin and Malpas point out that literature and philosophy have had a symbiotic relationship under the rubric of aesthetics and that 'theoretical advances' like 'the focus of the reader's role in constitution of meaning, the possibility that texts are open to a number of interpretations, the way in which literature troubles fixed definitions of class, race, gender and sexuality' can be viewed as 'the aesthetic function of literature'.<sup>95</sup>

This understanding of aesthetics bears a close kinship to formalist criticism in the shared focus on the text. For me, aesthetics in this vein wards off the idol of the Bard—it cannot be fully excised but keeping biography at bay allows for sidestepping the quagmire of authorship that has hindered Baconian readings of Shakespearean tragedy. In my reading focused on Bacon's idols, aesthetics is central: the sensory mediation of experience of Bacon's idols converges with the Baumgartian sense of aesthetics. What emerges here is the question of how does the aesthetic relate to the actual world, to empirical reality. For Adorno this tension is central:

Artworks detach themselves from the empirical world and bring forth another world, one opposed to the empirical world as if this other world too were an autonomous entity. Thus, however tragic they appear, artworks tend a priori toward affirmation. The clichés of art's reconciling glow enfolding the world are repugnant not only because they parody the emphatic concept of art with its bourgeois version and class among those Sunday institutions that provide solace. These clichés rub against the wound that art itself bears. ... Art must turn against itself, in opposition to its own concept and thus become uncertain of itself right into its innermost fiber.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics*, pp. 2-5. He builds his philosophical apparatus on the same figures as I do, namely Kant, Hegel, and Marx alongside Benjamin and Adorno.

<sup>95</sup> Joughin and Malpas, pp. 1-2.

<sup>96</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, transl. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 2.



The first part of this quotation is influential to Joughin and Malpas who phrase in this manner: 'Tied to actuality, in ways that cannot be reduced to the empirical, aesthetic experience allows for the creation of 'possible worlds' as well as for critical experimentation.'<sup>97</sup> The tension between the aesthetic and the empirical bridges the aesthetic part of my approach to the speculative one. However, Adorno is taking it further: as the bifurcation of the aesthetic from the empirical allows for a speculative and critical distance, the tensed dialectical cord snaps back from affirmatory content to question not just the outside world but itself. Art in its material bears the wounds of the external world—the bourgeois idea of art as immediately reconciling scrapes those wounds to remind of lie of affirming the actual. Keat's 'negative capability' stems from this element at play in Shakespeare.

For Adorno, the relationship of the aesthetic to its empirical other contains a formative influence on the artwork. 'Art acquires its specificity by separating itself from what it developed out of; its law of movement is its law of form. It exists only in relation to its other, it is the process that transpires with its other.'<sup>98</sup> As we will see, this formulation of form bears a striking resemblance to Bacon's form as the law of motion. The form of the artwork moves in accordance with the empirical. Thus the causality of fate in Shakespeare's tragedies has an empirical correlate in the cycle of violence in the age of terrorism.

My aesthetic methodology and the focus on the reader is not to suggest a theory of reception but rather to emphasise the subjectivity of the critic, my subjectivity, and how this, like the idols, are something we cannot escape. Hence, following Adorno, my attempt at objectivity is to embrace my subjectivity. This also explains the speculative modifier to the aesthetics particularly as an effort to move out of sheer subjectivity.

My aesthetic approach is enmeshed with the speculative approach not only with the relationship of the aesthetic to the empirical. In terms of the historical, I espouse a

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<sup>97</sup> Joughin and Malpas, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 3.

speculative tactic. As with the tension in the artwork between the aesthetic and the empirical, another particularly Shakespearean tension is between the past and present. My interest being in the web and layers of ideas, I cannot presume a simple cause – effect transmission as if an idea was a material object. Instead of presuming a ‘sequence of events like the beads of a rosary’, I follow Walter Benjamin in looking at the past as a ‘constellation which [my] own era has formed with a definite earlier one.’<sup>99</sup> Thus, the ideas presented by Bacon and dramatized by Shakespeare form a constellation of ideas, a shape that is tensed between the past and present.<sup>100</sup>

I am proposing a speculative constellation about how Baconian epistemology brings out an ethical dimension from the Shakespearean tragic aesthetic. Speculation of this manner is not unknown to Bacon as Graham Rees has argued—nor is it new to literary studies.<sup>101</sup> This speculative constellation presents a synchronic web of ideas; yet, there is also a diachronic aspect present, namely the layered history. The allegory of the constellation is instructive here: although a constellation in the sky jots two-dimensional images for us, each point differs in age as the light has travelled a varying amount of decades, centuries and millennia to reach us. Thus, constellations are in constant flux though from our momentary point of view they seem static. Likewise, ideas are in constant flux in the rays of history though seemingly eternal. Ideas, concepts, and words that denote

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<sup>99</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, transl. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 245-55 (p. 255); Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*, ed. by Steven Lukes, transl. by W. D. Halls (London: Free Press, 2013), p. 32, makes a similar point against linearity with regard to societies: ‘The succession of societies cannot be represented in a geometrical line; on the contrary, it resembles a tree whose branches grow in divergent directions.’

<sup>100</sup> For Benedetto Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, transl. by Sylvia Sprigge (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), p. 8, ‘[t]he practical requirements which underlie every historical judgment give to all history the character of “contemporary history” because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate.’

<sup>101</sup> Graham Rees, ‘Bacon’s speculative philosophy’, *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. by Markku Peltonen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 121-45; Richard Green Moulton, *The Modern Study of Literature: An Introduction to Literary Theory and Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915), p. 230, speculative criticism makes ‘prominent the leading issues of literary philosophy, thus blazing trails by which the student may guide himself amid the tangle of conflicting opinions.’

them therefore challenge the oft heard Shakespearean dichotomy of the historical and universal. Historical here is in the sense that David Lowenthal decries about a prejudice—or, in the context of this thesis, idol—that is ‘well-nigh universal’ in Shakespeare studies: namely, ‘the assumption that all writers (and thinkers) are historically time-bound and limited’.<sup>102</sup> More importantly, presentism has challenged the temporal restrictions put in textual interpretation.<sup>103</sup> Hence, the historical need not limit interpretation.<sup>104</sup>

Correspondingly, the universal, often linked to conservative and reactionary views, need not denote ahistoricism as Kiernan Ryan argues: ‘Far from dissolving history, [the concept of universality] is derived from and depends on it; far from precluding or denying the possibility of progressive social change, it demands nothing less than revolution to satisfy the true needs and full potential needs of human beings.’<sup>105</sup> In this sense, my speculative constellation challenges not only historical limitations of interpretation/reading but also reactionary and conservative essentialism that seek to justify present inequities.

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<sup>102</sup> David Lowenthal, *Shakespeare and the Good Life: Ethics and Politics of Dramatic Form* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), pp. viii-ix. This is the first of four prejudices. The second is ‘the assumption that poets ... are essentially like imitative ... birds, singing their personal impression of things ... but incapable of rationally understanding the natural and human world we all share’; third, ‘the assumption that literature is a field of its own, separate from the world of philosophical and political thought’; and fourth, ‘the assumption that Shakespeare wrote primarily for the stage rather than the study, from which it would follow that he wrote his plays for instant appreciation on the stage and avoided placing anything deep or complicated in them.’ These methodological idols have, for Lowenthal, limited the critical capabilities of the Shakespearean critic. These are linked to points I have made above. The second and fourth are linked to a biographical approach that stem from the first idol of historical limitation—the third relates to the apolitical sentiments of old aestheticism. The fourth, though stemming from biography, is also a formalist limitation that mixes in biographical intentionality.

<sup>103</sup> Ewan Fernie, ‘Shakespeare and the Prospect of Presentism’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 58 (2005), pp. 169-184 (p. 170).

<sup>104</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp. 39-49 (p.41, my emphasis), makes a similar point regarding new artworks that I would make of new criticism: ‘The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous *that the past should be altered by the present* as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.’

<sup>105</sup> Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare’s Universality: Here’s Fine Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 23.

I challenge the dichotomy of historicism and universalism in Shakespeare studies based on Bacon's concept of imagination. John M. Cocking remarks, in offering a genealogy of Bacon's concept of imagination, that it 'is what makes speculative thinking possible.'<sup>106</sup> For Bacon, imagination is the mediator in the mind working between the senses, reason and action:

imagination performs the office of an agent or messenger or proctor in both provinces [namely, reason and will] ... For sense sends all kinds of images over to imagination for reason to judge of; and reason again when it has made its judgment and selection, sends them over to imagination before the decree be put in execution. For voluntary motion is ever preceded and incited by imagination; so that imagination is as a common instrument to both ... reason and will[.] (*SEH IV*, 405-6)

This mediating position is where the idols of the mind have purchase on action and, hence, is crucial in how epistemology influences ethics, as was discussed above.

Imagination is also important when considering Shakespearean tragedy as Bacon, following the Italian mathematician and natural scientist Gerolamo Cardano,<sup>107</sup> offers the division of labour concerning the mental faculties: 'History has reference to the Memory, poesy to the Imagination, and philosophy to Reason.' (*SEH IV*, 292) In the *Sylva Sylvarum*, Bacon elaborates further on imagination and its relationship with time: 'Imagination, is of three kinds: the first joined with belief of that which is to come: the second joined with memory of that which is past: and the third is of things present, or as if they were present' (*SEH II*, 654). Thus poetry—by which Bacon 'mean[s] nothing else than feigned history or fables' (*SEH IV*, 292), a panoply where Shakespeare fits— can shrug off temporal as well as spatial chains. Imagination therefore holds a special place in the mind not only mediating between faculties but it also holds a creative position with two functions, as Karl R. Wallace summarises: 'First, imagination could interpret and illustrate the work of reason and

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<sup>106</sup> John M. Cocking, 'Bacon's View of Imagination', *Francis Bacon: Terminologia e Fortuna nel XVII Secolo*, ed. by Marta Fattori (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1984), pp. 43-58 (p. 44).

<sup>107</sup> Cocking, p. 57.

judgment. ... Second, imagination could create its own products. It could do what other faculties could not.<sup>108</sup>

In the mediating and creatively speculative role imagination linked epistemology and ethics. Bacon declares:

The doctrine concerning the Intellect ... and the doctrine concerning the Will of man, are as it were twins by birth. For purity of illumination and freedom of will began and fell together; and nowhere in the universal nature of things is there so intimate a sympathy as between truth and goodness. (*SEH IV*, 405)

The 'sympathy between truth and goodness' is the aesthetic formulation of the epistemological link between 'is' and 'ought', how things are and how they should be. As marked above, imagination mediates between reason and will, truth and goodness, therefore it can mediate between the 'is' and the 'ought'. How do these relate to each other in poetry?

Bacon makes a division of poetry 'into Poesy *Narrative, Dramatic, and Parabolical*':

Narrative Poesy is a mere imitation of History, such as might pass for real, only that it commonly exaggerates things beyond probability. Dramatic Poesy is as History made visible; for it represents actions as if they were present, whereas History represents them as past. Parabolical Poesy is typical History, by which ideas that are objects of intellect are represented in forms that are objects of the sense. (*SEH IV*, 315)

Here Bacon makes clear the relationship to the 'is', how they represent the actual world. They are exaggerated imitations, a visible past in the present, and ideas made sensible—a warped reality removed one step. For Bacon, 'narrative poesy' is an imaginative 'Heroical' composition, verse or prose; 'dramatic poesy' 'has the theatre for its world'; whereas 'parabolical poesy' refers to either illustrative, pedagogical composition or to compositions with hidden meaning, like 'fables or parables' (*SEH IV*, 315-7). Bacon builds a tension with 'is', the empirical world, and 'ought', the poetic world:

For as the sensible world is inferior in dignity to the rational soul, Poesy seems to bestow upon human nature those things which history denies to it; and to satisfy the mind with the shadows of things when the substance cannot be obtained. For if the matter be attentively considered, a sound

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<sup>108</sup> Karl R. Wallace, *Francis Bacon on the Nature of Man* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 74-5.

argument may be drawn from Poesy, to show that there is agreeable to the spirit of man a more ample greatness, a more perfect order, and a more beautiful variety than it can anywhere (since the Fall) find in nature. (*SEH* IV, 315-6)

Although Bacon does have his suspicions of poetry and imagination,<sup>109</sup> he does here subscribe to the traditional aesthetic idea of redemptive art: whereas the empirical world is 'inferior', poetry can produce a utopian vision of a 'greater', 'more perfect', and 'more beautiful' than anything that 'is'.

While such a utopian vision might form the basis for an ethical study—the hope for a positive realisation of an 'ought'—my interest in the 'ought' is a negative one. Thus the representation of the 'inferior' world of what 'is', seemingly divorced from the 'ought', is my focus. My speculative reading of the representation of 'action as if it were present' argues for the disconnection of description from prescription. What does this mean? Simply put: the description of nature, of an object, does not prescribe how it should act. Where this is most apparent is in human activity and, especially, in the binary debates of determinism versus freedom, or nature versus nurture. In a Shakespearean vein, I argue against essentialism as, for example, Jonathan Dollimore did. My argument stems from—and this is where I believe to be contributing something new—the Baconian notion of the mind as intermediary. What I term as the idols of nature is the representation of nature as a determining force, the implicit prescribing 'ought' present in description. We shall delve further into the philosophical mechanics of this in a moment.

The efficacy of tragedy, I propose, rests on the 'as if' of Baconian theatre. The speculative moment of the 'as if' representing something as 'present' (regarding the above discussion of history, note the temporal and spatial implications of 'present'), meaning that something performed both is and is not true, lays an implicit challenge to our perception of the empirical world and the necessities it implies. This fleeting moment of disjunction—

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<sup>109</sup> James Stephens, *Francis Bacon and the Style of Science* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 61-4.

something seeming both to be and not to be—whispers an alternative to what ‘is’ but does not present it positively. This type of negative image, a negative ethics, points to the direction of where not to go. It binds the reader, the audience, the subject of aesthetic experience to move anywhere but there. A suggestive paradox of the non-determining bind.

The power of speculation lies in its non-determinism. An adjacent part to this speculation is speculation in the sense of reflecting, derived from the Latin etymology from *speculum*, which means ‘mirror’. A further linked denotation is the surgical instrument, *speculum*, that facilitates sight and observation by dilating orifices. Sight and seeing—reminding us of the ever-present theme of perception—through a mediating instrument or surface is a seminal part of Bacon’s larger project of renovating science. Bacon often employs the mirror analogy when describing the relationship of the mind with nature, the outside world: ‘just as an uneven mirror alters the rays of things from their proper shape and figure, so also the mind, when it is affected by things through the senses, does not faithfully preserve them’ (*JSNO*, 19).<sup>110</sup> Although keeping the reflective link between the empirical world and perceptions in the mind, Bacon does retain a sceptical suspension of the truth. The ‘as if’ moment is already present in our perception. Again, the common mediator of perception and imagination is imagination, ‘which, being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined, and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things’ (*SEH* III, 343). Thus, with the aid of this suspension, the plays and its characters can be considered ‘as if’ real allowing them to prod into truth content of the plays. However, it must again be

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<sup>110</sup> Here I slightly prefer the Jardine-Silverthorne translation to *SEH* IV, 27, where it states the latter part as ‘cannot be trusted to report them truly’. ‘Reporting truly’ and ‘preserving faithfully’ have different modern connotations, the negations of which suggest differing functions of the mind. The troublesome Latin original is ‘in notionibus suis expediendis et comminiscendis, haud optima fide rerum naturæ’ (*SEH* I, 139).

remembered that the mirroring is not a simple positive projection of the world onto the stage but a negative image mediated by an 'uneven' surface that alters the light it projects.

This suspension of the 'as if' moment is further reflected in Bacon's affirmation of the 'do' over the 'ought to do': 'we are much beholden to Machiavel and others, that write what men do and not what they ought to do.' (*SEH* III, 430) As I noted above, Bacon's speculative *ought* is in his delineations of what science needs to do, whereas the *is* most clearly expressed in his idols. Therefore, I side with Subbotin's judgment: 'Shakespeare demonstrated the tragedy of the liberated human intellect, while Bacon presented its optimistic aspect; Shakespeare pictured reality, Bacon – Utopia.'<sup>111</sup> However, for me it will be a Shakespearean 'reality', too, that gestures towards the u-topos, or no-place, in pointing at the tragic *is*.

## Philosophical criticism

With this thesis I am staging an intervention especially in Shakespearean literary criticism. Although I am evoking the philosophical roots of literary criticism, I do not seek to promote my approach above anyone else's. Rather, a plurality of approaches is pivotal as it is the conversation and dialogue that animates any particular field. In a world where we live under the stress of political, social and economic division, we in the humanities need to set the tone of human(e) interaction. This is why my intervention seeks to highlight the place and medium of how we perceive and understand the world. Hence I am proposing to negotiate the rift that has been termed the 'two cultures debate'. In Shakespeare studies it has manifested itself around the issue of theory (and its relation to the various forms of practise) with continuous tensions for the last three or four decades. Instead of looking at the problem of nature being a *premise* for reading and criticism (do we read Shakespeare

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<sup>111</sup> Subbotin, p. 20.



as depicting the ‘human nature’ or humans as social constructs), the problem of nature is *what* we are reading. Hence, literary criticism (among the other humanities subjects) is part of the grander project of understanding the world in its social and natural iterations with our object of study being subjective creations that objectively create subjective responses. This convoluted description does not satisfactorily delineate the field of artistic study—nor should it!—but serves as an expression of the exponential complications that a reflective awareness of ourselves, whether as artist or critic, embedded in the work we study/create. No single viewpoint can fully express this which is why a plurality of approaches is essential. This is why I want to evoke a wider, more expansive concept of philosophy than in the modern professional academic sense. There are many definitions of philosophy, but for the purposes of the present discussion I define philosophy as an attempt to make sense of the world for and to ourselves. It does not seek to exclude but include through dialogue that does not recognise an end to discussion, merely pauses for reflection. In this thesis I want bring an alternative, underemphasised reading of Bacon into the discussion as an intervention that hopefully causes a reflective pause.

Over the last two decades there has been a turn away from theory to philosophy in Shakespeare studies. In 2000, the *Philosophical Shakespeares* collection, edited by John J. Joughin, appeared, which, in effect, gathered the philosophical strands of theory under its traditional name—fittingly it was prefaced by the unapologetically philosophical Stanley Cavell.<sup>112</sup> Since the dawn of the new millennium, there has been an increased interest by philosophers in Shakespeare, with books published by Agnes Heller, Colin McGinn, Tzachi Zamir, Jennifer Ann Bates, Raymond Angelo Belliotti, Andrew Cutrofello, Simon Critchley and Jamieson Webster; whereas Shakespeareans, like A. D. Nuttall, Richard Wilson, Hugh Grady, Stephen Greenblatt, Julia Lupton, and Andreas Höfele as well as Ewan Fernie, Paul

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<sup>112</sup> John J. Joughin (ed.), *Philosophical Shakespeares* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

A. Kottman, and Sam Gilchrist Hall, have mirrored the philosophers' interest with monographs on topics from aesthetics to political theology.

However, this claim for a philosophical turn has been undercut particularly by two collections: in 2009, Paul A. Kottman edited a volume of philosophers discussing Shakespeare from Herder to Heller including writings of important 20th century figures such as Walter Benjamin, Georg Lukács, the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt, and Jacques Derrida; in 2014, Jennifer Ann Bates and Richard Wilson edited *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy*, which brought philosophers and Shakespeareans together.<sup>113</sup> Both collections are steeped in the continental tradition of philosophy and, as Richard Wilson marks, have an 'engagement with the works of Shakespeare sustained over three centuries'.<sup>114</sup>

The latest philosophical turn seems more of a return as the theoretical boom of the 80s and 90s was itself steeped particularly in the French side of continental philosophy. Nearly a century before that, critics like R. G. Moulton and A. C. Bradley had a clear philosophical interest in Shakespeare, who were preceded by Coleridge's Romantic criticism (influenced by German Idealism). Moreover, the writing of early literary critics, like Dryden, Addison and Steele, had a strongly philosophical tone.

I place myself firmly in this philosophical return, which significantly differs from Bradley and Moulton in it being political (whether unapologetically so or at least needing to address its apoliticalness), living in a post-cultural materialism age. Moreover, this latest philosophical turn can perhaps be characterised as a turn from French theory to German philosophy.<sup>115</sup> In my case, this move stems from a dissatisfaction with Althusser's anti-humanism: I find the German tradition's focus on experience as having more explanatory power in insisting on a necessarily idealistic twist on a material world.

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<sup>113</sup> Paul A. Kottman (ed.), *Philosophers on Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Jennifer Ann Bates and Richard Wilson (eds.), *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

<sup>114</sup> Richard Wilson, 'Introduction', *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy*, ed. by Jennifer Ann Bates and Richard Wilson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 1-13 (p. 1).

<sup>115</sup> This was pointed out to me by Richard Wilson.

Two recent works in particular have shaped and guided my thinking in this thesis: Paul A. Kottman's *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare: Disinheriting the Globe* and Robert N. Watson's *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance*. Kottman's interest in tragic dissolution of social bonds linked, for me, aesthetics with ethics; whereas Watson's focus on nature and its epistemology underlined the importance of my reading of Shakespearean tragedy through Bacon's natural philosophy. It is in this combination of aesthetics, epistemology, and ethics read through Bacon's theory of the idols that sets me apart from *all* preceding Shakespeare critics.

However, all of the aspects of philosophical Shakespeare criticism mentioned above have received serious attention either individually or in combinations. Aesthetic criticism, particularly the 'impure' kind as advocated by Hugh Grady, that addresses conflicts and disunity in the artwork like political and sensuous interests or, in my case, the ethical and epistemological implications is the kind of criticism that makes sense of our fragmented modernity.<sup>116</sup> Akin to this approach is Richard Wilson's underread *Free Will: Art and Power on Shakespeare's Stage*, where he argues that Shakespeare's 'plays are systematically engaged in untying freedom from royalty by dismantling *sovereignty in all its forms*' and they 'did sing power's ode, but *back to itself*.'<sup>117</sup> I would add to this type of aesthetic readings engaged in issues of freedom, resistance and subversion recent works by Stephen Greenblatt, Andrew Cutrofello, Sam Gilchrist Hall, and Kiernan Ryan.<sup>118</sup>

Alongside these aesthetic approaches, recent works on Shakespeare and ethics (the philosophical realm usually associated with freedom) have been influential. Jennifer Ann Bates' *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination*, like the works mentioned above

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<sup>116</sup> Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Wilson, *Free Will: Art and Power on Shakespeare's Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 4, 8; original emphasis.

<sup>118</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Andrew Cutrofello, *All For Nothing: Hamlet's Negativity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014); Sam Gilchrist Hall, *Shakespeare's Folly: Philosophy, Humanism, Critical Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Universality*; Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

are in spirit similar to my work in their attempt to make sense of the world through the medium Shakespeare—Bates’ work particularly in its broadness of issues funnelled through a significant Western philosopher offers me a methodological precedent.<sup>119</sup> In addition, James A. Knapp’s recent study on the connection between visibility and ethics shares a perceptual interest with my work, helping me to understand that historical period where the ideas of perception and knowledge were in flux.<sup>120</sup> Another helpful book on that historical moment and ethical ideas shared by Shakespeare and Bacon is the article collection *Shakespeare and Renaissance Ethics*, edited by Patrick Gray and John D. Cox.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, Richard Wilson’s *Worldly Shakespeare*, which I consider to be an ‘impure’ book on ethics with its interest in the giving and taking of offense with ‘good will’, assisted me in addressing agonistic tensions in Shakespeare.<sup>122</sup>

While most of the above works link aesthetics to ethics there is a slightly differing strand with its interest in epistemology and ethics. This more analytical strand of philosophy stems from Stanley Cavell’s work, especially his *Disowning Knowledge*, originally published in 1987 with the updated edition published in 2003. Cavell’s sceptical reading of Shakespeare bears a close resemblance to my work (or rather mine to his)—and is indeed a constant companion in this journey—in that we share a Kantian outlook on epistemology but we differ in that Cavell follows Descartes through to Wittgenstein and modern analytical philosophy whereas I follow Bacon to Hegel, Marx and Horkheimer and Adorno. For Cavell the Shakespearean ‘mode of tragedy is a response to the crisis of knowledge inspired by the crisis of the unfolding of the New Science in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries’; however, his philosophical focus is ‘in the generation following those tragedies

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<sup>119</sup> Jennifer Ann Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010). However, it must be noted that stylistically Bates is closer to the analytic tradition than I am.

<sup>120</sup> James A. Knapp, *Image Ethics in Shakespeare and Spenser* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>121</sup> Patrick Gray and John D. Cox (eds.), *Shakespeare and Renaissance Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>122</sup> Richard Wilson, *Worldly Shakespeare: The Theatre of Our Good Will* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 25.

by Descartes's articulation of modern skepticism.<sup>123</sup> Tzachi Zamir moves along the road paved by Cavell: his interest in the intersection of philosophy and literature leads to an argument 'that an integrated "philosophical criticism" ... can substantially compensate for some limitations of non-literary philosophical argumentation.'<sup>124</sup> Although Zamir shares my interest in epistemology and moral philosophy, his addressing of the analytic tradition makes for a different kind of reading.

Although I am clearly situated latest turn to particularly German philosophy due to my particular reading of Shakespeare and Bacon (and indeed touching on the somewhat independent analytical philosophy tradition solidified by Cavell), I do see my thesis as a continuation of the cultural materialist project, particularly regarding the critique of ideology as formulated by Dollimore, Sinfield and Belsey.<sup>125</sup> Writing against an essentialising humanism of older critics the cultural materialists (often lumped together with new historicists, feminists and other expressly theoretical critics) were countered in the late 90's by Harold Bloom and, during the recent philosophical turn, Andy Mousley and Robin Headlam Wells.<sup>126</sup> While I agree with the anti-essentialist criticism of humanist writing and with the social constructivism of human life, I disagree with the (often simplified) implication that there is no thing as nature. The difficulty of access does not imply non-existence. My disagreement with the cultural materialist take on nature is linked to the concept of subjectivity as argued by Francis Barker and Belsey.<sup>127</sup> For me, at the root

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<sup>123</sup> Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, p. xiii. Other works on scepticism: Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare's Scepticism* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987); Millicent Bell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Scepticism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>124</sup> Tzachi Zamir, *Double Vision: Moral Philosophy and Shakespearean Drama* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. xiii.

<sup>125</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*; Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980).

<sup>126</sup> Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare and the Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998); Andy Mousley, *Re-Humanising Shakespeare*; Robin Headlam Wells, *Shakespeare's Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>127</sup> Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984); Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and difference in Renaissance drama* (London: Methuen, 1985). A more persuasive reading is given by Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity:*

is an interpretation of the transcendental (sometimes misread as transcendent) subject that has no agency. While there is indeed a problem of agency, it does not mean that there is no agency. Both of these issues of nature and agency exemplify Bacon's idols of the tribe. However, recent critiques of cultural materialist anti-humanism has sought alliances with cognitive science and evolutionary theory. Yet the too simple appropriation of these important ideas and works can easily import an anti-humanist positivism and scientism into the humanities—in terms of the causality of fate, an attempt to save the humanities can be its destruction. A radical critique of these ideas of nature and subjectivity is needed. As Marx states, '[to] be radical is to grasp things by the root. But for man the root is man himself.'<sup>128</sup> Hence, with all the (eco)feminist problems this phrasing raises, in my reading of Shakespeare I return to the philosophy of Francis Bacon for a critique of ideas of nature.

Two works in particular have influenced my understanding of Bacon's philosophy by providing a solid starting point. Perez Zagorin's *Francis Bacon* provided me with an indispensable guide to Bacon's works and thought, both as a philosopher and politician. The other seminal help came from Stephen Gaukroger's *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy*, with its focus on Bacon as a natural philosopher. However, I differ from them in the understanding of and emphasis on the idols, as I do from almost all Baconian critics I have found. Another two works have supported my divergent reading: first, Dennis Desroches' focus on Bacon as a theoretician of science; and, second, Elizabeth Hanson's focus on subjectivity.<sup>129</sup> Yet, neither barely touches on the theory of the idols.

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*Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1993). A helpful early critique is Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>128</sup> Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction', *Early Writings*, transl. by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin, 1974) pp. 243-57 (p. 251).

<sup>129</sup> Dennis Desroches, *Limits of Scientific Knowledge*; Elizabeth Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

However, Hanson was helpful in another aspect: reading Bacon with Shakespeare. She argues that when people were seen as objects of discovery—linking natural philosophy to law and torture—it also gave rise to the subject in its political and philosophical dimensions. For Hanson, an ‘epistemic change’ took place during Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns and

[t]he nature of this change is adumbrated in the very awkwardness which attends [her] use of the term “subject” in connection with this period, the jostling it produces between the modern meaning which designates the site of thought and experience, and the Renaissance meaning which proclaims the subordination of the governed.<sup>130</sup>

She continues:

Implicit in these different meanings are two different grammars of knowledge. The first supposes that the subject knows transitively, taking the world as the object of his thinking. The second posits that to the extent that the subject knows (and this may not be his defining activity) he must do so self-reflexively, recognising his place in a hierarchical order. ... the object the discoverer seeks to know is a subject: the site of thought and the origin of action.<sup>131</sup>

Hanson works in tradition stemming from Burckhardt (also Hegel) to (via Foucault) to Barker and Belsey.<sup>132</sup> Hanson underlines the unique role Bacon played: ‘The dual role of Francis Bacon, as a champion of the discovery of nature’s secrets and as a persistent practitioner of torture, apparently the only English lawyer who actually asserted that torture was permissible in English juridical practice, is also suggestive.’<sup>133</sup>

Comparative readings of Shakespeare and Bacon are by no means an undiscovered country. In the 1930’s, Caroline Spurgeon compared Shakespeare’s and Bacon’s use of imagery and noted that ‘the difference between [them] is very marked.’<sup>134</sup> Spurgeon’s analysis is limited on the Baconian side to only to ‘Bacon’s *Essays*, the *Advancement of*

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<sup>130</sup> Hanson, *Discovering the Subject*, p. 2.

<sup>131</sup> Hanson, *Discovering the Subject*, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup> Hanson, *Discovering the Subject*, p. 9.

<sup>133</sup> Hanson, *Discovering the Subject*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>134</sup> Spurgeon, ‘The Use of Imagery by Shakespeare and Bacon’, *The Review of English Studies*, 9 (1933), 385-96, p. 385.

*Learning, Henry VII* and the first part of the *New Atlantis*.<sup>135</sup> Although my work touches on the imagery in both Shakespeare and whole Baconian corpus, especially when they bear a philosophical importance, the comparison of imagery is not my immediate focus and hence slightly beyond the aims of this thesis. Nevertheless, the work of Spurgeon is still an influential resource for anyone studying Shakespeare and Bacon.

There are also several more recent instances: John Channing Briggs mirrors Othello's issues with persuasion and evidence to Bacon's project of renovating science 'for the sake of understanding more fully the poetical resources of Shakespeare's drama.'<sup>136</sup> José María Rodríguez García, in turn, mirrors Richard II with Bacon antagonism with Aristotle (in his early works) in terms of a providentialist historiography and prophetic language. These issues I tackle in chapter 1 but from the point of view of Iago and Richard III. Jacqueline L. Cowan argues that poetry and natural philosophy, specifically in terms of imagination, are complementary arts through a comparison of *The Tempest* and Bacon's *Instauration Magna*.<sup>137</sup> Giuseppe Mazzotta compares three utopian texts, namely Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and Bacon's *New Atlantis*.<sup>138</sup> Dymrna Callaghan and Chris R. Kyle study 'the contiguity between "wilde justice" and "justice"'—stemming from Bacon's definition of revenge as 'wild justice'—in *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>139</sup> In addition, Martin D. Yaffe compares two Jewish characters, Shakespeare's Shylock and Bacon's Joabin from *New Atlantis*, to challenge anti-semitic charges set against Shakespeare.<sup>140</sup> Following a reading of Bacon's allegory of Orpheus, Yaffe suggests that 'we cannot know things without first meddling in them. That is, we

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<sup>135</sup> Spurgeon, 'Shakespeare and Bacon', p. 385.

<sup>136</sup> John Channing Briggs, 'The Problem of Inartificial Proof: Othello Peers into Bacon's Universe', *Ben Jonson Journal*, 10 (2003), 161-77 (p. 162).

<sup>137</sup> Jacqueline L. Cowan, 'The Imagination's Arts: Poetry and Natural Philosophy in Bacon and Shakespeare', *Studies in Philology*, 113 (2016), 132-62.

<sup>138</sup> Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Cosmopoiesis: The Renaissance Experiment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

<sup>139</sup> Callaghan and Kyle, p. 40.

<sup>140</sup> Martin D. Yaffe, *Shylock and the Jewish Question* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 88-123.



cannot know things as they are in themselves but only as we make (or “tune”)—or perhaps mar (or inadvertently “untune”)—them.<sup>141</sup> Here, Yaffe emphasises the role of mediation in our knowledge of the world.

None of these make a reading of Shakespeare through Bacon’s idols of the mind. I have found only one exception. A. L. Subbotin’s 1964 article on Shakespeare and Bacon is the work that bears the closest resemblance to mine as it focuses on Bacon’s theory of the idols. For Subbotin these two figures share a ‘similarity of thought’ and argues that ‘[t]he social mind of [Bacon’s] time was infected with “idols” and stood in need of therapy. Shakespeare was able to see and express this no less penetratingly than Bacon.’<sup>142</sup> Subbotin arrived at this reading half a century before I did, but despite its promise the reading does not venture much beyond a cursory analysis of Shakespeare’s plays through Bacon’s idols of the mind and is particularly lacking (mainly because the developments in literary criticism after its writing) the theoretical and philosophical implications of such a reading which my thesis attempts rectify. Nevertheless, Subbotin’s work should not be underestimated as it provides a crucial distinction between the two authors: ‘In much of that which Bacon accepts as obvious and a standard, Shakespeare sees a problem, a drama, a tragedy.’<sup>143</sup> Although I think this simplifies Bacon’s philosophy, it is still a valid difference.

There is one more final critic whose readings of Shakespeare and Bacon who has on several occasions glanced the topic of Shakespeare and Baconian idols that has been very productive for me: namely David Hawkes. Not only does he present Bacon as a precursor to the modern concept of ideology, he expressly discusses Bacon’s idols of the marketplace in relation to, among others, Shakespeare—though with a clearer focus on the religious links

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<sup>141</sup> Yaffe, p. 94.

<sup>142</sup> Subbotin, p. 13-4.

<sup>143</sup> Subbotin, p. 22.

of commodity fetishism.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, in a recent article, Hawkes explores the connection of the mind to the body through a reading of the torture nature in Bacon's Proteus myth and Shakespeare.<sup>145</sup>

Surprisingly little has been written about Bacon in relation to nature in Shakespeare. Robert N. Watson bears a close kinship in this respect with his book *Back to Nature*, although his focus is on that sentiment (that would develop into a nostalgia) of a return to nature. My interest is in how the ideas and ideologies of the natural justify and influence ethical action in Shakespeare's tragedies. My kind of ideological interest, especially stemming from the Baconian idols is a novel approach. Few have tarried with the negative effects of the idols on interaction.

On the topic of nature, three books in particular have been useful and formative: Kate Soper's *What is Nature?*, Pierre Hadot's *The Veil of Isis*, and Keith Thomas' seminal *Man and the Natural World*.<sup>146</sup> However, one issue in particular comes up often in relation to Bacon: the domination of nature. Caroline Merchant's and William Leiss' seminal works on this issue have been instructive.<sup>147</sup> They also touch on the most important singular influence on this thesis: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which begins with a reading of Bacon and the concept of enlightenment.<sup>148</sup> This is what originally lead me to consider Bacon's idols in relation to Shakespeare. From here (and other works of Adorno) is where I derived my theoretical take of a materialist dialectic, according to which the very material world is infused with an unremovable ideal

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<sup>144</sup> Hawkes, *Ideology*, pp. 31-2; David Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace: Idolatry and Commodity Fetishism in English Literature, 1580-1680*. He also touches Bacon in David Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 171-2.

<sup>145</sup> David Hawkes, 'Proteus Agonistes: Shakespeare, Bacon, and the "Torture" of Nature', *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare's Theatre: The Early Modern Body-Mind*, ed. by Laurie Johnson, John Sutton, and Evelyn Tribble (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 13-26.

<sup>146</sup> Soper, *What is Nature?*; Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, transl. by Michael Chase (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2006); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1983).

<sup>147</sup> Merchant, *The Death of Nature*; William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

<sup>148</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, transl. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

aspect through our experience—thus physics for us, whether we like it or not, always comes with a metaphysics.<sup>149</sup> For Horkheimer and Adorno, Bacon has become a figure of the domination of nature. Therefore, in my argument, the idols of nature are what hide the destructive causality of fate inherent in the domination of nature.

## Idols of Nature

The idols of nature touch on several conceptual pairings: determinism – freedom, fact – action, subject – object, and nature/essentialism – culture/social constructivism. In the case of Bacon, the subject – object dyad is implicitly expressed in his theory of the idols that seek objectivity by taking subjective prejudices into consideration. Yet this dyad is intensified in the domination of nature as, according to Bacon, '[w]e can only command Nature by obeying her' (*UGNO*, 43) with Shakespeare often projected into the mind – body relationship.

The first pair, determinism and freedom, is the ethical rephrasing of the description-prescription problem. In other words, are we in our actions determined by nature, an 'inherent force' or do we possess free will? This issue often, especially in the early modern period, is presented in its theological robes, such as God's will or Providence. Crucially, this is where the domain of ethical action leans heavily on epistemology and, hence, where the distortion from Bacon's idols can have dire consequences. Moreover, it is here that the other conceptual pair, nature and culture, wields considerable power. Cultural conventions and customs—arising from *idola specus, fori, and theatri*—easily present themselves in a natural form, as Bacon observes: 'for custom wisely and skilfully conducted proves indeed, according to the saying, a *second nature*' (*SEH V*, 26; my emphasis). I contend that this is one of those under-estimated powers of mind to naturalise

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<sup>149</sup> Especially Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, transl. by E. B. Ashton (London and New York: Routledge, 1973); and Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*.

that which is cultural and thus to present a social convention with the determining power of nature. Therefore, the central interest of my thesis is to study the *idols of nature*, in which ethical action in the tragedies is influenced by an idea or representation of nature or the natural—where epistemology influences ethics.

The embedded meanings in key Baconian terms brings us back to the agency of the interpreter and how perception and ideas merge to influence action.<sup>150</sup> As Hamlet suggests that our ethical sensibilities arise from our mind: ‘there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.’ (2.2.251-2) The seminal sociologist Emile Durkheim makes a point of the sensual embeddedness of morality:

Moralists have not yet even grasped the simple truth that, just as our representations of things perceived by the senses spring from those things themselves and express them more or less accurately, our representation of morality springs from observing rules that function before our very eyes and perceives them systematically.<sup>151</sup>

Returning to the first aphorism of *Novum Organon*, links ‘Nature’s agent’ (as Jardine and Silverthorne had it) and his knowledge to action: ‘Man, being the servant and interpreter of Nature, can do and understand so much and so much only as he has observed in fact or in thought of the course of nature: beyond this he neither knows anything nor can do anything.’ (*SEH* IV, 47) The idols of nature are so influential because a seeming natural fact suggests implicitly a way of acting that is taken for granted. Moreover, this kind of fact bypasses ethical culpability as any according action would be in accordance with nature, hence the modern ‘realist’ can speak of brute facts without the need to question the implicated actions.

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<sup>150</sup> As my focus on idols etymologically suggest the centrality of sight, vision and images, my thesis perhaps does not sufficiently challenge the sight-centric epistemology, although I do want to elucidate the problems that such an epistemology entails. Elizabeth D. Harvey, ‘Introduction: The “Sense of All Senses”’, *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Elizabeth D. Harvey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 1-21, provides a clear overview of touch subjected particularly to sight in Western thought. (pp. 1-14)

<sup>151</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Sociology and its Method*, p. 34.

In *Valerius Terminus; of the Interpretation of Nature*, Bacon marks ‘that it is true that interpretation is the very natural and direct intention, action, and progression of the understanding delivered from impediments.’ (*SEH* III, 251) Now, with the knowledge of the facticity of nature, the *idola* presents itself in a new light: if indeed the removal of impediments provides ‘the very natural and direct action’ then these impediments, the idols not only necessitate ethical judgment but also constitute it. Hence the idols are the basis for ethical action.

The causality of fate negotiates the problem of determinism versus freedom, which is the ethical issue of my thesis. I argue that the blindness suggested by the causality of fate lies in what I term the Idols of Nature (which negotiate the dyad of essentialism and social constructivism) that are derived from Bacon’s idols of the mind. In fact, I will demonstrate how Baconian philosophy understood through the enchanted glass of his *idola* elucidate the mechanism that underscores the causality of fate and how the domination of nature is enmeshed in it. Thus we can be both determined and still retain a possibility for freedom at the same time.

My thesis consists of two chapters, each exploring idols of nature based on one of Bacon’s idol: starting with a reading of the idols of the theatre, followed by the idols of the marketplace. Embedded in the structure is a sub-argument that, on one hand, argues that Bacon’s idols applied cannot be separated from each other and do imply each other, and, on the other, that the embodied consciousness of *idola tribus* is what makes ideology inherent to our consciousness. However, before delving into the individual chapters, two observations are pertinent: first, the above arguments—and indeed the idols of nature, themselves—rose from the interaction and mutual resistance of the Shakespearean and Baconian texts. Therefore, this process can hardly be described as merely applying a theory to a reading but from the dialectical tension of reading Shakespeare and Bacon side by side. Second, the idols should not be seen as the villains of this piece: it would be as futile as

resenting the body that we are. Rather, learning to understand them and thus gathering some sort of Baconian prudential wisdom that can perhaps leads to an Adornian reconciliation with nature, fulfilling the aesthetic promise of happiness.

The first chapter, entitled 'Idols of (dis)Semblance', interprets Bacon's Idols of the Theatre, 'or of Theories' (as he also terms it; *UGNO*, 66), in how particularly Richard III and Iago create and manipulate ways of interpretation. Although this particular idol is about a (false) systemic understanding, Bacon knowingly chooses an allusion to theatre: it creates a false double of the world. Iago is essentially a dramatist in providing Othello with the 'ocular proof' (3.3.365) he requires. Yet Richard with his 'dissembled looks' is not only a dramatist but creates 'inductions dangerous' (1.2.224)—inverting Bacon's allusion by providing scientific proof for his theatre to seem real within the play. Akin to Bacon, Richard and Iago produce an interpretation but for their villainous ends.

This chapter is divided into two parts in accordance with two meanings of 'dissemblance': on one hand a 'dis-semlance', a bifurcation or doubling of appearance with the implication that one true and the other untrue; on the other hand, a 'de-semlance', a negative element both in Richard's de-formity and in the Baconian inductive process that Richard and Iago abuse. The first part is about 'dis-semlance', the doubling of inductive processes reading especially Richard through Bacon's Proteus allegory. The second part focuses on the latter aspect of dissemblance as well as the Machiavellian use of induction. In this chapter I argue that the use of instrumental reason provides villains with agency and, conversely, the loss of that agency when being instrumentally used—the confrontation of fore-knowledge without the ability to affect the outcome.

Bacon's Idols of the Marketplace (chapter 2) explicitly refer to problems arising from language. For Bacon, these idols 'are most troublesome of all: idols which have crept into the understanding through the alliances of words and names.' (*SEH* IV, 61) However, if we are to focus on the word Bacon uses to designate these idols, we can see that this issue

also revolves around the function of language: namely that marketplace designates the centre of society and the place for social interaction. Indeed, Bacon chose the name 'on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate' (*SEH IV*, 55).

In Bacon's allusion three things converge: society, commerce, and language. I link this tripartite allusion to social disintegration in *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens* through ideas of kindness and exchange. By 'kind'ness I mean similarity, being of a kind (either blood, familial kindness or similarity of character in friendship) alongside the emotional kindness. This 'kind'ness is closely connected to exchange as a trade 'in kind', a mercantile logic that makes things interchangeable. Language is also central, particularly in the form of verbal exchange, to 'kind' acts: the system of credit, implied in the words 'family' and 'friendship, cannot function if there is no trust in the words leading to actions. In the 'Idols of Kindness', I argue that the ideology of 'kind'ness pervasive in mercantile thought becomes a tool for disintegration in a society ruled by the logic of individual needs (as Edmund and Macbeth's did in the previous chapter). The societies of Denmark and Athens become unkind alienating Hamlet and Timon to the point of revenge, where they return societies' unkindness in kind—suicide as hostility against a hostile society. This reveals quasi-magical fallacy embedded in mercantile exchange: making dissimilar things similar, equivalent, unkind things traded in kind.

The idols of nature, I argue, enable the causality of fate to function by hiding the causal mechanism in the guise of nature, thus seemingly outside the sphere of human action. Firstly, on the level of the individual, the necessity of the mediating mind is obscured as the idols of (dis)semblance present a seemingly direct access to how things are in 'reality'. The obfuscated interpretation presents itself as facticity, already tinged with implications for action. This is dramatized to the extreme as the villainous Richard and Iago situate themselves as hidden dramatists who wickedly employ Baconian methods to

influence action in others. Their deception is tantamount to the creation of an ideology as a means to their ends, which are as nebulous as their motivations.

Secondly, on the societal level, internalised values privilege one mode of thinking action over others as one idol of 'kind'ness is established as the central ideological (and interpretative) framework for Athens and Denmark. The mercantile, abstracting logic inherent in the language used warps the natures of these societies to the extent that those economic bodies become undone by their own members that used to play a vital role, now a mortal one.

On both the individual and societal level Bacon's idols provide a formal structure through which ideas and ideologies influence action. However, the content of this manipulation is influenced by social values. The unifying element to this thesis is the mind functioning as medium: although, the mind is embodied in the individual, all perception is socially situated and interpreted by words, ideas and ideologies.

In both chapters, instrumental reason plays a pivotal role in the causality of fate. Richard and Iago embody it, and the dominant mercantile logic of Denmark and Athens are derived from it. However, the focus on 'means' and the foregoing of 'ends' feeds the self-destructive tendencies of instrumental reason as its agents also forego their ends. Instrumental reason is part of the domination of nature and, in the context of causality of fate, as both the individuals and societies are natural beings, in my argument, instrumental reason is part of self-dominating activity that feeds into self-destructiveness as well as the obfuscation of the causality of fate.

The tension of freedom and determinism, inherent in the causality of fate, is constant throughout this thesis. Indeed, this tension is the tension of tragedy as it points to the possibility of avoiding the causality of fate. The idols of nature thus bear witness to the necessity of epistemology to all ethical action.



## Chapter 1:

### Idols of (dis)Semblance in *Richard III* and *Othello*

Richard of Gloucester, and the third of his name, has the most distinctive appearance of Shakespearean characters. The misshapen body of Richard has been seen as the locus for his moral depravity, on one hand, and the world he inhabits, on the other: Joel Elliot Slotkin calls Richard ‘the primary embodiment of the sinister’ whereas for Ian Frederick Moulton the ‘unregulated, destructive masculine force’ that is rampant in an England without a ‘strong masculine royal authority ... is personified in the twisted and deformed body of Richard III.’<sup>152</sup> Marjorie Garber also notes that ‘Shakespeare’s use and abuse of history’ in *Richard III* is shaped by the Tudor historians for whom Richard is ‘self-evidently a villain, his deformed body a readable text.’<sup>153</sup> Linda Charnes extends the textuality to the earlier Shakespearean War of the Roses narrative: ‘all the political monstrosity developed in the first tetralogy is “embodied” in the deformed figure of Richard.’<sup>154</sup> Richard’s deformed body, his appearance, is thus read as signifying not only his personal evil but also the immoralities and turmoil of his world.

If these critics focus on the body as a sign of moral depravity, then James R. Siemon suggests that, through a reading of Francis Bacon’s essay ‘Of Deformity’, ‘physical attributes’ should be ‘treated as causes for, rather than signs of, character.’<sup>155</sup> Bacon writes:

Deformed persons are commonly even with nature; for as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature; being for the most part ... *void of*

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<sup>152</sup> Joel Elliot Slotkin, ‘Honeyed Toads: Sinister Aesthetics in Shakespeare’s “Richard III”’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 7 (2007), 5-32 (p. 26); Ian Frederick Moulton, “‘A Monster Great Deformed’ The Unruly Masculinity of Richard III”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47 (1996), 251-68 (p. 258).

<sup>153</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), p. 30.

<sup>154</sup> Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 30.

<sup>155</sup> James R. Siemon, ‘Sign, cause, or general habit? Toward a “historicist ontology” of character on the early modern stage’, *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, 2 (1997), 217-22 (p. 218).

*natural affection*; and so they have their revenge. Certainly there is a consent between the body and the mind; and where nature erreth in one, she ventureth in the other. ... But because there is in man an election touching the frame of his mind, and a necessity in the frame of his body, the stars of natural inclination are sometimes obscured by the sun of discipline and virtue. Therefore it is good to consider of deformity, not as a sign, which is more deceivable; but as a cause, which seldom faileth of the effect. Whosoever hath any thing fixed in his person that doth induce contempt, hath also a perpetual spur in himself to rescue and deliver himself from scorn. (*SEH VI*, 480)

He proposes a balance ('consent') between the mind and body that insofar as someone is deprived in terms of the body they are compensated with mental abilities. Bacon shifts from the presumption of a correlation between the mind and body—the deformed body as a sign of a malevolent mind, 'being void of natural affection'—to a social causality where a bodily 'necessity' is countered by a will ('a perpetual spur') to overcome 'scorn'. For Siemon, the 'mutually qualifying interaction' 'of bodily necessity and mental election, of nature and will' that Bacon proposes amounts, via Bourdieu, to a 'historicist ontology', where the two aspects of deformity comprise a 'double history' and 'conceives being as *social being*.'<sup>156</sup> Therefore, Siemon infers that Richard's character within the play both produces and is produced by 'a particular form of court society'.<sup>157</sup> Although Siemon develops a more dynamic understanding of the interrelation of embodiment and its social context, his interpretation remains fixed on Richard's body as determining his being.

Michael Torrey, in his reading of Richard's body in light of Bacon's essay, focuses instead on epistemology rather than on ontology. For Torrey, 'even if deformity is understood as a cause rather than a sign, it remains nonetheless a thoroughly *visible* cause, an obvious symptom of the motives and behaviour that [Bacon] describes.'<sup>158</sup> Indeed, this observation questions the status of Richard's body as the locus of his evil: if there is a

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<sup>156</sup> Siemon, p. 220.

<sup>157</sup> Siemon, p. 220.

<sup>158</sup> Michael Torrey, "The plain devil and dissembling looks": Ambivalent Physiognomy and Shakespeare's Richard III', *English Literary Renaissance*, 30 (2000), 123-53 (p. 137).

causal connection with Richard's appearance and his actions, why is it not obvious to everyone in the play?

Bacon anticipates such an objection and further develops the psychology of deformity:

in their superiors, [deformity] quencheth jealousy towards them, as persons that they think they may at pleasure despise: and it layeth their competitors and emulators asleep; as never believing they should be in possibility of advancement, till they see them in possession. So that upon the matter, in a great wit, deformity is an advantage to rising. (*SEH VI*, 480)

The obviousness of such a social disability affects a psychological anticipation in 'superiors', 'competitors', and 'emulators' that it results in an opposite reaction: instead of provoking suspicion deformity neutralises it. Because a deformed person is easily despised, they are as easily overlooked as lacking the 'possibility of advancement' and thus seemingly do not pose a threat. 'Physiognomic sign and psychological symptom', Michael Torrey explains, 'are thus transformed into a kind of beneficial camouflage'.<sup>159</sup> Rather than providing ontological surety, deformity in Bacon's essay presents Torrey with an epistemological ambivalence: 'physical appearance will always fail to yield reliable insights about inner character.'<sup>160</sup> However, as Torrey notes, this ambivalence proves to be an asset to Shakespeare's Richard because he 'reflects the dialectic of epistemological optimism and pessimism in early modern culture': 'By making Richard deformed, Shakespeare optimistically suggests that Richard's self was fully manifest, that his evil was easily known; but by making him a dissembler, Shakespeare pessimistically admits that Richard's self may actually have been obscure and his evil hidden.'<sup>161</sup> This suggests, to me, that the dramatic significance of Richard is less in the ontology of his deformed body than in the ambivalent way that it appears to us on stage.

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<sup>159</sup> Torrey, p. 138.

<sup>160</sup> Torrey, p. 138.

<sup>161</sup> Torrey, p. 141.

Another master of ambivalent appearance is Iago; yet, unlike Richard, his evil deformity is not signalled in any outward way, though some inner deformity could well be the cause of his evil. Iago appears honest: Othello's judgment 'Iago is most honest' (2.3.6) famously echoes throughout the play. Both Iago and Richard are able to manipulate the perception of their appearance: like the Vice-figures that came before them they bask in their deception pointing it out to the audience in their asides.<sup>162</sup> Iago points out that Othello 'thinks men honest that but seem to be so' (1.3.392). For the period shared by Shakespeare and Bacon outward seeming was a crucial issue as Watson points out: 'A key aspect of the Elizabethan theological compromise was that the state would not "make windows into men's hearts and secret thoughts" to see whether they believed the Protestant doctrine, so long as they complied with it outwardly.'<sup>163</sup> Here Bacon's words are used (*SEH VIII*, 98) to mark the limit of inwardness. Only when the secret inwardness manifests itself in outward action (or at least threatens to) does the issue of seeming gain political weight and provokes a re-action.

In contrast to Richard, Iago's appearance is on the opposite end of the spectrum as Terence Hawkes comments: 'Iago, who is devilish in reality, a villain who should be quite socially unacceptable, moves with ease in polite society, ... he is adept at social badinage with Desdemona and her attendants on arrival at Cyprus ... and he has an 'appearance' which is handsome and attractive; Cinthio's *novella* describes him as extremely good-looking.'<sup>164</sup> I disagree on the explicit outward attractiveness of Iago in Shakespeare, rather he is more distinctively indistinct and overshadowed by the younger Cassio. Iago remarks: 'the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green

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<sup>162</sup> The classic study on how the Medieval figure of Vice got a new lease of life in Shakespearean drama is Bernard Spivack's *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villains* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958). Iago is the central figure in Spivack's work to the extent that Richard, Aaron, and Don John—alongside Barabas and Lorenzo of *The Spanish Tragedy*—belong to 'the family of Iago' (pp. 34-35).

<sup>163</sup> Watson, *Back to Nature*, p. 11.

<sup>164</sup> Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason* (London: Routledge, 1964), p. 102-3.

minds look after' (2.1.245-7). Switching to the audience perspective, Norman Rabkin, on the other hand, sees Iago's attractiveness particularly in one, disturbing quality: 'he often speaks the truth'.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, Iago's physical qualities are almost non-existent compared to his intellect. Paul Cefalu goes through seminal critics from Coleridge, Hazlitt via Bradley through to G. Wilson Knight, who emphasise Iago's intellectual being.<sup>166</sup> Contrasted with Richard, whose bodily appearance dominates, it is the mind of Iago that permeates the play. However, I argue it is a misrepresentation of Richard to reduce him to his body. A helpful comparison of the two by Bradley in terms of evil makes this explicit:

Evil has nowhere else been portrayed with such mastery as in the character of Iago. Richard III, for example, beside being less subtly conceived, is a far greater figure and a less repellent. His physical deformity, separating him from other men, seems to offer some excuse for his egoism. In spite of his egoism, too he appears to us more than a mere individual: he is the representative of his family, the Fury of the House of York. Nor is he so negative as Iago: he has strong passions, he has admirations, and his conscience disturbs him. There is a glory of power about him. Though an excellent actor, he prefers force to fraud, and in his world there is no general illusion as to his true nature.<sup>167</sup>

Regarding the differences of Iago and Richard, Bradley touches on the significant difference: Richard is defined by his social connections, as discussed above, whether due to his body ('physical deformity') or the historical role he plays ('representative of his family'); Iago, on the other hand, is an individual driven by his 'egoism'. My main current interest is in the similarity of Richard and Iago regarding their intellect and mental capacities, which is where I disagree with Bradley's assessment. First, Richard's preference of 'force to fraud' is true to the extent that he utilises henchmen but they tend come either with some kind of publicity spin, as with Richard and Buckingham trying to garner public support for Richard in 3.7, or taking advantage of the ambiguous turbulence like at the death of his brother Edward, which is displayed in the discussion of the three citizens in 2.3. Moreover, it is

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<sup>165</sup> Norman Rabkin, *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 69.

<sup>166</sup> Paul Cefalu, *Tragic Cognition in Shakespeare's Othello: Beyond the Neural Sublime* (London: Bloomsbury 2015), p. 3.

<sup>167</sup> Bradley, p. 195.

significant that Richard does use henchmen for his deeds and not do them himself—a great departure from the stabbings of Prince Edward and Henry VI in *Henry VI part 3*, otherwise titled *Richard Duke of York*. Second, and more important, there is a ‘general illusion as to [Richard’s] true nature’ as Torrey noted above—Richard’s deformity works as a camouflage. Both of these points bring Richard closer to Iago as they share their main weapon of intellect.

The question embedded within the concept of appearance is how, or if, can we go beyond it—this is the central issue of Bacon’s reformation of knowledge. The dramatic tension created by Richard and Iago draws its strength from this question; but the question is inverted by the tragic experience of the plays: how are Richard and Iago able to deceive? Through a reading of Bacon’s *Idols of the Theatre*, I argue that the deception happens by controlling and manipulating the interpretation of appearance. This entails going seemingly beyond mere appearances in the minds of the manipulated to provide them with a truthful semblance of reality. Throughout the proceedings the audience is being kept aware of this dissemblance being applied—in the *Vice*-like asides and soliloquys. Yet, this dissembling ability possessed by Richard and Iago is proven to be itself a mere semblance of manipulative power. Both of them falter on the ability they prove to master: the weapon they control hits back at them calling into question whether they were ever fully in control. How does the central role of interpretation intermingle agency and appearance for the villains in *Richard III* and *Othello*?

Following Torrey’s indication of the importance of epistemology to the character of Richard, my focus in this chapter is on ‘dissembling nature’ (1.1.19) instead of Richard’s body. I do this for two interrelated reasons: first, in the formative first soliloquy Richard does not explicitly mention his body whereas he does speak of being ‘deformed’ and ‘cheated of feature by dissembling nature’ (1.1.10-20). Moreover, the additional focus on Iago shifts the attention from bodily ontology to an embodied epistemology and the

problem of appearance in interpretation, where the lack of feature or, more generally, negativity is emphasised. Whereas Richard uses his appearance, Iago is nothing but appearance. In posing an ambivalent epistemology, 'dissembling nature' underlines the importance of the mind as the locus for understanding, interpretation, and deception. Bacon already emphasised the role of the mind, on one hand, in deformed people (the inner 'election' and 'great wit') in overcoming their deformity and, on the other, in the 'superiors', 'competitors', and 'emulators' who are deceived ('laid asleep') by deformed appearances.

Second, 'dissembling nature' addresses the aforementioned ambivalent epistemology in both Richard and Iago. Not only does it entail Richard's disfigurement but also links to the deceptive side of his character. 'Dissembling nature' inherently poses a problem in perceiving the nature of things, suggesting a division of essence and appearance. This is underlined by Iago's paradoxical 'I am not what I am' by which he epistemologically challenges the possibility of any security in a perceived ontology. Thus it expands the issue of Richard and Iago's evil beyond merely natural, social, and ontological signification to the ability and means of knowing. The seeming truth is a powerful weapon utilised by villains. Again Watson is acutely aware of the epistemological mischief: 'Actually Iago, Iachimo, Falstaff, along with the not-so-gallants of Jonson's *Epicoene*, are the ones with the dirtiest secret, which is the emptiness of their claims to knowledge of the women's inner secrets. The real scandal is not the truth, but the pretense of access to it.'<sup>168</sup> As Richard is formed by 'dissembling nature', Iago, in his being an epistemological paradox, embodies it.

There are two meanings inherent to 'dissemblance' with which I will develop my reading of *Richard III* and *Othello* in relation to Bacon's natural philosophy: a deceptive meaning, dis-semblance, and a negative meaning, de-semblance. Dis-semblance, on one

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<sup>168</sup> Watson, *Back to Nature*, p. 31.

hand, denotes a bifurcation, a simultaneous appearance implying that one is true and the other deceitful.<sup>169</sup> This is what enables Richard and Iago to pretend to be something they are not. Thus dis-semblance is also linked to the division of essence and appearance. With de-semblance, on the other hand, I especially refer to the negative element<sup>170</sup> in both Richard and Iago—they are de-formed, lacking form—as well as induction—an intellectual form of dissection as it ‘takes experience apart’. (*JSNO*, 17) Crucially, because both ‘dissemblances’ are a product of the mind, Richard’s deformity is infused with an increasingly metaphysical quality. The dual meaning of ‘dissemblance’ also bears an influence on the meaning of ‘nature’. A de-sembled nature entails a division into subject and object: the former de-sembls and the latter is de-sembled. Moreover, this division leads to a dis-semblance of nature into human nature and external nature, things non-human.

Dissembling nature and particularly its deceptive interpretation is what Bacon warns us with his Idols of the Theatre in the *Novum Organum*:

there are Idols which have immigrated into men’s minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration. These I call Idols of the Theatre; because in my judgment all the received systems are but so many stage-plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion. Nor is it only of the systems now in vogue, or only of the ancient sects and philosophies, that I speak; for many more plays of the kind may yet be composed and in like artificial manner set forth; seeing that errors the most widely different have nevertheless causes for the most part alike. Neither again do I mean this only of entire systems, but also of many principles and axioms in science, which by tradition, credulity, and negligence have come to be received. (*SEH* IV, 55)

Dogmatic philosophy and the ‘wrong of demonstration’ both create an appearance or semblance of truth. The analogy with the theatre borrows from Plato’s cave allegory, where the shadows on the cave wall effectively produce a play the chained inhabitants take for reality. The ‘unreal and scenic fashion’ of these ‘created worlds’ underlines the distance

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<sup>169</sup> *OED*, dis- prefix, sense 1a.

<sup>170</sup> *OED*, dis- prefix, sense 2.



from the real world. However, implicit here is that these 'received systems' do actually touch on reality enough to 'represent' the world, though it is 'of their own creation'. Bacon makes this point explicit in using the analogy of the path or way, now with the woods of experience in the background: 'the question is simply about the way. As the saying goes, a lame man on the right road beats the runner who misses his way. It is absolutely clear that if you run the wrong way, the better and faster you are, the more you go astray.' (*JSNO*, 50)

Both the true science of Bacon and 'received systems' of 'created worlds' share the same terrain or reality. The falsity of these systems and the consciousness they morph is still based on the same ground as truth is.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, regarding 'civil business' in the essay 'Of Truth', he writes 'that [the] mixture of falsehood [with truth] is like allay in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it.' (*SEH VI*, 378)

The lie works better mixed into truth—the *modus operandi* not only of Richard and Iago but Edmund too, as we will see in the third chapter.

Daniel R. Coquillette, in his book on Bacon's jurisprudence, describes the *idola theatri* as 'ideological blindness', with an 'implied ... analytical and comparative study of political and religious ideologies'.<sup>172</sup> For David Hawkes these include 'all closed philosophical systems which try to force empirical reality to accord with their own formal patterns'.<sup>173</sup> Both Coquillette and Hawkes underline the pivotal role philosophy plays in everyday perception and how these idols can skew that perception, even to the level of 'blindness'. Accordingly, the political philosopher David Held describes an extension to the concept of ideology: 'Ideologies can express "modes of existence". Therefore, ideologies are often also packages of symbols, ideas, images and theories through which people

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<sup>171</sup> In the essay 'Of Truth', Bacon quotes Lucretius: 'but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of Truth' (*SEH VI*, 378).

<sup>172</sup> Daniel R. Coquillette, *Francis Bacon* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1992), pp. 1, 234.

<sup>173</sup> Hawkes, *Ideology*, p. 31.

experience their relation to each other and the world.<sup>174</sup> The idols of the theatre are usually thought of as external to the mind, which could be excised; however, if the *idola theatri* are to be considered as ideology along the lines Held describes they play a part of existence, of how the world is experienced—this questions their complete externality. Significantly, Paolo Rossi notes that in the 1603 *Valerius Terminus*, in contrast to the later formulations, ‘the idols of the theatre are not imposed from outside, but are integral to the nature of the human mind’.<sup>175</sup> Without making the particular forms of the *idola theatri* into permanent fixtures, I suggest reading the idols of the theatre as providing a heuristic, a synthesising (contra analysing, taking apart) system: the idols of the theatre are a placeholder for ideologies that bring experiences together into a formal pattern. Thus, although individual ideologies or idols can be purged but not the synthetic structure—this is demonstrated below in the theatre analogy as well as, further below, in the intermingling of the other idols in the use of *idola theatri*. In short, there are two levels to ideological *idola*: first, *idola theatri* as form, as structure that synthesises interpretation; second, *idola theatri* as content, as particular philosophies, ideologies or theories.

Underlined in all of this is the centrality of the mind as medium. As in his essay ‘Of Deformity’, the mind is central to Bacon’s project of creating a new science, yet—unlike in the aforementioned essay—the mind has a more dubious role because it ‘is the source of its own problems’, as discussed in the introductory chapter. Programmatically Bacon wants to correct the ‘dissemblance’, or deception created by the mind so that the mind can perceive nature truthfully. The primary opponents are the idols of the theatre, which Bacon also terms as ‘theories’ (*JSNO*, 50; *UGNO*, 66).<sup>176</sup> Remembering again the etymological connection of theory and theatre to seeing, Bacon’s criticism is less about *what* is seen

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<sup>174</sup> David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 186.

<sup>175</sup> Rossi, *From Magic to Science*, p. 161. Indeed, Bacon describes the all of the idols as ‘the internal and profound errors and superstitions in the nature of the mind’ and as ‘native and inherent errors in the mind of man’ (*SEH* III, 241-2).

<sup>176</sup> The Spedding et al. edition translates ‘*theoriarum*’ as ‘Systems’ (*SEH* I, 173; IV, 63).

than *how* that is perceived. In terms of the pathway analogy it is about seeing path and moving accordingly: ‘the lame man’ gets to their destination whereas the runner easily rushes in the wrong direction. Embedded in this analogy is the infrastructure of pathways: the well-trodden way is easier to run on and perhaps even roadworks have begun on it. Theory and repetition have built institutions on a certain way of thinking as the scholastics did with Aristotle. Ideas materialise into universities, intellectual smithies. Whereas Dollimore emphasises the ‘material existence’ of ideology, ‘ideology exists in, and as, the social practices which constitute people’s lives’, he does concede that Bacon’s theory of the idols ‘at least suggests the way that the cognitive and materialist notions of the ideological could then be thought simultaneously’.<sup>177</sup>

The core of Bacon’s critique of the *idola theatri* is directed towards three kinds of philosophy which he terms ‘Sophistic, Empirical and Superstitious’ (*JSNO*, 51). The first is exemplified by the rationalism of Aristotle and ‘his modern followers (the scholastic philosophers)’ (*JSNO*, 52)—calling them ‘Sophistic’ suggests a Platonic critique of scholastic Aristotelianism and their focus on the finery of words. Their particular sin, in Bacon’s eyes, is making a philosophical framework divorced from the empirical world from which explanations of particulars are deduced: ‘For the Rational school of philosophers seizes from experience a variety of common [instances] without properly checking them, and leaves the rest to cogitation and agitation of wit.’ (*UGNO*, 67) The second type of philosophy refers to the empiricism derived from ‘the narrow and unilluminating basis of a handful of experiments’ (*JSNO*, 52). This school is exemplified ‘in the alchemists and their dogmas’ (*SEH* IV, 65): they ‘have laboured carefully and faithfully over a few experiments, and have had the temerity to tease out their philosophies from them and build them up; the rest they twist to fit that pattern in wonderful ways.’ (*JSNO*, 51) The third, ‘Superstitious’ school Bacon finds particularly harmful: they ‘out of faith and piety mix

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<sup>177</sup> Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, pp. 9, 11.

theology and tradition with their philosophy; among these the vanity of some has led them astray to look for and derive science from [S]pirits and supernatural beings.’ (*UGNO*, 68)<sup>178</sup>

Bacon in *The Masculine Birth of Time* describes his project: ‘My intention is to impart to you, not the figments of my own brain, nor the shadows thrown by words, nor a mixture of religion and science, nor a few commonplace observations or notorious experiments tricked out to make a composition as fanciful as a stage-play.’ (*PFB*, 62) This is an early attempt at the doctrine of idols and here his theatrical allegory finds form. The ideology-philosophies bear the same relation to reality or nature as stage-plays do. The several translations of Bacon’s ‘fabulis theoriarum’ (*SEH I*, 172) in the *Novum Organum* attest to the tone allegory suggests: ‘fairytale theories’ (*JSNO*, 49), ‘fictitious tales in theories’ (*UGNO*, 66), and ‘play-books of philosophical systems’ (*SEH IV*, 62). The heavy inference is that the frivolity of imagination dissembles reality. This is further explained:

For just as several accounts of the heavens can be fashioned from the *phenomena* of the air, so, and much more, various dogmas can be based and constructed upon the phenomena of philosophy. And the stories of this kind of *theatre* have something else in common with the dramatist’s theatre, that narratives made up for the stage are neater and more elegant than true stories from history, and are the sort of thing people prefer. (*JSNO*, 50; original emphasis)

The theatre analogy Bacon employs<sup>179</sup> has three implications where idols and ideology play an influential role: first, the stage-play has a persuasive force that influences action; second, the mind works as a stage-play; third, (false) philosophies and stage-plays are analogous in their relationship to reality.

The first is about the persuasive quality of theatre, or rhetoric. In suggesting that idols of the theatre can be overcome, Bacon underlines that *these* idols ‘are not innate or

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<sup>178</sup> I have capitalised ‘Spirits’ here in accordance with the Latin ‘Spiritus’ (*SEH I*, 173) to differentiate the supernatural sense from the medicinal, Hippocratic/Galenic medium that enables movement in bodies.

<sup>179</sup> For good overview of Bacon’s theatrical imagery and the traditions into which he is writing, see Brian Vickers, ‘Bacon’s Use of Theatrical Imagery’, *Francis Bacon’s Legacy of Texts*, ed. by W. A. Sessions (New York: AMS Press, 1990), pp. 171-213. Vickers argues that Bacon was not hostile to theatre but rather indicates ‘his appreciation of universal nature of images drawn from [theatre] and also his considerable awareness of theatrical effect and procedure.’ (p. 198)

stealthily slipped into the understanding' but 'openly introduced and accepted' (*JSNO*, 49). The significant difference to the other idols is that there is a strong element of persuasion here, being 'the sort of thing people prefer'—though, rhetoric (the art of persuasion) is not insignificant with regards to the idols of the marketplace. The first school that Bacon discusses is the Sophistic one. A term usually reserved for ancient rhetoricians is expanded by Bacon: the

name of Sophists ... was contemptuously turned back and transferred by those who wanted to be thought true philosophers, to the rhetoricians of old, Gorgias, Protagoras, Hippias and Polus, also applies to the whole tribe, to Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Epicurus, Theophrastus and their successors, Chrysippus, Carneades and the rest. (*UGNO*, 80)

Bacon rhetorically turns the term back against those who began to use it with indignation.

Bacon continues:

The only difference was that the former were itinerant and mercenary, travelling around the cities, making a display of their wisdom and requiring fees; the others were more dignified and more liberal, in that they had fixed abodes, opened schools and taught without charge. But (though different in other ways) both were rhetorical, and made it a matter of disputations, and set up philosophical sects and schools, and fought for them. (*JSNO*, 59)

Crucially, the implication here is not only how rhetoric can be used instrumentally for differing ends but also it has combative element to it. Ken Jacobsen, in his study on Iago and Machiavelli, argues for this combative element being an important link that connects rhetoric to warfare.<sup>180</sup>

More importantly, Stephen Gaukroger points out that rhetoric was a central ingredient of law and natural philosophy because it was 'conceived as the general discipline of the rules of discovery and presentation driving classical humanism.'<sup>181</sup> For Bacon, according to Gaukroger, the humanist tradition particularly took the link between law and natural philosophy beyond a mere analogy. Moreover, Gaukroger claims that, unlike logic,

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<sup>180</sup> Ken Jacobsen, 'Iago's Art of War: The "Machiavellian Moment" in Othello', *Modern Philology*, 109 (2009), 497-529.

<sup>181</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 58.

rhetoric engages with human psychology.<sup>182</sup> However, while James Stephens agrees that rhetoric had 'its basis in psychology' and although 'Bacon clearly reduces rhetoric to the art of illustration, but', Stephens emphasises, 'it is also to be thought as a logical art.'<sup>183</sup> Bacon writes in *De Augmentis*:

For the end of logic is to teach a form of argument to secure reason, and not to *entrap* it; the end likewise of moral philosophy is to procure affections to fight on the side of reason, and not to invade it; the end of rhetoric is to fill the imagination with *observations* and *images*, to second reason, and not to oppress it. (*SEH* IV, 456, my emphasis)

Logic and rhetoric (but also moral philosophy), instead of being distinct and separate, are working in unison for Bacon. (As a sidenote, Bacon's focus on the role of reason, evident here, is what links him to the Enlightenment tradition.) Brian Vickers points out that '[f]or Bacon, as for all his contemporaries, it was axiomatic that these two arts, rhetoric and logic, constituted a dual training for the mind and preparation for the intellectual confrontations of real life.'<sup>184</sup> The link between logic and rhetoric, particularly in conjunction with psychology, is important because it allows the mind to create its own logic or to be persuaded to adopt one, even an irrational logic that 'entraps' reason—it is apropos that both Richard and Iago's actions are described as 'ensnaring' (*Richard III*, 1.3.241; *Othello*, 2.1.171, 5.2.308). Crucially, in Bacon's classification of knowledge, 'the arts of Judgment' that evaluates the inventions of logic and rhetoric, is the one that contains, as a cautionary, the idols of the mind (*SEH* III, 392-7).<sup>185</sup>

It is the 'observations' and particularly 'images' where idols (forms, shapes, figures, images, ideas, likenesses) and ideology (Held's 'packages of symbols, ideas, images and theories') meet with the persuasion of rhetoric. In the *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon

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<sup>182</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 103.

<sup>183</sup> James Stephens, *Francis Bacon and the Style of Science* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 37.

<sup>184</sup> Brian Vickers, 'Bacon and rhetoric', *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. by Markku Peltonen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 200-31 (p. 208). Bacon calls these two 'the arts of arts' (*SEH* III, 326)

<sup>185</sup> See also Vickers, 'Bacon and rhetoric', pp. 209-10.

calls rhetoric's subject 'Imaginative or Insinuating Reason', part of the 'Arts of Reason' (*SEH* III, 383). According to Lisa Jardine, 'he is referring to the peculiar mode of action of rhetorical devices.' In an encapsulating passage, Jardine continues:

According to his theories, these [devices] act either by stimulating images in the imagination which are judged similar enough to sustain a point (as in the case of supporting devices which make use of resemblance or *exemplum*), or by direct sensory stimulation (in the case of rhetorical figures which depend on patterns of words). Both can be used to subvert reason, which ultimately is responsible for the reader's acceptance of an argument as persuasive. These devices sidestep formal inference, and work directly on the subsidiary faculties (the senses and imagination).<sup>186</sup>

These 'stimulating images' or 'direct sensory stimulation' are what Bacon means by 'wrong laws of demonstration' in the *idola theatri*. They are the very stuff of drama. Vickers is very suspicious of this 'purely sensory theory of persuasion, detached from all considerations of meaning' as a representation of Bacon's thought as he 'frequently expressed scorn for those who value words more than matter'.<sup>187</sup> However, I think that Vickers is here missing the connection to idols of theatre: images are never just mere images but tied to imagination and the thinking process, where words mediate the links between ideas and images providing the narrative threads persuade or demonstrate something. Curiously, in re-counting Aristotle's psychological influence on Bacon's understanding of rhetoric, Vickers effectively makes this point:

Imagination is ... an integral part of thought processes, indeed thinking is defined as being 'in part imagination, in part judgment,' both also depending on sensation. In brief, 'the soul never thinks without an image,' and imagination exists alongside our 'primary thoughts,' which 'necessarily involve images.'<sup>188</sup>

The centrality of the image to thought gives images power. Therefore Bacon calls on rhetoric to assist reason, 'to second' it. Furthermore, '[t]he duty and office of Rhetoric',

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<sup>186</sup> Lisa Jardine, *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 218.

<sup>187</sup> Vickers, 'Bacon and rhetoric', p. 203.

<sup>188</sup> Vickers, 'Bacon and rhetoric', p. 213. Vickers' Aristotle quotations of *De anima* are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Bacon implores, 'is to *apply Reason to Imagination* for the better moving of the will.' (*SEH* III, 409; original emphasis) Logic and rhetoric are entwined with moral philosophy: action is to be governed by reason to make sure that the ends are good, not villainous. But, as Jardine noted, reason can be subverted. This thought is implicit in Bacon's need to assert guidelines to logic, rhetoric, and moral philosophy, for them not to entrap, oppress, or invade reason. Rhetoric plays a key role in how thoughts link to action. Raphael Lyne, in discussing Bacon in his book *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition*, elegantly describes rhetoric's efficacy: 'Rhetoric is bound to thoughts: they do not lie behind it, as it can seem, but are in fact conceived within it.'<sup>189</sup>

Moving to the second implication regarding the *idola theatri*, linked to rhetoric's cognitive embeddedness, the mind shares a structural quality with theatre. In the study of consciousness the theatre metaphor has found some traction. Donald Beecher elaborates on why this metaphor is suitable: 'Consciousness is like a stage because it is a place of sequential representations, and because those representations come to appear like a narrative after the fact.'<sup>190</sup> Indeed, the eminent psychologist Bernard J. Baars utilising the Global Workspace theory explores the "theater model" in which consciousness requires a central workspace, much like the stage of a theater.'<sup>191</sup> Neuroscientists Gerald M. Edelman and Giulio Tononi also discuss the phenomenology of consciousness in terms of 'everyman's private theater'.<sup>192</sup> They have had forebears—both before and after Bacon—in Giulio Camillo and David Hume in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively, to name a

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<sup>189</sup> Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 98.

<sup>190</sup> Donald Beecher, 'Mind, Theaters, and the Anatomy of Consciousness', *Philosophy and Literature*, 30 (2006), 1-16 (p. 8).

<sup>191</sup> Bernard J. Baars, *In the Theater of Consciousness: The Workspace of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. viii. He derives the metaphor from Plato's Allegory of the Cave linking it to the 'spotlight' metaphor of consciousness from the biologist and neuroscientist Francis Crick (p. 5).

<sup>192</sup> Gerald M. Edelman and Giulio Tononi, *Consciousness: How Matter Becomes Imagination* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 20-34.



couple.<sup>193</sup> The appeal of the theatre metaphor is in its inherent representational quality, indeed as it was for Bacon. Paul Cefalu expands:

According to the foundational assumptions of cognitive science, the brain relies on internal representations and computations, many of which are subpersonal and inaccessible to personal awareness, in order to process information.<sup>194</sup>

What Cefalu is discussing here is the mind's reliance on sensual data and how that data is processed—the Aristotelian thinking being 'in part imagination, part judgment' as Vickers noted above. In order to get a modern structure to Bacon's theatre analogy and how that works as a model consciousness, let us focus, momentarily, on Baars' theatre of consciousness.

The model has five major parts: the stage, the actors, the spotlight, the behind-the-scenes, and the audience. The stage is the working memory where 'we carry on the narrative of our lives.'<sup>195</sup> Second, the actors onstage represent the contents of conscious experience that vie not only to get onstage but also, when there, to get attention. Next is that spotlight of attention, where consciousness focuses.<sup>196</sup> The spotlight also has a partially lit fringe, the place of our experiences that are less detailed.<sup>197</sup> Fourth are the backstage elements that are not explicitly onstage but give the experience an unconscious context: these include the director, the spotlight operator as well the stage-hands that

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<sup>193</sup> Beecher, pp. 2-4, 9. Camillo's use of the theatre focused on it as a mnemonic device, for a classic analysis see Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: The Bodley Head, 1966), pp. 135-74. On the other hand, David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by Ernest C. Mossner (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 301, remarks: 'The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.'

<sup>194</sup> Paul Cefalu, *Tragic Cognition in Shakespeare's Othello: Beyond the Neural Sublime* (London: Bloomsbury 2015), p. 1.

<sup>195</sup> Baars, p. 41. For Baars, the working memory has primarily a verbal and visual component, inner speech and visual imagery—theatre as an audio-visual medium. It should be noted that this is a very simplified model of theatre as it leaves out olfactory components as well as spatial possibilities of a non-proscenium arch stage.

<sup>196</sup> Baars, p. 44. 'The spotlight of attention has a crucial role in ... the theater metaphor, for whenever it falls on some particular actor he or she comes to consciousness.'

<sup>197</sup> Baars, p. 44: 'If we take focal consciousness to include immediate, detailed experience, the fringe would cover those cases in which we have reliable access to information without being able to experience it explicitly in detail.'

operate the scenery. They represent the immediate mental contexts that form our current conscious experience without becoming objects of it—the director can be seen as the unified self that controls, at least partially, the spotlight operator, who in turn portrays volitional action.<sup>198</sup> Finally, the audience—which is massive—is the rest of the unconscious mind, any part of which can, and often does, interact with the players onstage. The audience includes the observing self (that is partially conscious as it is presumably linked to interpretative contents), automated actions, systems of memory, and motivations.<sup>199</sup>

Baars is portraying how the limited capacity of our active consciousness has access to a vast array of unconscious resources.<sup>200</sup> What makes this particularly difficult to understand, is that the mind and its theatre is in constant flux: actors going on and off stage, the audience going backstage and vice versa within ten seconds or a fraction thereof<sup>201</sup>—there is little permanence besides the notion of the abstract theatrical structure.<sup>202</sup> (Bacon registers this tension within the idols of the tribe, where, on one hand, he marks that ‘human understanding is restless; it cannot stop or rest, but presses on’; while, on the other, it ‘readily supposes a greater order and uniformity in things than it finds ... it devises parallels and correspondences and relations which are not there.’ (*UGNO*, 58, 56)) While his analytical framework is very useful—and I do put it into use—in explicating how the mind works in the theatre analogy, I do depart from his analysis and re-interpret the framework in terms of Shakespeare and Bacon, as my interest is in how interactions manifest on a cognitive level. For example, persuasive success seems to lie on

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<sup>198</sup> Baars, pp. 45, 113-53. This section is increasingly difficult as Baars only occasionally touches on the coordinating theatre metaphor and he shifts between conscious and unconscious elements.

<sup>199</sup> Baars, pp. 42, 45-61, 142-53.

<sup>200</sup> Baars, p. 41. ‘Working memory is remarkably *limited*. We can keep seven unrelated items in the verbal part, and in the mind’s eye perhaps four.’

<sup>201</sup> Baars, p. 48, points this out in Figure 2-2, where he marks on the importance of two time scales: ‘Sensory events occurring within a tenth of a second merge into a single conscious sensory experience, suggesting a 100-millisecond scale. But working memory, the domain in which we talk to ourselves or use our visual imagination, stretches out over roughly 10-second steps. The tenth-of-a-second level is automatic, while the 10-second level is shaped by conscious plans and goals.’

<sup>202</sup> Edelman and Tononi (p. 245, fn 20) suggest an alternative metaphor ‘of a riotous parliament trying to make a decision ... [w]ithin 300 msec or so, a new vote is taken.’ Baars (p. 46) hints at this in saying that ‘[i]n many ways the audience acts like a legislature.’

their ability to usurp the role of the director in the mind of others, nudging the spotlight where they want it to be. It should be noted that when I use this kind of theatrical language, I am not using it in the sense Baars and other cognitive scientists use it, namely as things that happen within the mind. I use the theatrical terminology to describe how the villains present things *to* their subject's mind, not *within* it.

Regarding the villains' ability to invade other minds, let us linger a moment longer with Baars and his *dramatis personae*. The actors come from three groups: the outer senses (seeing, hearing, tasting etc.), the inner senses (inner speech, visual imagery, dreams, imagined feelings), and ideas (in verbal or image form, intuitions, and fragmentary thoughts).<sup>203</sup> For Baars, echoing our discussion of rhetoric above, consciousness has a sensory bias, be it from the inner or outer senses. Regarding consciousness, Baars says that '[w]e now know that Aristotle was right: there is a close overlap between the brain areas involved in perception and imagery. Images and inner speech are truly internally created sensations.'<sup>204</sup> This is further qualified in 'that imagery and perception differ primarily in the source of information: In perception the source is the outer senses, while in imagery it is the brain itself.'<sup>205</sup> Moreover, the third group, ideas—remembering its etymology—is also associated with images. However, therein lies the tension between abstract ideas and concrete perceptions ever since Plato. Regarding the role of ideas, Baars makes four observations (amongst a plethora of others) pertinent our interests: ideas can go beyond sensations but in the mind they act like sensations in being internally consistent and, as a result, they compete for the same role, although 'perception and meaning' seem to coexist if they are consistent with each other.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Baars, pp. 42-3, 84-6.

<sup>204</sup> Baars, pp. 62-4.

<sup>205</sup> Baars, p. 73.

<sup>206</sup> Baars says: first, '[c]onscious ideas empower us to transcend the sensory moment' (p.86) ; second, 'concepts behave much as percepts do in the theater of the mind ... conscious concepts are always internally consistent, like perceptual experiences' (p. 87); third, 'ideas and sensations seem like two different experiences that make use of the same mental faculty of consciousness; fourth,

In that final point, Baars is pointing, in my view, to the referent-signifier-signified connection, which if, at least somewhat, 'consistent' provides a secure-seeming explanatory structure from which to act—it is what Iago's framing of the handkerchief presents to Othello. This is further (cognitive) proof of the centrality of images to influence—all of the cognitive actors have a connection to images and imagination. Moreover, it adds force to Lyne's description above of thoughts being conceived *within* rhetoric.

Moving to the third implication, where works of the mind, be they philosophies or plays, have an analogous relationship to reality. Theory and theatre both use and provide semblances, which (considering the first implication) means both influence action. This influence happens in the mind, which works like a theatre (second implication). The third implication, building on the previous ones, is that philosophy and stage-plays influence reality via human agency. The unifying element is the image.

If we leave the analysis of the theatre analogy and its implications here, ours would be quite close to Edelman and Tononi's comment: 'we are agents, aware of being aware, and aware that we are making decisions that are based on our histories and plans.'<sup>207</sup> This is an innocuous formulation of the autonomous subject and how it operates in the world—effectively the first and second implication combined. What is missing, for us, is the theatre analogy alongside the third implication. Beecher, in his defence of the theatre metaphor, explains the mechanism of how experienced reality is translated into cognitive semblances: 'If there is a "script" it is reality itself, imposing challenges of recognition and orientation. The mind converts these primary "space-times" into neural equivalents diversely deemed

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'[i]t may be that we can handle two levels, perception and meaning, if they are consistent with each other, just as we can handle two streams of visual or auditory information when they are mutually consistent.' (p. 90)

<sup>207</sup> Edelman and Tononi, p. 24.

symbolic (allegorical) in nature or realistic (representational).<sup>208</sup> It is very suggestive that ‘script’ is here marked in double quotation marks, as if signalling a distance to the actual metaphor, which is “just” a metaphor, nothing more.<sup>209</sup> Calling reality scripted, without the added typography, gives a very different tone. A script, as all theatre and theory practitioners know, is made by someone. Hence the analogy of theatre and theory, plays and philosophies, suggests that reality is not simply given as neutral ‘neural equivalents’—as Bacon says ‘human understanding ... merg[es] its own nature with the nature of things, which thus distorts and corrupts it.’ (*JSNO*, 41)

Bacon’s comment about the merger is on the mind mediating the sensory input, in particular he is describing the idols of the tribe. Indeed, the idols of the theatre work on the *idola tribus*. It is perhaps this relationship that unconsciously evokes the use of scare quotes. Returning to Edelman and Tononi, their description of the autonomous agent is very much complicated by the theatre analogy. Indeed, the three implications put together describe the mechanism of ideology—how can Edelman and Tononi’s agents be sure they are acting out *their* ‘histories and plans’? Bacon’s use of the theatre analogy attests to the power semblances bear. Bacon and Shakespeare’s contemporaries took seriously ideological power implicit in what we often class as mere entertainment. Robert N. Watson makes this point:

Implicit in this period’s anti-theatrical polemics and sumptuary legislation alike was a suspicion that roles and clothes might misrepresent—and thereby alter—the essential nature, the true identity, of a person. Class, gender, even race were at risk of being disguised—which may have been

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<sup>208</sup> Beecher, p. 14. He is particularly reacting against Daniel Dennett and his critique of what he terms ‘the Cartesian theater’. For more on this see Beecher, pp. 5-15, and Baars, pp. viii-ix fn 1. Linked to this is Gilbert Ryle’s critique of the self as observer and the homunculus in the mind, see Baars, pp. 143-5, and Beecher, pp. 1-2.

<sup>209</sup> It should be noted that “space-time” is accompanied by a footnote and reference to Harry Berger Jr.’s book *Second World and Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction-Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). More should be made of the instrumental use of ‘metaphor’ as a one-way implication; I use ‘analogy’ because it suggests implicatory traffic both ways in theory’s and theatre’s relationship.

the safe way of saying they were at risk of being exposed as merely costumes, merely constructed.<sup>210</sup>

Semblances have power because of its relationship with reality, with nature. In other words, the power of appearance is its implication of essence. With any representation lies the possibility for *misrepresentation*. Any semblance can dissemble.

Bacon's project of renovating natural philosophy wanted to dissociate science from theatrical idols. In this sense the modern advocates for the theatre metaphor want to keep theatre as "theatre": just as an innocuous metaphor. Thus ideology and the constructedness of reality, which are implied in Bacon's use of an influencing theatre, are kept at bay. The idea, for Bacon, was to have the mind properly reflect reality. Thus, as Bacon writes in the plan for the Great Instauration, *The Novum Organum* would furnish and adorn 'the bedchamber for the marriage of the mind and the universe.' (*JSNO*, 19)<sup>211</sup> The older logic did not do this as for Bacon it 'took its precautions too late': 'daily habits of life had let the mind be hooked by hearsay and debased doctrine, and occupied by thoroughly empty illusions.' (*JSNO*, 28) This is pointed the idols of the theatre and in particular the rhetoric of his Sophists. The critique of this logic is why Bacon continuously emphasises the role of proper reason in contrast to the 'human reason as ordinarily applied in matter of nature, [which] I call for the sake of distinction *Anticipations of Nature* (as a thing rash or premature).' (*SEH IV*, 51)<sup>212</sup> The corrective of '[t]hat reason which is elicited from facts by a just and methodical process, I call *Interpretation of Nature*.' (*SEH IV*, 51) These refer to the two 'methods', the two tools of '*The New Organon, or Directions for the Interpretation of Nature*' (*JSNO*, 30, 14). These are what Bacon alludes to in the second aphorism of Book I:

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<sup>210</sup> Watson, *Back to Nature*, p. 9.

<sup>211</sup> Moreover, in *De Augmentis*, in making an argument for knowledge and contemplation, Bacon exclaims: 'How good a thing to have the motion of the mind concentric with the universe!' (*SEH IV*, 482)

<sup>212</sup> For a good overview of Bacon's critique of this 'common reason', see Michel Malherbe, 'Bacon's Critique of Logic', *Francis Bacon's Legacy of Texts*, ed. by W. A. Sessions (New York: AMS Press, 1990), pp. 69-87.

‘As the hand’s tools either prompt or guide its motions, so the mind’s tools either prompt or warn the intellect.’ (*JSNO*, 33)<sup>213</sup>

The Interpretation of Nature of course refers to Bacon’s inductive method in Book II of *Novum Organum*. The Anticipations of the Mind (containing the Anticipations of Nature), on the other hand, is Bacon’s general term for the old logic and idols, the topic of Book I.<sup>214</sup> At this stage we should remember that the *Novum Organum* is focused on the issues of the mind, both things that hinder and help the intellect. In this vein, Michel Malherbe elaborates: ‘it is the human mind itself that must be the object of the new logic, and in such a way that it owes nothing to its own nature. Thus, the critique of logic contains another critique, that of human nature.’<sup>215</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that ‘anticipation’ meant ‘the action of taking into possession, actually or virtually, beforehand’ in the early modern period alongside ‘prejudice’.<sup>216</sup> It is ambiguous whether it is nature or the mind that is taken into possession but in this context I would suggest the latter. ‘In fact’, Bacon admits, ‘anticipations are much more powerful in winning assent than interpretations; they are gathered from just a few instances, especially those which are common and familiar, which merely brush past the intellect and fill the imagination.’ (*JSNO*, 38) Therefore, Bacon’s critique of human nature can be seen, I suggest, as the psychology of human nature, containing within it the rhetoric and the power of the image.

However, the problem with such tools is that they can be put to other uses than to which they were meant. Iago and Richard exemplify this problem, portrayed as guides (in the pathway analogy of science) that misdirect others or as (word)smiths that fashion the

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<sup>213</sup> As is noted below, the actual name Bacon give the first tool is the Anticipations of the Mind instead of Nature. By this switch Bacon means to underline the actual source of those anticipations.

<sup>214</sup> This word, anticipation, has led to many misreadings, most notably from Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 279 fn \*3, who read this as a disavowal of hypothesis. Popper interpretation is rightly critiqued by Urbach, *Bacon’s Philosophy of Science*, pp. 26-37 and Antoinette Mann Paterson, *Francis Bacon and Socialized Science* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1973), pp. 19-30.

<sup>215</sup> Malherbe, ‘Bacon’s Critique of Reason’, pp. 69-70.

<sup>216</sup> *OED* ‘anticipation’ n. 1, 6.

truth, with suitable alloy ('the mixture of falsehood with truth'), to serve as tools for themselves. Another form of rationality is taking over: instrumental reason. For Hugh Grady, in his study of *Iago*, this is the current and limited, enlightenment version of reason formed by the historical development of which Bacon as a figure of enlightenment is part: 'Reason has become autonomous from other values, instrumental and capable of service to any number of subjective ends, whether rational or not.'<sup>217</sup> This critique of enlightenment stems from Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where the concept of enlightenment is derived from a reading of Bacon. Horkheimer and Adorno write:

Myth becomes enlightenment and nature mere objectivity. Human beings purchase the increase in their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted. Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their 'in-itself' becomes 'for him.' In their transformation the essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination. This identity constitutes the unity of nature.<sup>218</sup>

The theme of instrumental reason and its connection to reification and the domination of nature as stemming from the enlightenment attitude is a constant theme in this thesis; but our current interest is in instrumental reason as the link between Bacon and the Shakespearean villains of *Othello* and *Richard III*. To put it simply: Richard and Iago use the tools Bacon delineates not for 'human progress and empowerment' but for their own ends (*JSNO*, 13). For me, Iago and Richard are the embodiment of instrumental reason their main weapon being Bacon's psychology of human nature—a mode of the domination of nature. Buckingham, Anne, Clarence, the princes (for Richard); Roderigo, Othello, Emilia, Cassio (for Iago) are caught in the limbo of being-for-themselves and being-for-another—but so are, as I will demonstrate, Richard and Iago. That is the 'unity of nature' that ties the two plays together.

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<sup>217</sup> Hugh Grady, 'Iago and the Dialectic of Enlightenment: Reason, Will, and Desire in "Othello"', *Criticism*, 37 (1995), 537-58 (p. 540).

<sup>218</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 6.



Linking this mode of thought to Bacon has raised the ire of Baconian critics.<sup>219</sup>

However, Horkheimer and Adorno do not read Bacon as the mastermind of enlightenment, that Bacon personally is responsible and hence reprehensible, or that science singularly is responsible for the domination of nature; rather, Bacon as a figure of enlightenment puts the ethos of instrumental reason into words, despite his intentions. If anything, Bacon is as much a tool of instrumental reason as its reluctant advocate. Horkheimer and Adorno in no way attribute historical causation of enlightenment thought but are analysing the dominant mode of rationality in modernity—another figure of which is Odysseus. Correspondingly, I am in no way suggesting that the characters of Richard and Iago actually read Bacon—or even that Shakespeare read him—but that, like Odysseus, they represent the dominant ideological force of the modern world.

But how does Bacon then advocate for instrumental reason? Instrumental reason is characterised by the separation of means and ends, and substituting means for ends. I see three reasons in Horkheimer and Adorno's reading: first, the focus on the instruments of reason as the way for renewal of natural philosophy—that is, crucially, also to be applied to 'Logic, Ethics and Politics' (*JSNO*, 98); second, a focus on utility; third, disregarding the end cause in natural philosophy. Regarding the first point, Bacon differentiates his logic from the older: 'They defeat and conquer their adversary by disputation; we conquer nature by work.' (*JSNO*, 16) This is further underlined in the preface to 'Great Renewal', where there are 'new aids devised, so that the mind may exercise its right over nature.' (*JSNO*, 6) Linking

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<sup>219</sup> Paolo Rossi, 'Bacon's Idea of Science', *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. by Markku Peltonen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 25-46 (pp. 43-4), remarks that it is strange that Horkheimer and Adorno hold Bacon as 'the symbol of what science has been up [to] until now', whereas 'to the philosophers of our century who extolled scientific knowledge against the nonsensical propositions of metaphysicians, Bacon has nothing to do with science.' For Catherine Gimelli Martin, 'The Feminine Birth of the Mind: Regendering the Empirical Subject in Bacon and His Followers', *Francis Bacon and the Refiguring of Early Modern Thought*, ed. by Julie Robin Solomon and Catherine Gimelli Martin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) pp. 69-88 (p. 87), 'Frankfort [sic] School like Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno [among others] resemble [Bacon's] feminist in forgetting that the deposed Lord Chancellor never sought profit for his own sake but only for the good of humankind.'

this to the second, Bacon's new logic 'adapt[s] itself to the common understanding [only] in its utility and effects.' (*JSNO*, 30, 98) Regarding the final cause, Bacon comments that human understanding easily 'falls back on ... final causes, which are plainly derived from the nature of man [the idol of the tribe] rather than of the universe, and from this origin have wonderfully corrupted philosophy.' (*JSNO*, 44) Moreover, 'the final cause, so far from assisting the sciences, actually corrupts them' (*UGNO*, 134) 'For the inquisition of Final Causes', Bacon adds unequivocally in *De Augmentis*, 'is barren, and like a virgin consecrated to God produces nothing.' (*SEH* IV, 365). Instead, '[t]he task and purpose of human Science is to find for a given nature its Form' (*JSNO*, 102). Bacon explains form:

For though nothing exists in nature except individual bodies which exhibit pure individual acts in accordance with law, in philosophical doctrine, that law itself, and the investigation, discovery and explanation of it, are taken as the foundation both of knowing and doing. It is this *law* and its *clauses* which we understand by the term Forms, especially as this word has become established and is in common use. (*JSNO*, 103; original emphasis)

The knowledge of forms is the knowledge of how things act and thus be able to manipulate that thing. This links back to the power: 'The task and purpose of human Power is to generate and superinduce on a given body a new nature or new natures.' (*JSNO*, 102) Thus the purpose, the ends, of both human power and science is to find and use forms—the original ends of 'human progress and empowerment' entails the subjection of nature. It must be noted that all this with the application of Christian charity: 'the true ends of knowledge ... [is] for the uses and benefits of life, and to improve and conduct it in charity.' (*JSNO*, 13) However, 'life' seems to entail merely human life, forgetting the rest of what counts as life and their own ends. Bacon's focus on the means for a new science, the new logic, the simultaneous eschewing of end causes, and the focus on utility opened the door to consider him as an advocate for instrumental reason and the domination of nature. This is less a critique of Bacon's persona or his aims but of him as a figure of enlightenment—

which are not mutually exclusive although seeming so. Bacon, standing in for his philosophy, serves as a shorthand for instrumental reason.

The villainous potential lies in the tension of semblance and dissemblance. Cognitively, our minds receive, through our senses, the semblance of the world. Recalling Bacon's mirror analogy, the mind only reflects 'the light of nature', our thoughts being only semblances of reality. In pointing this out, I am not suggesting two separate worlds akin to Plato ideas but again marking in a Kantian vein that our minds are radically *mediated* by the concepts therein as well as material reflection from our senses—'radical' here in the 'root', Latin *radix*, etymological sense of the word. In this sense, our consciousness could be said to be always 'false', merely a semblance or an appearance; however, ideology and the *idola theatri* do not stress the sense but rather the mental concepts that form and make sense of the senses. It is this sense-making capacity, the interpretation, that Richard and Iago deform or dissemble. Thus dissemblance, in this context, is the locus of agency: the moulding of appearances through interpretation, deforming the thoughts that guide action.

Whereas Bacon wants to eradicate or mitigate the mind's dissemblance of nature, Shakespeare in his presentation of Richard and Iago is interested in how this kind of deception occurs and is recreated. Yet he is also interested in power, which for Bacon coincides with knowledge: they are 'a pair of twins' as 'human knowledge and human power come to the same thing' (*JSNO*, 24, 33). The central elements, to rehearse the context, to Bacon's new science are experience and experiment, which in the early modern period were closely related.<sup>220</sup> Experience is the medium of knowledge but it is susceptible to corruption. Bacon explains how the mind corrupts experience thus creating illusions and how these can be methodically overcome by an inductive process. Bacon compares these illusions—'semblance' having then the connotation of 'apparition or vision'—to 'an uneven

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<sup>220</sup> *OED*, 'experience' n. 1a and b; Peter Dear, 'The Meanings of Experience', *Early Modern Science*, eds. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 106. Dear also notes that the understanding of experience as experiment was highly influential by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

mirror alters the rays of things from their proper shape and figure' (*JSNO*, 18-9).<sup>221</sup>

Accordingly, Shakespeare's interest is echoed in Richard, who is a 'false glass' (2.2.52) and whose 'deceit ... steal[s] ... gentle shapes (2.2.26). Shifting to the explicitly cognitive register, Iago, on the other hand, has a 'talent for what cognitive theorists would describe as mind-reading, the relative ability to access imaginatively another's mental world and ... cruelly to manipulate that world.'<sup>222</sup> Moreover, Richard employs 'inductions dangerous' (1.1.32, Quarto 3) to further his goals, which is an abuse of Bacon's 'true induction' which is meant to 'banish idols' not aid them. (*JSNO*, 41) Iago too is perceived as an experimenter: for Coleridge Iago has 'the coolness of a preconceiving experimenter.'<sup>223</sup> Harold Bloom sees 'Iago [as] an inventor, an experimenter always willing to try modes heretofore unknown.'<sup>224</sup> In this vein, Cefalu touches on Iago experimenting with 'Stoic ideas about contentment' on Othello.<sup>225</sup> Thus in my reading Shakespeare stages a scientific allegory in which Richard and Iago are wicked natural philosophers.

Yet, although this dissemblance is the dominating aspect of *Richard III* and *Othello*, the villains after initial success do fail in their devices. Shakespeare presents Richard as an empowered, manipulative subject, he is also presented as an ostensibly determined, subjected character. Within the play a providential force is 'determined to prove [Richard] a villain' (1.1.30) by whose death the 'civil wounds [of war] are stopped [and] peace lives again' (5.7.40). It is this force that evokes the readings of Richard's deformity as a sign of an 'unregulated, destructive masculine force', Tudor historiography, or the 'political monstrosity' in Shakespeare's War of the Roses tetralogy, as noted above by Moulton, Garber, and Charnes. From this point of view, Richard is presented as an object of induction, a general symbol inferred from a particular character. However, his fate is

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<sup>221</sup> *OED*, 'semblance' n. 4b Bacon, *The New Organon*, pp. 18-9.

<sup>222</sup> Cefalu, *Tragic Cognition*, p. 11.

<sup>223</sup> Coleridge, p. 186.

<sup>224</sup> Bloom, p. 436.

<sup>225</sup> Cefalu, *Tragic Cognition*, p. 33.

complicated with my twinning him with Iago: *Othello* does not operate with the same historical baggage as *Richard III*, but they do have a semblance of representation in their villains being portrayed as inhuman figures. This returns us to the theatrical allegory the issue of agency of these almost real characters and how the plays re-semble our experience in an ideological framework of their own.

Richard and Iago, embodying instrumental reason on stage, are both instruments of war, bound to appearance (Richard as the scapegoat for Edward or the Tudors; Iago as an ensign who carries his army's symbol into battle). A Protean aspect designates their ability, their control of the medium, their mediating position; whereas a Machiavellian mode sets action over contemplation, the means that they represent are made into the ends, action is key whereas reflection becomes superfluous. If they can, they will. Theory is pointless when not used in practice—like Cassio, the 'bookish theoretic' (1.1.23) whose martial understanding is '[m]ere prattle without practice' (1.1.25).

The idols of (dis)semblance, as dramatized by Shakespeare and theorized by Bacon, utilize the machinery of Baconian theatre of cognitive images in the (mis)appropriation of Richard and Iago as well as, I argue further, a critique of instrumental reason in that the simplified means-orientated rationality is self-destructive. This chapter is divided into two parts according to the two meanings of 'dissemblance': the bifurcating dis-semblance and the negative de-semblance. Moreover, I develop these two parts by analysing the two deceptive and villainous Renaissance figures that both Shakespeare and Bacon share. Namely, Proteus and the Machiavel, the figures with which Richard explains himself in *3 Henry VI*: 'I can ... | Change shapes with Proteus for advantages, | And set the murderous Machiavel to school' (3.2.191-3).<sup>226</sup> In my view, both of these figures play an implicit part in *Richard III* and *Othello* that is uncovered by Bacon's proximity. The first part focuses on the

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<sup>226</sup> Waldo F. McNeir, 'The Masks of Richard the Third', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 11 (1971), 167-186 (p. 170), marks that this soliloquy in *3 Henry VI* is where 'Shakespeare introduces the Richard of *Richard III*.'

figure of Proteus, known for his shape-shifting abilities, and deception. The master of forms, Proteus represents the means by which to deceive. Here I analyse Iago and Richard's use of the idols. The second part deals with Machiavelli, the Elizabethan figure of political scheming, and induction.

## Protean Bifurcation

Proteus appears in Bacon's allegorical readings of ancient myths called the *Wisdom of the Ancients* (*De Sapientia Veterum*; *SEH VI*, 607). Proteus, as a shape-shifting god of the sea, is beholden to Neptune (his 'herdsman') and is depicted as an old man with prophetic powers (*SEH VI*, 725).<sup>227</sup> Anyone needing Proteus' help would have to bind him '[w]hereupon he on his part, in order to get free, would turn himself into all manner of strange shapes—fire, water, wild beasts, &c., till at last he returned again to his original shape.' (*SEH VI*, 725) Bacon interprets Proteus as representing matter and the herd he watches over is the variety of forms and shapes that matter takes in nature.<sup>228</sup> As matter he both knows the forms of nature as well as embodies them. Bacon also emphasises Proteus as the 'thrice excellent' prophet in that he knows not only the future but the present and past as well (*SEH VI*, 725-6). The figure of Proteus is significant to Bacon in the sense that as matter he was privy to its secrets and the person who 'knew the conditions, affectations and processes of matter ... would ... comprehend the sum and general issue ... of all things past, present, and to come.' (*SEH VI*, 726)

Although Proteus represents matter, many critics read the sea-god as a metaphor for nature.<sup>229</sup> However, taking into consideration how the mind intermingles with the senses in perception, Proteus is, in our context, more specifically *the cognitive*

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<sup>227</sup> William E. Burns, "'A Proverb of Versatile Mutability": Proteus and Natural Knowledge in Early Modern Britain', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32 (2001), 969-80 (p. 969).

<sup>228</sup> The translation talks of shapes, but in the Latin Bacon writes 'omnes formas' [all forms] and 'pristinam formam' [original form] (*SEH VI*, 651).

<sup>229</sup> Zagorin, *Bacon*, p. 40.

representation *par excellence*, the metaphor of nature in our mind. This explains how Proteus is for Bacon the allegorical source of natural knowledge but also how Proteus is a figure of deception. In Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the evil wizard Archimago is able to disguise himself in '[a]s many formes and shapes ... [a]s euer *Proteus* to himselfe could make' (1.2.10).<sup>230</sup> Shakespeare's own Proteus, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, follows suit and betrays his friend Valentine in order to seduce Silvia; when he fails, he threatens to force her to yield (5.4.58-9). This tradition of Protean figures is one of duplicitous villains: Richard declares himself 'subtle, false, and treacherous' which echoes Silvia calling Proteus a 'subtle, perjur'd, false, disloyal man' (4.2.92). Indeed, this duplicity is based on not deceiving the senses but deceiving understanding. Consider Proteus, the sea-god himself, who also appears in *The Faerie Queene*, initially saving Florimell (3.8.34-6) but subsequently keeping her captive after she refuses his wooing (3.8.38-41). Richard (and Iago), however, differs from Spenser's Proteus, who '[t]o dreadfull shapes ... did himselfe transforme, | [n]ow like a Gyant, now like to a feend, | [t]hen like a Centaure, then like to a storme' (3.8.41). As a Protean figure Richard does not change shapes in the physical manner that Spenser's Proteus does; his deception is more histrionic, theatrical, and linguistic as he 'moralize[s] two meanings in one word' (3.1.83). Our Protean figure manipulates the stage and the actors in the theatre of the mind taking over directing duties unbeknownst to the directorial 'I', who finds themselves sitting in the audience. Let us first consider Richard.

To clarify the different levels on which the figurative use of Proteus operates, I will draw on William E. Burns's three-fold division. In the early modern period the Protean image, the metaphor of the shape shifter, was used in three ways: first, as an allegory for the natural world, as with Bacon; second, as a figure that knows nature; third, as a giver of

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<sup>230</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (London: Penguin, 1978). Reference given in parenthesis.

false knowledge of nature.<sup>231</sup> Richard in describing himself as being able to ‘change shapes with Proteus for advantages’, explains the method by which he gains power. McNeir presents Richard’s method—deception—as being that of a protean actor who can put on different guises or masks in performing ‘for two audiences, his dupes in the play, ... and the auditors in the theater’.<sup>232</sup> This aligns Richard particularly with one of the three sources for the Early Modern Protean imagery that William E. Burns points out, namely Plato’s Proteus.<sup>233</sup> His Proteus, particularly in the *Euthydemus* dialogue, is metaphorical: Proteus is compared to the sophists, disseminators of deceitful knowledge, from whom Socrates could garner useful knowledge. This is in line with how Bacon uses the anticipations of the mind as the first tool of the *Novum Organum*. However, it is important to note that deception in these terms is implicitly premised on an actual knowledge: if acts of deception are successively successful then they entail some kind of truthful knowledge that enables such success. Indeed, this is why Socrates can obtain knowledge from the sophists. Truth and deception form a dialectic.<sup>234</sup> Therefore, Richard’s deception is premised on a knowledge of nature.

Bacon’s allegory of Proteus coincides with the second of Burns’s three figurative appropriations, namely Proteus as the natural world which stems from Homer. In *The Odyssey*, Menelaus extracted the knowledge for their voyage home by wrestling Proteus and not letting him go despite the changes of shape.<sup>235</sup> The wrestling with Proteus is an allegory of the way in which the natural philosopher gains knowledge because Proteus is

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<sup>231</sup> William E. Burns, “‘A Proverb of Versatile Mutability’: Proteus and Natural Knowledge in Early Modern Britain”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32 (2001), 969-80 (p. 972).

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.* 173.

<sup>233</sup> Burns, pp. 970-2.

<sup>234</sup> *OED*, n.1, meaning 1 versus 2. ‘Dialectic’ as a philosophical concept is marked by a difference in meaning in its pre-modern and modern use. The pre-modern use is linked to the Socratic method in which truth is discovered through a dialogue of opposing positions. Although the pre-modern sense is what I am primarily referring to here, the modern sense of ‘dialectic’ also at play. The modern use stems from Kant and particularly from Hegel’s critique of him. In Hegel opposites are implicitly linked to each other in experience as a process.

<sup>235</sup> Burns, p. 970.



the source, the object of natural knowledge; the deceiver, in order to succeed, needs some kind of link to this knowledge in order to pervert it. Therefore, Proteus' prophecies, in the hands of Richard, become 'drunken prophecies' (1.1.33), tools with which to create discord. This figure of Proteus, understood through Bacon's natural philosophy, also reveals the epistemological depth that knowledge, or Richard's perversion of it, touches on. Proteus is matter, 'the most ancient of things, next to God'—hence the depiction as an old man. He is bound to Neptune because 'all the operation and dispensation of matter is effected principally in liquids.' Also, being the herdsman he knows the forms and shapes of his flock, 'the ordinary species of animals, plants, minerals, etc. in which matter may be said to diffuse and use itself up.' (*SEH VI*, 725) The imagery of wrestling Proteus occurs when Bacon touches on 'making a [natural] history not only of nature free and unconstrained ... but much more of nature confined and harassed, when it is forced from its own condition by art and human agency, and pressured and moulded.' (*JSNO*, 20-1) Matter with form are in Bacon's epistemology the central elements nature. Therefore, the knowledge that Proteus yields includes all natural things, including humans. As a master of the idols of (dis)semblance, Richard can create an appearance of truth.

Richard is therefore, in my view, alike to Burns's third and final figurative early modern appropriation of Proteus as the knower of nature stemming from Diodorus Siculus, the first century B.C historian. Diodorus, in his *Antiquities of Egypt*, gave a euhemerist explanation for shape-shifting and knowledge: Proteus was a king of Egypt, who had a variety of head-dresses that he wore and he, rather than being a source of knowledge, was a knower himself. Richard is the wicked natural philosopher who can dis-semble, dissimulate forms. Richard's knowledge is not of nature per se but of 'dissembling nature' (1.1.19) In his self-description, Richard goes from being 'not shaped', 'rudely stamped', 'curtailed of this fair proportion' (1.1.14, 16, 18) to being 'unshapen' (1.2.235), 'deformed, unfinished, sent before [his] time', and 'scarce half made up' (1.1.20-1). It is a shift from a

physical disability to a state of Protean malleability, which gives him the freedom to choose his form, to finish himself as the knower of his dissembling nature. He is the actor-director of the cognitive theatre. This is akin to what Stephen Greenblatt describes as self-fashioning: 'a way of designating the forming of a self', a 'fashioning ... of a less tangible shape[,] a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving.'<sup>236</sup>

The Protean bifurcation, besides the division of essence and appearance, is that of a separation of subject and object. According to Brian Vickers, 'in the Renaissance Christian (and especially Puritan) tradition Proteus is a symbol for deceit and sinister hypocrisy ... [whereas n]owhere does [Bacon] connect it with the dissembler or hypocrite, which was a commonplace in Tudor and Elizabethan England.'<sup>237</sup> For me, this is mainly because in Bacon Proteus is objectified as the source of knowledge. Proteus is often read by critics of Bacon as an object in conjunction with the practise of torture, torturing nature, and the problem of knowing the mind of the other.<sup>238</sup> By focusing more on the subjective side of Proteus, where the freedom for villainous activity resides, I want to highlight how Richard and Iago are able to deceive. Hence, I am inverting and expanding Caroline Merchant's symbol of Bacon's Proteus as 'nature in error' to use of nature *for* error.<sup>239</sup>

Reading Proteus cognitively brings matter and forms closer together as the matter of the mind has a significant basis in imagery. To grasp the full significance let us delve back

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<sup>236</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1980), p. 2.

<sup>237</sup> Vickers, 'Bacon's Use of Theatrical Imagery', p. 205.

<sup>238</sup> This debate culminates in the exchanges between Carolyn Merchant and Peter Pesic, who defends Bacon's use of the metaphor. See Carolyn Merchant, 'Secrets of Nature: The Bacon Debates Revisited', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 69 (2008), 147-62; "'Violence of Impediments': Francis Bacon and the Origins of Experimentation', *Isis*, 99 (2008), 731-60; Peter Pesic, 'Wrestling with Proteus: Francis Bacon and the "Torture" of Nature', *Isis*, 90 (1999), 81-94; 'Shapes of Proteus in Renaissance Art', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73 (2010), 57-82. Elizabeth Hanson, pp. 24-54, 122-49, studies Bacon's relationship to torture as legal discovery contrasted with the scientific discovery of nature particularly in terms of epistemology. For a critique of Bacon via Shakespeare focused on the implications of Proteus' torture, see David Hawkes, 'Proteus Agonistes'.

<sup>239</sup> Merchant, 'Violence of Impediments', p. 745. Proteus is among the mythological figures of Pan and Prometheus in representing nature: Pan as 'nature in liberty' and Prometheus as 'nature in bonds' (pp. 745-7).

into what Bacon means by form: it is the ‘true difference, or causative nature or the source of [that nature’s] coming-to-be’ (*JSNO*, 102).<sup>240</sup> ‘Nature’ is here in the sense of an internal ‘character, capacity, function’.<sup>241</sup> Hence, Bacon is referring to an individualised, intrinsic quality of a thing or person, something that can predict how it can act.<sup>242</sup> Indeed, Bacon also calls forms the ‘laws of act.’ (*JSNO*, 45) Thus, forms should not be sought for ‘a lion, an oak, or even water and gold, for these are infinite’, instead what we should look for ‘are the Forms of sense, colours, weight, density, heat, and so on’.<sup>243</sup> It should be underlined that for Bacon—unlike for Plato who in error of abstraction assigned ‘to Forms the principal role in being’ (*JSNO*, 103)—‘Forms are real, but they are not beings.’<sup>244</sup> So the crucial thing, for Bacon, about forms is that there is an inherent causality. ‘What Bacon is seeking,’ Gaukroger points out, ‘is the discovery of causes which are both necessary and sufficient for their effects.’<sup>245</sup> Therefore, the image a form produces in the mind is pregnant with a potential quality or action.

With such suggestive images, the cognitive Proteus is able to excite the imagination. Being the ‘intermediary to the faculties of the mind in three distinct

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<sup>240</sup> For Bacon the formal cause was the most important of the Aristotelian causes. Specifying what the four causes were in artificial objects—such as a statue—was a straightforward narrative of the artificer: the material cause is the matter that the statue is made of, bronze for example; the formal cause is the shape the statue takes by the agency of the sculptor; the efficient cause is the sculptor in giving it a shape; the final cause is the finished shape as planned by the sculptor. However, this becomes more complex when describing a natural object like a tree. The form takes on a triple duty: a tree is a composite of matter and form making hard to distinguish the material cause from the formal cause; the form becomes the efficient cause as it possesses within itself the principle of motion or change, the tree creates itself; moreover, the form is the final cause or end as well because it defines what it is to become—the *telos* of a tree is to be a tree. For further elaboration of this see Lynn S. Joy, ‘Scientific Explanation from Formal Causes to Laws of Nature’, *Early Modern Science*, ed. by Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 70-105 (pp. 75-6).

<sup>241</sup> *OED* ‘nature’ n. 7d.

<sup>242</sup> For Joy (pp. 77-8), Bacon confused the powers of extrinsic and intrinsic causes. The Baconian form with its intrinsic efficient cause was the law, a ‘regularity in the behavior of extrinsic efficient causes’. Bacon’s form produces a property for a body out of a configuration of its parts: the form of light is embodied in its parts (p. 85). This differentiated Bacon from the corpuscular and mechanical philosophers (like Hobbes and Descartes) that came after him, who were in favour of extrinsic efficient causes.

<sup>243</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 140.

<sup>244</sup> Malherbe, ‘Bacon’s Method of Science’, p. 92.

<sup>245</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 139.

transactions[,] between the senses and the reason, between senses and the will, and between the reason and the will',<sup>246</sup> the imagination is the door to the cognitive theatre's backstage. As Marc Cogan points out, this role allows for imagination to "usurp" the reason's proper role as governor of action, and direct the will on its own, irrationally.<sup>247</sup> Crucially, Cogan also indicates that, in being subservient to imagination, rhetoric is its 'tool'.<sup>248</sup> The embodiment of instrumental thought, Iago's position is analogous to rhetoric. Iago describes two types of servant: One knavish, the other only seeming so. Here Iago sets out the logic by which he can seem to be something without actually being so. This bifurcated servant also marks the differentiation of agency and non-agency:

You shall mark  
 Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave  
 That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,  
 Wears out his time much like his master's ass  
 For naught but provender, and when he's old, cashiered.  
 Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are  
 Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,  
 Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,  
 And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,  
 Do well thrive by 'em, and when they have lined their coats,  
 Do themselves homage. These fellows have some soul,  
 And such a one I do profess myself' (1.1.44-55).

The contrast of the servile, duteous fool, who is as he seems, to the self-interested actor, who can play at service, makes Iago into Proteus, who, as David Hawkes remarks, is 'also a conventional symbol of verbal equivocation.'<sup>249</sup> Like rhetoric to imagination (and thus imagination to reason), Iago is able to usurp, at least partially, control of Othello's executive functions. As Elizabeth Hanson comments, [i]f Iago professes himself a consummate actor ... he in fact does his damage through the ease with which his own state of mind seems to communicate itself to others.<sup>250</sup> The privileged access of the servant to

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<sup>246</sup> Marc Cogan, 'Rhetoric and Action in Francis Bacon', *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 14 (1981), 212-33 (p. 215).

<sup>247</sup> Cogan, p. 216.

<sup>248</sup> Cogan, p. 214.

<sup>249</sup> David Hawkes, 'Proteus Agonistes', p. 22.

<sup>250</sup> Hanson, p. 77.

their lord is what gives Iago his power. Iago underlines his instrumental attitude: 'I follow him to serve my turn upon him. | We cannot all be masters, nor all masters | Cannot be truly followed.' (1.1.42-4)

He is less the 'mind reader' that Marjorie Garber suggests<sup>251</sup> and more of the theatre company that has residency in the theatre Othello. Being a 'mind reader' suggests access to Othello's mind as observer, whereas Iago and Richard are more actors of that stage of the mind, where they impose their play on the director, take roles in production, and as players try to win as much of the audience as they can with their performance. They are mind readers in the sense of reading out loud, not in possessing telepathy. Paul Cefalu suggests that Iago is not a very good mind reader. Instead he suggests that Iago's

challenge is the inescapable, generic problem of other minds, a challenge which in the world of the play transmutes into a curse. Iago's outsider status derives from thinking too much about what others are thinking, from never being in the moment.<sup>252</sup>

Even the villains cannot escape problem of appearance, they can only manipulate it.

Iago's and Richard's Protean dissemblance, their bifurcation, signals their ability to meld into the medium of the mind. They are constantly on stage but avoid the direct spotlight. Mastering Protean forms enables this as John C. Briggs argues: 'Those who possess the laws of the forms wear a new kind of Gyges' ring: they have the power to mold invisibly the world of seeming things.'<sup>253</sup> Bacon suggests in the essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation', that

[t]here be three degrees of this hiding and veiling of man's self. The first, Closeness, Reservation, and Secrecy; when a man leaveth himself without observation, or without hold to be taken, what he is. The second, Dissimulation, in the negative; when a man lets fall signs and arguments, that he is not that he is. And the third, Simulation, in the affirmative; when a man industriously and expressly feigns and pretends to be that he is not. (SEH VI, 387-8)

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<sup>251</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004) p. 606.

<sup>252</sup> Cefalu, pp. 13, 14-15.

<sup>253</sup> John C. Briggs, *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature* (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 42.

Richard and Iago use all of these throughout the plays: Richard keeps close to his brothers as Iago does to Othello and Roderigo; both drop Vice-like hints that are underlined to the audience; Richard presents himself as a faithful brother and subject, later as a pious and religious would-not-but-actually-would-be king, while Iago chooses to be seen as the honest but not-ill-willing ensign. But more importantly, these (dis)semblances have three advantages. 'First, to lay asleep opposition, and to surprise. ... The second is, to reserve to a man's self a fair retreat. ... The third is, the better to discover the mind of another.' (*SEH* VI, 389) These advantages allow our villains (Richard more in the first half of the play, Iago throughout) to get safely closer to find and use the right imagery to affect their suggestive and causative images. Iago's 'Ha! I like not that' (3.3.33) points Othello's spotlight to the pregnant image of Cassio leaving Desdemona—even forcing Othello to verbalise the image—while framing it 'guilty-like' due to Othello's presence (3.3.38-9). This is the first image—unwittingly confirmed by Desdemona's equivocal 'I have been talking to a suitor here' (3.3.42)—that sets Othello on the path of (self)destruction: 'It is the cause, it is the cause' (5.2.1) As Cogan aptly remarks: 'It is not accidental that Bacon chose the word *idola* instead of the more familiar and therefore neutral *imagines* for the images the imagination passes to the reason.'<sup>254</sup> How do Richard and Iago use the idols?

Richard's strongest resonance with the idols of the theatre occurs when he attempts to become king by winning over the Mayor and citizens with the support of Buckingham, Richard's 'other self' (2.2.120). Initially, they de-legitimize Edward and his sons by inferring Richard's legitimacy on the basis of an inherited appearance. Buckingham reports his efforts to Richard:

I did infer your lineaments,  
Being the right idea of your father  
Both in your form and nobleness of mind' (3.7.9-11).

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<sup>254</sup> Cogan, p. 216.

Buckingham offers a logical argument whereby the similarity of appearance indicates a genealogical connection or, in Edward's case, disconnection. Failing to garner outright approval with a second-hand report and praise, their second phase is to have Richard perform his virtues, to give his onstage audience first-hand experience of them—when the Sophistical school did not work, they switch to the Empirical.

The central image they use is Richard standing between two bishops with a prayer book in hand (3.7.91-4) upon which they 'build a holy descant' (3.7.44). Buckingham's choice of word for their activity, 'descant', links this deception to Richard's dissembling nature, to Richard descanting on his deformity (1.1.27). To this image of piety they add Richard performing acts of humility and self-denigration, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. Richard declares, 'I am unfit for state and dignity' (3.7.187), to the gathering of citizens led by the Mayor in an effort to rhetorically dissociate himself from Buckingham, who led the people there, in order to simultaneously add credence to Buckingham's enterprise of making him king and demonstrate the virtue of humility. Richard also adds to the dissociation by addressing the obvious issue of Edward's heirs:

The royal tree hath left us royal fruit,  
Which ...  
Will well become the seat of majesty,  
And make ... us happy by his reign' (3.7.150-3).

This seeming loyalty is, of course, a setup for Buckingham to point out Richard's virtuous act ('this argues conscience in your grace', 3.7.157) and to further attack Edward's lineage. After a dramatically timely exit by Buckingham and some citizens, seemingly left with little choice, Richard is ready to sacrifice himself:

Would you enforce me to a world of care?  
... I am not made of stones,  
But penetrable to your kind entreats,  
Albeit against my conscience and my soul.' (3.7.205-8)

Richard and Buckingham build the inevitable acceptance as something that is thrust upon Richard while carefully deflecting any hint of self-interest. He is 'unfit' yet 'penetrable to

kind entreats' and only takes the crown due to 'enforcement'. With these images and acts Richard is providing empirical evidence for the onstage audience of his suitability to be king. The initial saintly image is supported by acts of virtue performed directly to give first-hand confirmation of that initial image. But in this performance it is not the kingship that is enforced on Richard; rather what is enforced is the image of the seeming saint as fact. Appearance is imposed to the on-stage audience as essence.

Richard puts on similar performances, both alone and in league with Buckingham, throughout the play: two in the palace in 1.3<sup>255</sup> and 2.1, once with the princes in 3.1, in the Tower in 3.4 to get rid of Hastings, and in 3.5 to justify the hasty execution of Hastings to the Mayor. In contrast, Iago has one convoluted performance focused on Othello and Desdemona with two main sides with one public and the other private. Iago signals his bifurcation by suitably swearing '[b]y Janus' (1.2.33), 'the god with two faces', as remarked by Terence Hawkes, 'and Iago's version of what has happened between Othello and Desdemona as the play opens is literally "two-faced"; it "seems" to be the truth.'<sup>256</sup> In this he is akin to Bacon's description of the 'Janus of imagination' sitting in between reason and will 'for the face towards reason has the print of truth, and the face towards action has the print of goodness' (*SEH* IV, 406). Iago's public face is that of reason, while the private is the one suggesting action. These coincide with the three levels of Bacon's (dis)simulation: the face of reason dissimulates, action simulates and both share the closeness, reservation and secrecy. The last is evident in the scene referred to by Hawkes. Hiding his identity from Brabantio Iago urges him to action, to check on his daughter, the goodness of which is validated the truth of Desdemona's absence as well as the implied wickedness behind it. 'It is too true an evil' (1.1.162), Brabantio testifies. A further call to action is insuated from linking the 'profane' racist animal imagery of the 'black ram' and the 'Barbary horse' and

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<sup>255</sup> McNeir, pp. 176-7, offers a reading of this scene in which Richard shifts between different positions or masks (from acting simple, to arrogant, to pious).

<sup>256</sup> Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason*, p. 102.



Brabantio calling the hidden Iago a 'villain' for it with Iago's goading response of 'You are a senator' implying that Brabantio has the power to do something about the situation (1.1.88, 113-4, 116, 120).

But it is Othello that gets the best of Iago's two faces. The image of the cheating, untrue wife is set up by casting Cassio in a new (spot)light. Iago persuades Cassio to drink and stage-manages him into a drunken fight. This persuasion is done as with Brabantio in proximity, privately between Iago and Cassio, where Iago now hides himself in the general disposition of revelry, first to put off the guard duty (2.3.13-17) then to join 'the gallants' in drink (2.3.39-40). Once Cassio is drunk and brawling, Iago turns to his public persona reasoning with both Cassio and Montano. In front of Othello, he can be the voice of reason and chastisement: 'Have you forgot all place of sense and duty?' (2.3.160) Fortuitously, Cassio's shame (and/or drunkenness) and Montano's wound gives Iago the spotlight to dissimulate the unwilling witness against Cassio. In the negativity of dissimulation, the truth speaking public persona of Iago can, simultaneously, infer his partiality to Cassio as well as keeping to the truth by telling his subjective story (itself a negative, hedging mode of narrative) built around the two incriminating facts: 'Cassio following [a fellow crying out for help] with determined sword' then cut off by Iago's seemingly true (and utterly besides the point) excursus on following that 'fellow'; '[w]hen [Iago] came back ... [he] found them [Cassio and Montano] close together | At blow and thrust, even as again they were, | When [Othello] did part them.' (2.3.219-20, 229-32) Iago's hedged reasoning allows him to show that he believes to be defending Cassio and telling the truth strengthened by weaving Othello in as witness to the truth of his testimony. Further hedging evidence Iago delivers in the form of commonplaces: 'But men are men. The best sometimes forget.' (2.3.234)

It is this same role of the unwilling witness that Iago uses as a strategy to create suspicion in the mind of the Othello about Cassio's sudden, suspicious departure from Desdemona in 3.3. The sequence of implications via images gets properly underway when

Iago discovers in Desdemona's exchange with Othello the apropos factoid in a suitably suggestive form. Desdemona speaks of Cassio to Othello: he 'came a-wooing with you, and so many a time | When I have spoke of you dispraisingly | Hath ta'en your part' (3.3.72-4). Not only does Iago discover a strong image with equally strong associations but appropriate wording that he can hone in on: amidst wooing Cassio 'took' Othello's 'part' like Iago suspects 'the lusty Moor | Hath leapt into [Iago's] seat' (2.1.294-5). This projection allows Iago to formulate the coming scene from his own, perhaps imagined, experiences.<sup>257</sup> Capitalising on the already strong image of Cassio departing guiltily, Iago strengthens the association of with a pointed question: 'Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady, | Know of your love? ... I did not think he had been acquainted with her.' (3.3.96-7, 101). While discussing Cassio and Desdemona, Iago keeps his public face on and offers an argumentative logic—or rather forces Othello to dig it out of him making him complicit in the thought process—but in the negative guise of Baconian dissimulation by asking questions, falling silent and echoing Othello.<sup>258</sup> Iago is replaying a familiar scene to Othello in a new lighting that increasingly de-familiarises the players.

Although Iago is in the spotlight Othello's focus is on Cassio. Iago introduces the problem of appearance: 'Men should be what they seem' (3.3.131). This rational argument is backed up by the precedence of Cassio's drunken brawl, which empirically proved an error in Othello's judgment. 'Reserving a fair retreat' the dissimulating Iago extends the problem of appearance to himself: 'say [my thoughts] are vile and false ... I perchance am vicious in my guess' (3.3.141, 150). This puts the onus on Othello to judge the situation, whether to trust 'honest Iago' or the newly light Cassio. Iago provides the stage figures and

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<sup>257</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 225, links Iago's improvisational ability to the capacity of empathy, which he develops from the sociologist Daniel Lerner.

<sup>258</sup> These are the rhetorical devices of ratiocinatio, aposiopesis, and plocé. I relied on Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) and the analysis of Iago from Marion Trousedale, *Shakespeare and The Rhetoricians* (London: Scholar Press, 1982), esp. pp. 162-8

the lighting from which Othello's director must piece the narrative (to 'build [himself] a trouble | Out of [Iago's] scattering and unsure observance', 3.3.155-6) as Iago withholds the actual content of his thoughts. Crucially, it is here that Iago introduces 'jealousy' onstage [to shape] faults that are not' (3.3.152-3). Iago's emphatic and repeated warnings about 'the green-eyed monster' (3.3.170) make sure that jealousy is well-seated in the theatre Othello. It is to this audience that Iago finally opens up: 'Look to your wife. Observe her well with Cassio.' (3.3.201) After a long episode of hedging to reason, Iago—the Janus of imagination—finally addresses the will in suggesting this ocular action. The spotlight at last brings Desdemona into full focus but in the same lighting as Cassio.<sup>259</sup> Now Iago pushes a second argument more Sophistic onstage:

I know our country disposition well.  
In Venice they do let God see the pranks  
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience  
Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown. (3.3.205-8)

As Hanson points out, Iago is exploiting misogyny:

its anxious ways of knowing and representing female otherness, in order to reproduce the supervisory gaze which ... controls the relations in the chain of command as a site of chronic epistemic lack. Such a strategy is enabled by the fact that misogyny is itself already an expression of the anxiety which circulates through a system of male relations that uses women to establish male identities and make them available to knowledge.<sup>260</sup>

This builds on the prior being-seeming issue transposed onto Desdemona. Iago

immediately offers more empirical proof:

She did deceive her father, marrying you,  
And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks  
She loved you most. (3.3.210-2)

In using the hiding of their marriage from Desdemona's father Iago creates, in Othello's mind, the plausibility for Desdemona's deception. In the words of Terence Hawkes: 'Iago uses sound premises to reach conclusions which are unsound. As a result, an "appearance"

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<sup>259</sup> Honigmann in his Arden edition marks that Iago shifts the denotation of proof from guilt or innocence to mere guilt.

<sup>260</sup> Hanson, p. 75.

of truth comes to be substituted for its “reality”.<sup>261</sup> Iago uses the same diversion strategy the Turks tried on the Venetians, when they seemed to be heading to Rhodes, which the First Senator saw through: “’tis a pageant | To keep us in false gaze.” (1.3.19-20) Iago succeeds where the Turks failed. Garber’s assessment is on point in that the ‘phrase “false gaze” is a significant one for the play as a whole’.<sup>262</sup> Thus the problem of appearance is an issue of subjective perception, the ‘gazer’, rather than of the perceived object, the ‘gazed’.

However, Iago’s final point is the most important in inverting and dissembling the cause of the ‘false gaze’: he transfers the falsity of the gaze onto the object by naturalising the perceived disjunction of essence and appearance.

Ay, there’s the point; as, to be bold with you,  
 Not to affect many proposèd matches  
 Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,  
 Whereto we see in all things nature tends.  
 Foh, one may smell in such a will most rank,  
 Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural! (3.3.233-8)

‘Nature’ prefers similarity, Desdemona should ‘naturally’ have chosen a husband amongst fellow Venetians. Choosing Othello was ‘unnatural’. Katharine Eisaman Maus makes the point succinctly: ‘Iago exploits the slipperiness of the language of monstrosity to especially perverse effect in this passage, entrapping Othello in a bizarre logic which makes Desdemona’s “unnatural” devotion to her black husband evidence for her “monstrous” infidelities.’<sup>263</sup> Worse still, as the *idola theatri* are wont to do, Iago naturalises even the racist logic of xenophobia. Iago mitigates the racism with misogyny (‘I do not ... [d]istinctly speak of [Desdemona]’, 3.3.239-40) making it an issue of ‘her own clime, complexion, and degree’. Though theatrical and most certainly dissembling, the idol that hides epistemological issues of appearance under an ontology of class, race, or gender is an idol of nature par excellence. ‘I am bound to thee for ever’ (3.3.217) is how Othello responds to

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<sup>261</sup> Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason*, p. 105.

<sup>262</sup> Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, p. 590.

<sup>263</sup> Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 122. For an interpretation of Iago’s use of will in this particular instance, see Grady, ‘Iago and the Dialectic of Enlightenment’, pp. 543-5.

Iago for the infection with the 'false gaze'. Hawkes aptly comments: 'Because Othello is by this time inextricably and permanently involved with Iago's world of appearance, [the words] are literally true.'<sup>264</sup>

Richard and Iago clearly apply the Sophistical and Empirical schools of Bacon's idols of the theatre in their rationalised persuasions. Yet the Superstitious school has also been in play all the while. In sculpting the images of piety or deception both villains ascribe in the Platonic manner being to the forms of Richard and women, respectively. For Bacon, it is a 'kind of evil' to introduce 'abstract forms' (*JSNO*, 53). The form and lineage of the Plantagenets is to be found in the pious Richard, whereas the deception of women culminates in Desdemona. Both forms have implications. Terence Hawkes deftly unpacks the idolatrous logic of forms in the 'It is the cause' (5.2.1) speech of Othello:

'Causal' assertions such as '... she must die, else she'll betray more men' [5.2.6] clearly have no basis in fact. No men have been betrayed, and the reasoning behind such words is plainly degraded. In effect, although the argument goes through the motions of a 'cause and effect' analysis, it contains nothing but contention, and emotional weighting.<sup>265</sup>

But what of the other idols?

The premise for Richard and Iago's ideology of appearance being essence originates from the *idola tribus*, idols of the tribe. These idols 'are founded in human nature itself and in the very tribe or race of mankind.' Due to the weakness of the senses mental abstractions to become dominant. This is particularly the case with Hastings (Othello too, as shown above with Iago). He is sure that, when it comes to Richard, he can read 'the mind's construction in the face'—an ability that Duncan denies in *Macbeth* (1.4.12). Hastings says moments before Richard orders his execution: 'I think there's never a man in Christendom | Can lesser hide his love or hate than he; | For by his face straight shall you know his heart.' (3.4.56-8) Despite being warned earlier by Stanley and learning from Catesby that Richard wants the crown, which Hastings refused to assist, he persists in

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<sup>264</sup> Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason*, p. 104.

<sup>265</sup> Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason*, p. 120.

believing that his idea of Richard is true—premised on a trust in his seeing through appearances. Yet he deceives himself in believing in his abstraction.

Hastings's idol of the tribe comes close to the *idola specus*, idols of the cave, that afflicts Clarence. The idols of the cave are illusions of the mind that come from the individual's inclinations. Clarence is particularly affected by the shared history with his brother. He is so convinced of his brother's love that he has to be told three times (1.4.212, 222, 227-8) that it is Richard, not Edward, that wants him dead. He clings to the image of Richard weeping his predicament (1.4.219, 225) to the extent that the murderers shift from saying 'You are deceived' (1.4.212) to 'Thou deceiv'st thyself' (1.4.222). Clarence is trapped alone in the almost literal cave of his cell. Social fragmentation, the division into different idols of the cave, is another enabling element for Richard. He uses Clarence to deepen the factions within the court (1.3.327-31). Othello, on the other hand, is faced with being the outsider and the tradition of racism that he has internalised Iago's 'colonial attitude' as Stephen Greenblatt describes it.<sup>266</sup> His 'blackness ... is the indelible witness to Othello's permanent status as an outsider, no matter how highly the state may value his services or how sincerely he has embraced its values.'<sup>267</sup>

As sophist rhetorician and actor language is Richard and Iago's most important support in creating and maintaining their ideologies—as words are to a play. Thus the idols of the marketplace are the most ubiquitous in both plays, particularly due to the equivocation of the Vice-like villains. Russ McDonald connects 'the ambiguities of a defective medium' in *Richard III* to the fallen state of man. For him, the villainous use of language results only in 'Richard's tireless efforts to substitute himself for Edward's heirs' rather than actual replacement.<sup>268</sup> However, McDonald ignores two instances where

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<sup>266</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 233-4.

<sup>267</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 240.

<sup>268</sup> Russ McDonald, 'Richard III and the Tropes of Treachery', *Philological Quarterly*, 68 (1989), 465-83, p. 475.

Richard, appropriating the ambiguous idol of the marketplace, succeeds in exchanging himself for another. First is the prophecy of the 'G' that will be the murderer amongst Edward's heirs. Edward believes that this refers to George, Duke of Clarence, whereas the actual referent is Gloucester. Richard implies his culpability in this interpretation: 'By drunken prophecies' he will 'set [his] brother Clarence and the King | In deadly hate the one against the other' (1.1.33-5). In the second exchange Richard shifts attention and the guilt of killing Henry VI and his son Edward to Lady Anne, the widow of the latter. Richard asks Anne:

Is not the causer of the timeless deaths  
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,  
As blameful as the executioner?

LADY ANNE

Thou art the cause, of most accursed effect.

RICHARD DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

Your beauty was the cause of that effect (1.2.115-9)

Richard uses the ambiguity of 'cause'. By implicating Anne as the final cause to his efficient cause, Richard implicates Anne with a shared culpability. This exchange also marks an intensification in his wooing that results in the successful replacement of this Edward. Richard's use of language in wooing of Lady Anne results in Anne changing her opinion through linguistic alteration of Richard's image, stemming from a deepening of Richard's image. Richard's success comes from the admittance of undeniable facts—his murderous activity—and explaining his motivation. The turning point in their stichomythic engagement occurs when Richard offers Anne his sword pointed towards his bare breast (1.2.160-4). That is the Protean image that finally subdues Anne for Richard's ends.

## Machiavellian Dissection

Bacon and Richard share an instrumental attitude with the Machiavel: for Bacon knowledge is to serve the monarch,<sup>269</sup> whereas Richard's deception is a means to power, to become monarch. '[T]hose two goals of man' Bacon states, 'knowledge and power, a pair of twins, are really come to the same thing.' (*JSNO*, 24) Although Bacon and Richard share the goal of power, for Bacon power, even via the monarch, is meant for the good whole of mankind, whereas for Richard, his 'deep intent' (1.1.148) is his and his alone: he does not share it with the audience although its success is premised on the death of his brothers. Iago too, at least nominally, shares in this instrumental attitude, even in Coleridge's 'motive-hunting of motiveless malignity': 'In following [Othello] I follow but myself. ... not I for love and duty, | But seeming so for my peculiar end.' (1.1.58-60)<sup>270</sup> The model for linking knowledge to power, is for Gaukroger, Machiavelli: the linkage 'should in fact be read as a claim about power, about something practical and useful, telling us that knowledge plays a hitherto unrecognised role in power.'<sup>271</sup>

Significantly, Bacon privileges application over knowledge. The knowledge of forms is to be put into action, to be used elsewhere. 'For the form of a nature is such that if it is there, the given nature inevitably follows. ... [W]hat is most useful in operating is truest in knowing.' (*JSNO*, 104) In other words, the validity of knowledge is tested in practice. The focus on application and the centrality of practice indicate in Bacon an inclination to exploit nature—for the good of humankind. In wanting to produce 'new natures' in bodies, to control nature, Bacon takes the role of the artificer, who can manipulate the formal cause to create new effects in other bodies.

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<sup>269</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>270</sup> Samuel T. Coleridge, *Coleridge on Shakespeare*, ed. by Terence Hawkes (London: Penguin, 1959), p. 190.

<sup>271</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 17.



Vincent Luciani studies Bacon's and Machiavelli's shared ideas. He finds two points of connection: the doctrine of *faber fortunae* and the active life.<sup>272</sup> Both Bacon and Machiavelli favour an active life, preferably in the service of the state, over a contemplative. Iago identifies with 'practice' in contrast to the 'prattle' of 'the bookish theoretic' Cassio (1.1.23-5). Richard, too, 'hate[s] the idle pleasures of [his] days': he prefers to be left in 'the world ... to bustle' (1.1.25, 151). The former, the doctrine of *faber fortunae*, is the principle of self-determination. Again, Richard echoes Bacon and Machiavelli in his declaration, 'I am determinèd to prove a villain' (1.1.30), whereas Iago questions his role: 'what's he then that says I play the villain?' (2.3.327) Active life and making one's own fortune are intertwined ideas underlining subjective agency. In this final section I argue that Iago and Richard take each a central Baconian natural philosophy idea, which each of the villains use in a Machiavellian negative fashion to their own ends only to be undone by the causality of fate in the guise of providential forces. Iago's de-sembling activity centres, I argue, on invention or discovery whereas Richard focuses on induction. As a result both become de-humanised and de-sembléd themselves.

The Machiavel has two referents: Niccolò Machiavelli, the Florentine political theorist, and the Elizabethan character type based on him. George Watson warns that, although he sees the character type as a critique of the person, these two referents should not be conflated because '[t]he Elizabethans sometimes attribute a belief of gratuitous violence to Machiavelli ... [making] nonsense of his doctrines.'<sup>273</sup> There is no lack of murders and bloody imagery in *Richard III*, but it is not Richard who executes the murders although he is behind them. He does not have blood on his hands in the same literal way as

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<sup>272</sup> Vincent Luciani, 'Bacon and Machiavelli', *Italica*, 24 (1947), 26-40 (p.27). Bacon's relationship to Machiavelli is still a contested issue. For an argument that Bacon outdoes Machiavelli, see Robert K. Faulkner, 'The Empire of Progress: Bacon's Improvement Upon Machiavelli', *Interpretation*, 20 (1992), 37-62; work argues for Bacon criticising Machiavelli based on his concept of philanthropia, see Michelle Tolman Clarke, 'Uprooting Nebuchadnezzar's Tree: Francis Bacon's Criticism of Machiavellian Imperialism', *Political Research Quarterly*, 61 (2008), 367-78.

<sup>273</sup> George Watson, 'Machiavel and Machiavelli', *The Sewanee Review*, 84 (1976), 630-48 (p. 633).

he did in *3 Henry VI*. In ‘setting the murderous Machiavel to school’ Richard is not aiming to educate the Machiavel in how to murder; but rather he wants to teach how it is done covertly, without direct association. Although ‘Machiavellian’ connotes expediency and unscrupulousness, it also suggests duplicity, astuteness, cunning, and scheming.<sup>274</sup> Richard’s pedagogical intent suggests an attempt to return the Machiavel to Machiavelli, to seize the crown by ‘inductious’—seductive—‘plots’ (1.1.32) rather than by simple and direct murder. Richard is following Machiavelli’s advice which suggests the necessity of a prince ‘to be a great pretender and dissembler.’<sup>275</sup> In Baconian terminology, Richard exploits ‘the subtlety of nature, the obscurity of things and the weakness of human understanding’ (*JSNO*, 61), ‘[a]s [he is] subtle, false, and treacherous’ (1.1.37). What about Iago?

Although ‘the well-worn observation that Iago is an ingenious villain or stage Machiavel ... is true enough’, Ken Jacobsen marks and suggests that Iago’s ‘behaviour represents an authentic application of the inner logic of Machiavellism’.<sup>276</sup> Jacobsen focuses on the conjunction of rhetoric and military strategy in Machiavelli, one point being ‘invention’.<sup>277</sup> Invention, or *inventio* is the ‘first of five traditional parts of rhetorical theory, concerned with the finding and elaboration of arguments.’<sup>278</sup> Wallace terms it as ‘the finding and discovering of ideas’.<sup>279</sup> It is an important term for Bacon: ‘INVENTION is of two kinds, very different; one of arts and sciences and the other of speech and arguments.’ (*SEH* IV, 407) He calls the former, which he finds lacking, the ‘Art of Indication’ divided again into ‘Learned Experience’ and ‘Interpretation of Nature, or the New Organon.’ (*SEH*

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<sup>274</sup> *OED*, ‘Machiavellian’ n. and adj.

<sup>275</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. by Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 61.

<sup>276</sup> Ken Jacobsen, ‘Iago’s Art of War: The “Machiavellian Moment” in Othello’, *Modern Philology*, 106 (2009), 497-529, (p. 500).

<sup>277</sup> Jacobsen, p. 500. Jacobsen’s particular focus is on Machiavelli’s *The Art of War*, which has gotten little attention in relation to Shakespeare.

<sup>278</sup> Lanham, pp. 91-2.

<sup>279</sup> Karl R. Wallace, *Francis Bacon and the Nature of Man* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1967), p. 71.

IV, 413)<sup>280</sup> He describes 'Learned Experience' as using 'some direction and order in experimenting, it is as if ... led by [a] hand' in the dark. To have a light in the dark comes from the Interpretation of Nature. Another word for 'invention' is 'discovery'. Bacon sets out his plan for the *Novum Organum*:

For the end I propose for my science is the discovery not of arguments but of arts, not of things that are consistent with first principles, but of the principles themselves, not of probable reasons but of indicators and directions for works. As my intention is different, so therefore is the result. The result of the one is to overcome an opponent by disputation, of the other to overcome Nature by action. (*UGNO*, 19)

This is a very Machiavellian formulation. Instrumental reason creeps in making the ends of Bacon's science the discovery 'of arts', of industry, of skills, of means.<sup>281</sup> Bacon is juxtaposing himself again with the dominant scholastic science. Hawkes, particularly in relation to Bacon, comments on action:

The idea of 'action' had as its basis the contention that all knowledge and its acquisition should have the end of practicality. The 'active' man 'actively' involved himself with the world and concerned himself in applying his knowledge to it for the good of the society; 'active' knowledge thus took on the colour of 'applied' science.<sup>282</sup>

Hawkes makes explicit Bacon's connection to the idea of active life he shared with Machiavelli. This is one side of the Classical juxtaposition of *negotium* and *otium* (that became prominent in the Renaissance), of an active life especially in public affairs versus a life of 'detachment and contemplation'.<sup>283</sup> Gaukroger expands on this:

The choice ... is ... between the active of practical life and the contemplative life, where philosopher and to a lesser extent poets had traditionally fallen in the latter category, although neither poesy nor philosophy were strictly incompatible with the former. The explicit shift to the defence of the active or practical life, however does place new

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<sup>280</sup> For a closer inspection of this division, see Lisa Jardine, 'Experientia literata or *Novum Organum*? The Dilemma of Bacon's Scientific Method', *Francis Bacon's Legacy of Texts*, ed. by W. A. Sessions (New York: AMS Press, 1990), pp. 47-67.

<sup>281</sup> For a defence of Bacon against charges of utilitarianism see Desroches, *Limits of Scientific Knowledge*, pp.103-8; and Brian Vickers, 'Bacon's so-called "Utilitarianism": sources and influence', *Francis Bacon: Terminologia e Fortuna nel XVII Secolo*, ed. by Marta Fattori (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1984), pp. 281-313.

<sup>282</sup> Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason*, p. 34.

<sup>283</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 47.

requirements on these activities, for their practitioners now had to show that they were able to live up to the aims of the active or practical life. What Bacon effectively does is to transform philosophy into something that comes within the realm of *negotium*.<sup>284</sup>

It is here that Iago finds success applying his imaginative artistry to weave the ideology of 'false gaze' in the theatre Othello.

For Bacon, invention and discovery entailed applying knowledge from one field of knowledge to another.<sup>285</sup> Iago applies his military knowledge to his dissembling social activity: Jacobsen notes how Machiavelli links invention to improvisation on the battle field.<sup>286</sup> This is part of Iago's activity of out-mastering the master or, more, out-strategizing the general.<sup>287</sup> Iago also is the maker of his own fortune as his most well-known invention is use the handkerchief as 'ocular proof' for Othello, sealing his and Desdemona's doom. It was indeed a piece of luck that happened to convey the 'napkin' into his possession—as Machiavelli clarifies in *The Prince* 'in order not to wipe out our free will, I consider it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one half of our actions, but ... still leaves the control of the other half, or almost that, to us.'<sup>288</sup>

Under the rhetorical concept of *inventio* two types of proof were situated: inartificial proof (which comes close to the modern sense of evidence) and artificial proof consisting of ethos, pathos, and logos.<sup>289</sup> Let us briefly consider the latter three: ethos is derived from the trustworthiness of speaker's character. This is the ubiquitous 'honest Iago'.<sup>290</sup> Pathos is persuasion that stirs the auditor's emotions. As Jacobsen notes, the 'peculiar force of pathos is its tendency to throw auditors off balance, paralyzing their

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<sup>284</sup> Gaukroger, *Bacon and the Transformation*, p. 55.

<sup>285</sup> Stephen H. Daniel, 'Myth and the Grammar of Discovery in Francis Bacon', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 15 (1982), 219-37 (pp. 222-4), studies in particular how Bacon's work on myths yielded knowledge to philosophy in general.

<sup>286</sup> Jacobsen, p. 512.

<sup>287</sup> This is part of Iago's war against his former god of war, Othello, as Harold Bloom, pp. 454-6, interprets Iago's animus.

<sup>288</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 84.

<sup>289</sup> Lanham, p. 166.

<sup>290</sup> For more in depth analysis, see Jacobsen, pp. 507-8.

capacity for rational judgment'.<sup>291</sup> The clearest example of this is 3.3, where Othello goes from denying his being 'a little dashed [in his] spirits' (3.3.218-9) to grabbing Iago by the throat and demanding, '[v]illain, be sure thou prove my love a whore. | Be sure of it. Give me the ocular proof' (3.3.364-5). A big part of this played the rational argument, detailed above, that is persuasion by *logos*. These proofs set the stage for Othello observing Iago give said 'ocular proof' in his discussion with Cassio. In addition—in accordance with *heuresis*, the Greek term for *inventio*—Iago 'is a master at exploiting heuristics' (39) the 'mental shortcuts' that assist our fast decision making.<sup>292</sup> With the final straw of adding the inartificial evidence of the handkerchief in the hands of Cassio, Iago's cognitive shaping activity has transformed Othello: 'My lord is not my lord' (3.4.122), Desdemona testifies. Iago has moved Othello, in the words of John C. Briggs, 'between various worlds of proof and evidence, shaping and being shaped by them.'<sup>293</sup> Iago's dissembling actions reached their summit.

Richard's dissembling ability gains its impetus from the re-figuring—self-fashioning—of his physical body. This re-figuring is the shift from de-semblance to dis-semblance. As a matter of Machiavellian expediency, Richard transforms his body to the vessel of his deception by which, as in the doctrine of *faber fortunae*, he can make himself king. I argue that this transformation can be seen as a form of Baconian induction in which Richard want to turn his physical deformity, his lack of form, into the metaphysical form the king's body. Indeed, Bacon's inductive method is characterized by the movement from

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<sup>291</sup> Jacobsen, p. 508. See pp. 508-12 for the full analysis I have drawn on.

<sup>292</sup> Neema Parvini, *Shakespeare and Cognition: Thinking Fast and Slow through Character* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), pp. 14, 39. Particularly relevant here is the framing effect that 'refers to the *context* in which a decision is made' (p. 18, my emphasis). Moreover, Parvini suggests that Othello's quick decision on the handkerchief proof is 'a classic example of confirmation bias' (p. 16). This is what Iago is talking about when noting that 'Trifles light as air | Are to the jealous confirmations strong | As proofs of holy writ' (3.3.322-4). The neuroscientist Itiel E. Dror, 'How can Francis Bacon help forensic science? The four idols of human biases', *Jurimetrics*, 50 (2009), 93-110 (p. 97), assigns confirmation bias to the idols of the tribe.

<sup>293</sup> John C. Briggs, 'The Problem of Inartificial Proof: Othello Peers into Bacon's Universe', *Ben Jonson Journal*, 10(2003), 161-77 (p. 163).

physical experiment to metaphysical form. Induction ‘takes experience apart and analyses it’. (*JSNO*, 17) Bacon saw his way of analysis literally: it is unloosing, untying activity as derived from the Greek *analyein*.<sup>294</sup> The move from the physical to the metaphysical is more dissection than merely an abstraction. (*JSNO*, 45) For Bacon, the faculty of understanding has the power to abstract.<sup>295</sup> ‘But our logic instructs the understanding’, he explains, ‘and trains it, not (as common logic does) to grope and clutch at abstracts with feeble mental tendrils but to dissect nature truly, and discover the powers and actions of bodies and their law limned in matter.’ (*JSNO*, 219-20) Richard has his physical handicap, his deformity ‘limned in his matter’. Richard’s self-discovery that leads to his self-narrated re-birth is implicit and presumed in *Richard III*. The moment in which he discovers ‘the law limned in his matter’ is when he expresses capability to rival and beat Proteus and the Machiavel: ‘Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?’ (*3 Henry VI*, 3.2.194) Richard’s ability to deceive is linked to his desire for the crown.

None of this contemplation is expressed in *Richard III*. Richard only mentions his ‘deep intent’ and ‘another secret close intent’ (1.1.157). Buckingham is the first to explicitly say that Richard should be king (3.1.162-3) within this play nice —although Rivers and the Queen toy with the idea of Richard being king to express their loyalty to the institution despite who occupies it (1.3.148-54). Richard does not even mention his deceptive abilities explicitly; the plots have already been laid (1.1.32). Therefore the play begins *in medias res* with Richard starting his inductive process, the re-birth based on the aforementioned implicit self-discovery.

Bacon’s induction is essentially a three-fold operation: it begins with a presentation but, as Bacon points out, ‘[t]rue *induction* is founded on *exclusion*, but is not completed

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<sup>294</sup> *OED*, ‘analysis’ n.

<sup>295</sup> Wallace, p. 101.

until it reaches an affirmation.’ (*JSNO*, 130; original emphasis)<sup>296</sup> It is a kind of negation that is at the core of Richard’s de-semblance. Richard presents himself as being inevitably separated, excluded from others due to his body. His opening soliloquy begins with a collective move from war (‘winter of *our* discontent’; 1.1.1) to peace: ‘Our bruised arms hung up for monuments, | Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings, | Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.’ (1.1.6-8) However, Richard turns from the first person plural to the singular as a sign of exclusion from the collective:

But I that am not shaped for sportive tricks

Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass,  
I that am rudely stamped, and want love’s majesty  
To strut before a wanton-ambling nymph,  
I that am curtailed of this fair proportion,  
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,  
And that so lamely and unfashionable  
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them ... (1.1.14-23)

As the stage direction suggests, Richard emerges from the war alone, excluded, in the middle stage of induction. He is marked by a succession of negative relations: quotations ‘not shaped’, ‘not made’; ‘curtailed’, ‘cheated’; ‘deformed’, ‘unfinished’, ‘unfashionable’. The social exclusion is part of the negativity inherent to Richard. In this passage he introduces himself as a participial sub-clause (‘I that am’) with the predicate is omitted. He is suggesting, particularly with the passive voice, a lack of agency on his part being wholly determined by his body. The only active verb, ‘halt’, denotes an action that is partial, imperfect, non-continuous. The only agency here is given to ‘dissembling nature’, an extrinsic cause. Because of the suggested agency and it being linked to birth imagery, I argue for that ‘dissembling nature’ is central to the way Richard perceives himself.

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<sup>296</sup> I find Bacon’s inductive process (presentation, exclusion, and affirmation) to coincide with the Platonic dialectic of thesis, antithesis, synthesis the process of which is itself a reflective experience on the initial experience in the history. Hence, it is a refinement of experience rather than a rectification of phenomena. Bacon’s inductive process thus pre-empts the Hegelian dialectic.

'Dissembling nature', both inner and outer nature, the double determination, is the source of Richard's negation—his inductive de-semblance.

Richard's physical body is determinate only in a negative sense—as the inductive exclusion—in terms of what it is not. Yet, crucially, his physical body is only implied here, not explicitly mentioned; whereas in *3 Henry VI*, his arm is 'like a wither'd shrub', 'an envious mountain on [his] back', his legs shaped 'of an unequal size', and 'deformity' sitting 'to mock [his] body' (3.2.155-9). Richard's determining de-formity is metaphysical, beyond the physical, endowed by 'dissembling nature' and 'the powers of the mind' that made Richard's re-birth possible. In it being causative of Richard's exclusion this human nature is de-sembling, taking apart rather than bringing together. The fully potent predicate verb appears only to realise and affirm his separation from others:

Why, I in this weak-piping time of peace  
Have no delight to pass away the time,  
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun  
And descant on mine own deformity. (1.1.24-7)

Richard gains an initial affirmation in a possessive phrase. But this possession is again delivered through a double negation: he has 'no delight' 'unless to spy' 'and descant'. Significantly, de-semblance gives Richard possession of a visual ability and a verbal/aural ability—that are important to his dis-semblance. 'Spy' implies a covert sight, seeing but not being seen. This suggests an epistemological difference in Richard, particularly if the 'shadow' is taken to be the false image he creates of himself in conjunction with the 'sun' of York, Edward. Furthermore, Martine van Elk points out musical image of 'descant': not only can descanting 'happen in harmony with the musical base, but it may also counter it'.<sup>297</sup> Thus deformity affords Richard agency to counteract 'the weak-piping time of peace' leading to the inevitable conclusion:

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover  
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,

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<sup>297</sup> Martine van Elk, "'Determined to Prove a Villain": Criticism, Pedagogy, and "Richard III"', *College Literature*, 34 (2007), 1-21 (p. 9).



I am determined to prove a villain,  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (1.1.28-31)

'Prove' connotes the subjection to a test<sup>298</sup> suggesting that Richard, in his self-narrative, has experimented being 'a lover' with negative results. Richard's negation results in an affirmation of determinism, a simultaneous subjection to his excluding nature and achieving agency through that subjection. Bacon recognises the importance of such self-subjection: 'nature is conquered only by obedience.' (*JSNO*, 24) He follows the doctrine of *faber fortunae* through his self-dissection and is able to induce his form in the Baconian sense. Form, as we recall, is 'true difference, or causative nature or the source of [a thing's] coming-to-be', which makes 'dissembling nature' Richard's form.

The act of dissection is indicative of what Jonathan Sawday calls the early modern 'culture of dissection'.<sup>299</sup> That culture revolves around enquiry, particularly of the human body, extending the mode of study into other forms of understanding the world beyond anatomy, like philosophy, theology, art, poetry, and architecture.<sup>300</sup> With the analogy of dissection, the inductive method is meant to keep understanding from overt abstraction and embed it in that anatomical mode of analysis. Exclusion makes induction a form of dissection rather than abstraction. Bacon emphasizes intellectual dissection over mechanical, Minerva over Vulcan: the 'separation and dissolution of bodies is certainly not to be achieved through fire, but by reason and true induction, with auxiliary experiments'. (*JSNO*, 108) Richard's opening soliloquy has allegorically dissolved his body and found within his disembodied shape and form self-determinism through a mental dissection, an intellectual de-sembling. However, at this stage he has not yet reached his full de-sembling malleability because he regards himself as 'unfashionable' and lacking the lover's charms—a lingering exclusion. Sowing discord between his brothers, his initial 'deep intent'

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<sup>298</sup> *OED*, 'prove' v. 6b.

<sup>299</sup> Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the human body in Renaissance culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>300</sup> Sawday, p. ix.

and experiment, Richard achieves '[w]ith lies well steeled weighty arguments' (1.1.147). His other 'secret close intent' he reaches by marrying Anne—in what amounts to an auxiliary experiment.

The lingering exclusion from Richard's opening presentation finds auxiliary affirmation with Richard's success in wooing Lady Anne. Richard is surprised by his accomplishment:

And I nothing to back my suit at all  
But the plain devil and dissembling looks,  
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing? (1.2.221-3)

The negative aspect of being 'unfashionable' and 'no lover' is rendered moot by his 'dissembling looks'. With this affirmation Richard more fully understands the implications of his de-formity. Anne explicitly attributes him with dissemblance (1.2.170) and deformity (1.2.55) and still concedes to his wooing. This success affirms the efficacy of Richard's ideology: the mind and perception is susceptible to his manipulation, his dis-semblance.

Alongside his dis-sembling abilities, Richard also affirms his inductive approach to become king—the end presumably behind his intents. Analogically to the inductive process, Richard wants to extend himself from the physical particular to the metaphysical general entity of the king—from his natural body to the body politic. Pre-empting this, he starts the play with a de-embodied figure the malleability of which he uses to eliminate obstacles. Richard's first extension is to marry Anne and 'to become her husband and her father' (1.1.155) instead of the father, Henry VI, and husband, Edward, that he killed. He plants himself in the place of the Lancastrian heir and even takes possession of the old king's body. In revelling in his success Richard suggestively infers himself as 'I no-thing' (1.2.221), thus evoking his inner negativity in the connotation of no longer being a mere person.<sup>301</sup> The 'no-thing' also denotes the negation of a thing in the sense of a cause,<sup>302</sup> which links to Richard's de-formity in the Baconian sense being the negation of a cause. In lacking a form

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<sup>301</sup> *OED*, 'nothing' pron., and n., 2a.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* 'thing' n1. 2b.

he would be missing 'a causative nature' and 'true difference', which suggests he is shifting from particularity to generality. Furthermore, in this vein, the question of 'all the world to nothing' (1.2.223) marks Richard sensing the limitlessness of his capabilities. He is truly inducing himself to a metaphysical entity.

Richard's induction finds suggestive echoes in what Bacon terms 'privileged instances', which are an aid to understanding that shorten and facilitate induction. (*JSNO*, 219-21)<sup>303</sup> Three instances in particular stand out. First, the deviant instances are 'errors of nature, freaks and monsters'. Bacon calls them 'wonders of individuals' and they are easily transferable to use. These instances also protect the mind against the presumption of commonplace and they reveal common forms. (*JSNO*, 148-9) Richard reflects this kind of deviancy possessing an individualistic de-formity. His deviancy and exclusion allows him to identify and use typical modes of behaviour as masks to hide his deceit.<sup>304</sup> Richard demonstrates an awareness of the theatrical convention—and its common character forms—he partakes in by comparing his actions to 'the formal Vice Iniquity' (3.1.82). This deceit is again linked to Richard's dis-semblance, his appropriation of the idols of the mind.

Next are 'instances that open doors or gates', which 'assist direct actions of sense'. Vision holds the primary spot among the senses and Bacon suggests 'three kinds of aids: either to see what has not been seen; or to see further; or to see more accurately and distinctly.' (*JSNO*, 170-2) Like the deviant instance, this works in reverse: Richard's primary aid, Buckingham assists in deceiving rather than in seeing 'more accurately', as will be discussed with the idols. Yet Buckingham's aid in making others perceive Richard as king is pivotal—he opens the door to the crown. On Buckingham's suggestion ('holy and devout religious men | Are at their beads', 3.7.87-8) the Mayor exclaims, 'See where he stands between two clergymen' (3.7.90), to which Buckingham adds emphasis: 'And see, a prayer

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<sup>303</sup>Bacon, *The New Organon*, pp. 219-21; Malherbe, p. 87; Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the order of nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), p. 225.

<sup>304</sup> McNeir (pp. 176-8) compiles a list of these masks or roles that Richard uses.

book in hand' (3.7.93). Together Buckingham and Richard especially use the third aid to Richard's induction, namely the instances of resemblance. These instances reveal physical similarities between concrete objects, like an eye and a mirror, or teeth and a beak. Although, from Bacon's point of view, these are not the most helpful in finding forms, they are 'extremely useful in uncovering the structure of parts of a whole'. (*JSNO*, 144-7) The central argument in Buckingham's oration for Richard's kingship is that he is the true descendant of York because Richard resembles his father, Richard Plantagenet, whereas Edward does not. Buckingham infers shape or figure as being the 'structure' which makes Richard a 'part' of the York 'whole'. Central to this is the lexical connection of 'lineaments' to 'lineal'. Richard's 'lineaments', the outline or distinctive features of the body or face,<sup>305</sup> are 'the right idea of [his] father | [b]oth in [his] form and nobleness of mind' (3.7.9-10); while Edward's 'lineaments' are 'nothing like the noble Duke [their] father' (3.5.89-90). Richard's resemblance is associated to 'the lineal glory of [the] royal house' of York (3.7.115). The resemblance of 'lineaments' is proof of true 'lineal' succession. Therefore, Buckingham argues, Richard's kingship, instead of Edward's son, would set the monarchy '[u]nto a lineal, true-derivèd course.' (3.7.183)

Richard's inductive allegory seeks to affirm him as the true heir of York. By laying claim to his father's lineaments, he extends his metaphysical body to take the crown 'as successively blood from blood | [his] right of birth, [his] empery, [his] own.' (3.7.128-9) All the male members of his immediate family and their offspring are excluded, in one way or the other, to affirm Richard—the final affirmation of his inductive process. His view of himself as king is revealed upon hearing of Richmond's departure to claim his crown:

Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?  
 Is the king dead? The empire unpossessed?  
 What heir of York is there alive but we?  
 And who is England's king, but great York's heir? (4.4.387-390)

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<sup>305</sup> *OED*, 'lineament' n., 2a and 3.

Richard's logic is revealed here: being the undisputed heir of York makes him king. He wants all lines to point to him. Thus he needs to marry his niece '[o]r else [his] kingdom stands on brittle glass.' (4.2.61) This series of questions marks the point in which he affirms himself as the body politic: he is no longer the excluded 'I' that emerged alone in the beginning of the play; he is the royal 'we', 'great York's heir', 'the king', sitting on the throne, wielding 'the sword'. Richard seems to be successful in his 'intellectual dissection', in extending his de-formity to the form of the king. He 'is England's king'.

However, this affirmation is only momentarily in the face of a looming exclusion, negation: it is not just Richmond coming to claim the crown but with the re-emergence of Richard's negative vocabulary, he seems to be inferring a physical lack. If indeed he is affirmed as the body politic then simultaneously he seems missing the body natural. Rather, a body immaterial is implied by the empty chair, the unswayed sword, the unpossessed empery. In his inductive success, Richard has in fact further excluded himself as he destroyed the Yorkist powerbase any and all opposition. In Bacon's terms, the metaphysics of forms are inseparable from the physics of material causes: the knowledge of a true form is proved by the ability to recreate its function. (*JSNO*, 109) In other words, a *purely* intellectual induction would be without substance, only an abstraction. Richard eliminated his substance, the Yorkist supporters. His series of questions with the negative vocabulary confesses to the inability to recreate the function of a true king: peace.

The providential force emerges explicitly on the eve of Bosworth when what Richard calls 'shadows' (5.4.195), 'the souls of all that [he] had murdered' (5.4.183) appear to affirm his impending negation—the 'vengeance on the head of Richard' (5.4.185). Richard's inductive project falters in the face of the negative quality he has appropriated thus far. The providential determinism of his villainy takes over the inductive process: instead leaving Richard as the royal body politic he is negated as the 'diffused infection of man', as Anne calls him (1.2.76 Folio), that is to be purged. Notably, 'diffused' means both

‘disordered’, referring to Richard’s shape, and ‘widespread’, inferring the partial success of Richard’s inductive allegory.<sup>306</sup> If that inductive allegory is Richard’s intrinsic psychological volition to discover his full capabilities—the ‘determination to be a villain’—then this providential induction is the social *telos* of Richard’s villainy as the violent and war-like herald to the peace brought by a true king—instead of the ‘bloody tyrant’ (5.4.225) Richard who ‘is falsely set’ on ‘England’s chair’ (5.4.230). This kind of reading is famously promoted by Tillyard, for whom Richard ‘is the great ulcer of the body politic into which all its impurity is drained and against which all the members of the body politic are united.’<sup>307</sup>

Whereas Richard wanted to exploit induction to make himself a true king, this providential induction reveals him to be a false king and, moreover, an infection, a disease, a symbol for the violence and torment of civil war. For Krieger, ‘he is an incarnation of the spirit of usurpation and ... chaos.’<sup>308</sup> Other critics have also pointed out this kind of historical codification of Richard’s deformity.<sup>309</sup> Marjorie Garber presents this point elegantly: ‘Richard is not only deformed, his deformity is itself a deformation. His twisted and misshapen body encodes the whole strategy of history as a necessary deforming and *unforming*—with the object of *reforming*—the past.’<sup>310</sup> Significantly, the natural sign of Richard’s body re-emerges here in conjunction social re-signification—importantly in the guise of history. What these critics, especially Garber—and Tillyard to some extent—are pointing to is the creation—even re-creation—of a natural history on stage that determines Richard as a monstrous villain. For Bacon, natural history is primary source for knowledge of particular things as well as the basis for natural philosophy and ‘the stuff and subject

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<sup>306</sup> *OED*, ‘diffused’ adj. 1 and 2.

<sup>307</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays* (London: Penguin, 1944), p. 215. Similar sentiments about the necessity of purging Richard are made by Murray Krieger, ‘The Dark Generations of “Richard III”’, *Criticism*, 1 (1959), 32-48 (p. 32) and Roy E. Aycock, ‘Dual Progression in “Richard III”’, *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 38 (1973), 70-8 (p. 78).

<sup>308</sup> Krieger, p. 45.

<sup>309</sup> Charnes, p. 30; Torrey, pp. 123-4; Mark Thornton Burnett, *Constructing ‘Monsters’ in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 69.

<sup>310</sup> Garber, *Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers*, p. 36, original emphasis.

matter of true induction.’ (*SEH* IV, 254)<sup>311</sup> On stage, the ultimate proof of Richard’s villainy and Richmond’s legitimacy is the recreation of the undisputed king’s function: ending the civil war.

As Richard is undone by his inductive actions, so too is Iago by his inventions: Emilia refuses to be silent and reveals Iago. Both fall victim to the reason they employ. Grady challenges the notion that sets enlightenment reason against emotional irrationality (a reformulation of Cartesian the mind-body dichotomy) with the instrumental form of rationality being the locus of that challenge: ‘The critique of instrumental reason ... radically alters the Romantic-Modernist antimony of irrational art against overly rationalized society by showing that the prevailing mode of rationality—instrumental reason—in fact produces deeply irrational social results, only correctable by renewed critical rationality.’<sup>312</sup> Indeed, following Grady, I argue that not just Iago but Richard too are ‘agent[s] of an acute, excessive rationalism’, though in differing ways.<sup>313</sup> However, Grady’s use of ‘excessive rationalism’ here might lead readers to think he lapses into the traditional antinomy he criticizes: but there is an implicit distinction of rationality from reason, the former being linked to the instrumental form, especially due to its derivation from the Latin *ratio* and link to calculation. Hence, rationalism in my use is a sub-section of reason in its fuller, not-yet-actualised form also encompassing bodily emotions and feelings instead of being opposed to it. As Adorno and Horkheimer would have it, the enlightenment reason is characterised not by the overt use of reason but a deep lack of its fullness.

The historical providence that hails the coming Tudor monarchy is Richard’s deforming. He looks to be the puppet of Tudor myth writers. However, Richard’s full embodiment of this role, particularly the Vice-like qualities, seem to implicitly challenge Richard’s determination as a mere villain: ‘I am a villain. Yet I lie: I am not.’ (5.5.145) Yet it is

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<sup>311</sup> For a helpful exposition of Bacon’s natural history see Peter R. Anstey, ‘Locke, Bacon and Natural History’, *Early Science and Medicine*, 7 (2002), 65-92 (pp. 70-3).

<sup>312</sup> Grady, ‘Iago and the Dialectic of Enlightenment’, p. 539.

<sup>313</sup> Grady, ‘Iago and the Dialectic of Enlightenment’, p. 539.

Iago's negativity that provides the bigger challenge. 'I am not what I am' seems to challenge the dramatic structure itself. Considered from the theatre of the mind, Richard and Iago's negativity challenge the identity of cognitive representations with that which they represent. They are (dis)sembled. But as their appearance is not their essence, importantly, there is something that appears—we just do not positively what it is.



## Chapter 2:

### The Idols of Kindness in *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens*

Both Hamlet's interjection of 'A little more than kin and less than kind' (1.2.65) and Timon's deploration of 'nature being sick of man's unkindness' (4.3.177) signify an alienation from the societies they respectively inhabit. Hamlet is sceptical about his changed familial relationship with Claudius; Timon is expressing his disappointment and anger of the injustice of being cast out from Athens, the place where he was once celebrated and much loved. Behind these thoughts is a perception of change in the circumstances of their social relationships. Peculiarly, Hamlet and Timon express their judgment on the change in terms of 'kind'ness: an alienating and disintegrating society is portrayed as not being 'kind'. The death of the ruling family in *Hamlet*, according to Horatio, is a story '[o]f carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts'; Timon shifting from philanthropy to dying alone as an outcast, who 'All living men did hate.' (5.5.76) Like the societies they perceive, both Hamlet (2.2.5) and Timon (5.5.19) are 'transformed'.

I will explore this failure of 'kind'ness through Francis Bacon's 'Idols of the Marketplace'. They are

formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other ... on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate; and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. (*SEH IV*, 54-5)

Bacon's 'obstruction to understanding' is belied by three intertwined things: society, trade, and language. The 'association' of people is enabled by language and by trade—yet there is no language nor trade without 'association'. For Bacon, the 'obstruction' derives from the social agreement by which words are either badly defined or that the words designate something that does not exist—'ill and unfit choice of words'. Words should identify their worldly referent. Bacon's choice of referring to this as an illusion that pertains to the

‘market-place’ is very interesting, not simply because it designates the gathering point of society. The choice implies an analogy between trade and language: the relationship between words and their referents is analogous to the trade ‘in kind’ where one thing is readily exchangeable with the other—a ‘kind’ness of exchange. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon writes that ‘Words are but the current tokens or marks of Popular Notions of things’ (*SEH III*, 388). This is the ‘imposition of vulgar apprehension’ mentioned above. Thus, there is an inherent logic of equivalency in Bacon’s Idols of the Marketplace: an identity is abstracted between two things (or words) that are deemed to be of a ‘kind’, placed in the same category. Furthermore, this holds an implied extension to the society they form. Bacon says, ‘men believe that their reason governs words; but it is also true that words react on the understanding’ (*SEH IV*, 61). If ‘words’ can have an effect on the mind, would not the logic that they follow also ‘react on the understanding’? Perhaps then specific societies interact in accordance with their idiosyncratic ‘kind’ of marketplace.

I propose three aspects/functions to ‘kind’ness: identification, exchange, and affective. They are derived from Bacon’s grammatical differentiation of words holding ‘degrees of distortion and error’.

One of the least faulty kinds is that of names of substances, especially of lowest species and well-deduced (for the notion of *chalk* and of *mud* is good, of *earth* bad); a more faulty kind is that of actions, as *to generate*, *to corrupt*, *to alter*; the most faulty is that of qualities (except such as are the immediate objects of the sense) as *heavy*, *light*, *rare*, *dense*, and the like. (*SEH IV*, 62)

An identifying ‘kind’ness relates to Bacon’s nouns in the naming of things. It categorises particulars into a group of similar by some shared property, or are alike in some way. The exchange ‘kind’ness functions as a verb denoting a ‘trade in kind’, an equivalency between things. As having this verb-like quality to it, the exchange ‘kind’ness is the locus of action (whether active or passive) and interaction between the identified things. It is the mechanism that is transformative, the emphatic ‘change’ in and from ‘exchange’—Bacon’s

examples of 'generate', 'corrupt', and 'alter' are very fitting in this context. This is at the heart of Bacon's allegory of the marketplace: it is enabling and possibly obstructing. Affective 'kind'ness, in turn, possesses adjectival qualities, particularly relating to the affectionate, amicable, humane, gentle sense of 'kind'. In modifying both nouns and verbs, this aspect bestows the positive emotional effect or affect on either the identifying or exchange 'kind'ness—in a sense it evaluates them. These aspects are intimately linked together and occur in some combination as different forms of 'kind'ness.

Besides the simple political identification of the two associated groups of Danes and Athenians, they respectively revolve around the two 'kind'nesses' of kinship and friendship. Although these identifiers of association are on a discursive level they also work, in accordance with the Idols of the Marketplace, as economic forms. In Denmark, the feudal relations become convoluted with the basic economic unit of the family as well as its blood and kinship relations; in Athens reciprocal gifting based on friendship is undermined by commercial contracts. However, in the light of these economic relations, how are we to understand the relationship between the socially unifying type of 'kind'ness and the shift to 'unkindness'? What facilitates the alienation of Hamlet and Timon from their societies?

The body economic is where the different parts of *idola fori* interact, it is the embodiment of the idols of the marketplace. From this point of view, the 'kind'ness I have been discussing appears itself to be an Idol of the Marketplace, an obstruction to understanding. My task in this chapter is to unobstruct and demonstrate how these *idols of kindness* mediate the alienation of Hamlet and Timon and, eventually, lead them to their respective deaths. The point of contention resides in exchange 'kind'ness, the pivotal mode of thought in Bacon's marketplace, which finds its expression in the plays through the language and ideas of trade. Since exchange 'kind'ness is irreducibly intertwined with the other aspects of 'kind'ness, its expression needs to be analysed not in simplified isolation but in relation to the society and individuals that are identified and affected by it—the

expression does not consist of verbs alone but also of nouns and adjectives. In other words, the object of study is the logic of exchange in the forms of 'kind'ness, kinship and friendship. In order to study this mediation between society and its particulars, I will use the body allegory; however, instead of a body politic, I will posit a body economic.<sup>314</sup> Ernst H. Kantorowics, who wrote the seminal study *The King's Two Bodies*, considers the bodies as linked to theological and mystical cum legal aspects surrounding the king,<sup>315</sup> whereas my interest is more in how individuals come together as a society, a social body that is nourished by its marketplace.

Bacon is no stranger to the body allegory, especially in relation to the king's bodies politic and natural, to which he referred to particularly when advocating for the union of England and Scotland under the joint kingship of James I. In the *Case of the Post-Nati of Scotland*, where he argues for naturalization of Scots born under the Jacobean joint rule, Bacon marks the interaction of the two bodies. For Bacon, 'the natural body of the king hath an operation and influence into his body politic, as well as his body politic hath upon his body natural' (*SEH VII*, 665). Bacon calls this interaction a 'mutual and reciprocal intercourse' (*SEH VII*, 668). This links back to Bacon's allegory of the marketplace: individuals interact with the larger whole through exchange, verbal and economic.

What I am interested in is how kindness is changed in the plays with the mediation of mercantile logic. Bacon's framework serves as an analytic tool to address the shift in kindness from a socially cohesive force to the sign of social dissolution. The different types of kindness correspond the different functions of Bacon's framework.

To give structure for the analysis of the workings of 'kind'ness in the body economic, I will employ Bacon's division of natural philosophy. Approaching the plays

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<sup>314</sup> For a related study that does not revolve around the body allegory but rather focuses on political economy and its effect and affect on the body in early Victorian novels, see Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>315</sup> Ernst H. Kantorowics, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

through both the body analogy and natural philosophy is to emphasise the natural aspect of 'kind'ness in the mind. Bacon suggests a general rule to the division of knowledge: 'that all divisions of knowledge be accepted and used rather for lines to mark or distinguish, than sections to divide and separate them' (*SEH IV*, 373). Despite the mercantile, linguistic, logical, and social features of the broad idea of 'kind'ness Bacon does not separate the natural from the political: 'For there is a great affinity and consent between the rules of nature, and the true rules of policy: the one being nothing else but an order in the government of the world, and the other an order in the government of an estate.'<sup>316</sup> Bacon says that there exists 'a congruity between the principles of Nature and Policy.' (*SEH X*, 91)

For Bacon 'the doctrine of Natural Philosophy [is] divided into the Inquisition of Causes, and the Production of Effects; Speculative and Operative. The one searching into the bowels of nature, the other shaping nature as on an anvil.' (*SEH IV*, 343) The first section analyses the body economic through Bacon's speculative doctrine. First, I will offer an anatomy of the body economic before delving into the Metaphysics and Physics of the economic bodies of Denmark and Athens. The second section is devoted to the abstractive qualities of particularly exchange 'kind'ness as emerging from debates on exchange rates in the 1620's and the mathematical tools that accompanied commerce. The third section concentrates on revenge as a form of exchange within the body economic and discusses magic the ethical implications of the plays in relation to Bacon's Idols of the Marketplace.

I argue that Shakespeare is representing and criticising an early modern form of reification in *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens*. It is manifest in the abstractive workings of exchange 'kind'ness and mediates, from the view of Hamlet and Timon, the shift to an 'unkind', hostile society. Both become alienated: Hamlet figuratively, and Timon literally. Shakespeare presents the disintegration of societies based on 'kindness' in the broadest sense due to a narrowing of the idea to a mere exchange 'kindness'. Social kindness

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<sup>316</sup> Bacon, *Works X*, p. 90.

becomes increasingly mediated by an abstractive mercantile exchange logic—the specific type of trade ‘kind’ness—leading to ethical relationships disintegrating to modes of trade.

The philosophy of Bacon, again, works as a reflective surface with which to elucidate Shakespeare’s philosophical ideas. The phenomenon that Shakespeare and Bacon touch upon in this chapter is an emergent form of exchange logic that makes disparate things equivalent. In their work on Bacon, Adorno and Horkheimer describe this logic as making ‘dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities.’<sup>317</sup>

Elsewhere, Adorno describes the experience, which I relate to the plight of Hamlet and Timon. He says: ‘The doctrine of the transcendental subject faithfully discloses the precedence of the abstract, rational relations that are abstracted from individuals and their conditions and for which exchange is the model. If the standard structure of society is the exchange form, its rationality constitutes people: what they are for themselves, what they think they are, is secondary.’<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>318</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, ‘On Subject-Object’, in *Critical Models*, trans. by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 248.

## Identifying 'kind'ness or metaphysics and physics of the body economic

A community linked by language and trade is the central premise behind Bacon's Idols of the Marketplace. This community gives the individuals that make up its body a shared identity underpinned by economic transactions. This section looks at how this body economic should work in Shakespeare's Denmark and Athens or, in Bacon's terms, the theoretical or speculative side of natural philosophy.

Bacon divides this theoretical doctrine into 'Physic' and 'Metaphysic'<sup>319</sup>: 'Physic handles that which is most inherent in matter and therefore transitory, and Metaphysic that which is more abstracted and fixed. And again, that Physic supposes in nature only a being and moving and natural necessity; whereas Metaphysic supposes also a mind and idea.' (*SEH IV*, 346) Accordingly, my interest in the Physic of the body economic is to do with individuals and their interactions. Before that, I will explore a theory of the body economic as an allegory for the communities and how that is portrayed in the plays.

With this, Bacon enquires after causes: 'Physic inquires and handles the Material and Efficient causes, Metaphysic the Formal and Final.' (*SEH IV*, 346) In Bacon's cave analogy this theoretical doctrine delves 'into the bowels of nature' (*SEH IV*, 343). As I wrote in chapter 1, his central interest is in the formal cause, which pivotal here as the body economic, like a tree, is a natural object. However, as it consists of humans it cannot be wholly separated from a crafted object, the formal cause's triple duty, its intertwinement with the other causes, cannot be understated. Economic systems that underpin societies' interactions are always crafted by human beings to serve a purpose. Edward Misselden, 17<sup>th</sup> century mercantilist writer, provides an example: 'The *Eye* is a *Naturall* thing, the

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<sup>319</sup> Bacon has two distinct uses for 'Metaphysic': 'the one I have made a parent or common ancestor to all knowledge; the other, a branch or potion of Natural Philosophy.' (*SEH IV*, 345-6) I am now discussing the latter, although I consider there to be some overlap with the former, especially one of what Bacon terms 'Transcendentals' or 'the Relative and Adventitious Conditions of Essences', namely things being 'Like, Unlike' (*SEH IV*, 346).

*Matter* whereof is an *Oculary* substance: the *Forme* is Seeing.<sup>320</sup> Nevertheless, as our interest in this chapter is on the societal influence over the individual and how certain individuals affect society more than others, the exchange form—the ‘kind’ness as identity—remains the focus in this section.

Besides the instrumental importance of formal causes, Bacon points out two important aspects pertaining to Form. Firstly, the Form is what qualitatively differentiates one thing from another, what Bacon calls ‘Essential Forms or true differences’, and, secondly, this qualitative difference emanates in ‘action and use’. (*SEH IV*, 360) The metaphysical inquiry into formal causes not only differentiates one body economic from another but also does it in terms of its functionality. Therefore, the Danish body economic differs from the Athenian in terms of their ‘kind’ness. The central form of ‘kind’ness in Denmark is kinship and in Athens friendship. Both societies, at least from the protagonists’ perspectives, were ‘kind’ to begin with: the change from ‘kind’ to ‘unkind’ is made visible with Timon, whereas Hamlet’s alienation is already well underway in the beginning of the play. When old Hamlet was alive, presumably, Hamlet had no issue with his father also being the king: it was a happy union of family and feudal over-lordship. Underneath, kinship and friendship both share an economic function.

Bacon never wrote a sustained study explicitly on commerce.<sup>321</sup> The closest thing is a letter of advice written in 1616 to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham when he became James I’s favourite. Bacon underlines the importance of trade: domestic trade ‘enableth the subjects of the kingdom to live, and lays the foundation for a foreign trade by way of traffic with others, which enableth them to live peaceably and plentifully.’ (*SEH XIII*, 47) The advice, for the domestic part, pertains to agricultural issues such as tillage, husbandry, planting trees, hop-yards, and hemp; but Bacon, vis-à-vis foreign trade, discusses

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<sup>320</sup> Edward Misselden, *The Circle of Commerce or The Ballance of Trade, in defence of free Trade* (London, 1623), p. 12.

<sup>321</sup> *SEH V*, 78 does mention economics being a part of ‘the Art of Empire or Civil Government’, but does not discuss it further.



particularly the balance of trade. (*SEH XIII*, 22-4, 47-9) It is important to note that domestic and foreign trade are intrinsically linked, one being the other's 'foundation', although 'exchange' is in this period usually linked to foreign trade. Bacon is prescient as the balance of trade will be a central issue in the economic depression of the early 1620's—during which Bacon was charged of bribery and corruption, consequently losing his position as Lord Chancellor and being jailed for a while.

The depression stemmed from various sources: the textile industry, Thirty Years War, and exchange mechanisms.<sup>322</sup> One of the main problems was in the balance of trade, namely that the 'balance' was not in favour of England: the imports exceeded the exports, which meant that the precious metals of gold and silver, whether in coin form or not, were leaving the country.<sup>323</sup> In his 'Advice to Villiers', Bacon advocated for a balance that favoured England: 'care being taken, that the exportation exceed in value of importation: for then the balance of trade must of necessity be in coin or bullion.' (*SEH XIII*, 49) Bacon's emphasis on bullion suggests the demand of substantiality in trade over abstractness—matter over ideas.

In the earlier version of this advice letter, Bacon qualifies what kind of things should be imported: 'let not the merchant return toys and vanities ... but solid merchandize, first for necessity, next for pleasure, but not for luxury.' (*SEH XIII*, 22-3) This demand for substance and not 'vanities' and 'luxury' is akin to Bacon's caveat of the 'obstructive' qualities of the Idols of the Marketplace. Like the 'luxurious vanities', 'the juggleries and charms of words will in many ways seduce and forcibly disturb the judgment' and 'lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies.' (*SEH IV*, 434,

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<sup>322</sup> J. D. Gould, 'Trade Depression in the Early 1620's', *The Economic History Review*, 7 (1954), 81-90, surveys the various suggested causes for the depression. Also see Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 35-7.

<sup>323</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, trans. by Siân Reynolds (London: Book Club Associates, 1983), pp. 204-8; Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, pp. 38-44; B. E. Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England 1600-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 89-96.

55) The non-substantial, abstract exchange is linked to a corruptive and vice-like force. Significantly, when Bacon wrote about ‘the false appearances that are imposed upon us by words’ in *The Advancement of Learning*, published in 1605, he did not use the allegory of the marketplace. Neither did he qualify the effects with such depraved vocabulary; he merely spoke of the obstructive qualities, that they ‘mightily entangle and pervert judgment’. (*SEH III*, 396)<sup>324</sup> Suggestively, the marketplace allegory emerges in the *Novum Organum*, published 1620, and in *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, published in 1623—during the aforementioned depression. Bacon is ambivalent about commerce: it is a necessary part of the state but within lies the possible seeds of corruption.

Mirroring Bacon’s sentiments about the vice-like quality, Apemantus, in speaking to Athenian merchants, calls ‘Traffic [their] god’ (1.1.242). He is suggesting an idolatrous streak to commerce, where the means by which the community sustains itself takes the place of the arbiter of fate. Hamlet, castigating his mother, expresses similar sentiments about the corrupting influence of excess: ‘For in the fatness of these pury times | Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg’ (3.4.144-5). This ‘fatness’ reflects Bacon’s luxurious vanities linking to the money-centred ‘pury times’. Like the idolatry Apemantus talks of, ‘vice’ has gained a position of power in relation to system of belief (‘Traffic’s thy god’) and the shared values (‘virtue’) of the community. The equivalent ‘kind’ness of commerce, dealt in Section 2, holds socially obstructive and transformative power—like the Idols of the Marketplace—over understanding.

Gerard Malynes<sup>325</sup> is mainly known for his debate with Edward Misselden and Thomas Mun over the causes of the 1620’s depression. In this debate Malynes held a traditional view on commerce, where he emphasised that exchange (the focal point of their

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<sup>324</sup> Despite the decadent connotations of ‘pervert’, I maintain that in this context the meaning is more in the lines of ‘to obstruct’. Cf. *OED* ‘pervert’ v. 1a.

<sup>325</sup> A Dutch-born merchant, who settled in London in 1585 and was appointed in 1609 as a commissioner on mint affairs. Perry Gauci, ‘Malynes, Gerard’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. 2008. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17912>> [Accessed 21 May 2014]

debate) should happen with fixed prices and values; Misselden and Mun expressed more progressive view, insisting that commerce was in continuous flux and exchange rates expressed rather than controlled trade.<sup>326</sup> Eileen Reeves argues that Bacon was a great influence on Malynes, although Bacon has been seen as more fitting company to Malynes' rivals, Misselden and Mun, due to their progressive and empirical ideas.<sup>327</sup> Nevertheless, Malynes offers a useful description of trade in bodily terms. In his most comprehensive and influential work *Lex Mercatoria*, which became essential reading for students of commerce for over a century, he suggests a Galenic allegory of commerce:

[T]he ... three essential parts of Trafficke are properly the *Bodie, Soule, and Spirit of Commerce*, and haue their operation accordingly.

The first as the *Bodie* vpheld the world by commutation and bartring of Commodities, vntill Money was deuised to be coyned.

The second, as the *Soule* in the *Bodie*, did infuse life to trafficke, by the meanes of Equalitie and Equitie, preuenting aduantage between buyers and sellers.

The third, as the *Spirit* and facultie of the *Soule* (being seated euerie where) corroborateth the vitall *Spirit* of trafficke, directing and controlling (by iust proportions) the prices and values of Commodities and Moneys.

True it is, that this *Spirit* and facultie of the *Soule*, namely the *Exchange for Money*, taketh his originall from the *Soule*, which giveth life to the bodie of trafficke[.]<sup>328</sup>

The 'body' consists of 'commodities' and 'money', the things that are traded; the 'soul' is the arbiter of the trade; and 'spirit' as a part of the 'soul' is what gives the formula for equivalent trade, the exchange rate. Reeves elaborates:

The first two elements, commodities and money, were passive; exchange alone was active, as the efficient cause of the sound or poor economic health a nation enjoyed. Malynes tirelessly recommended a return to the old exchange rate or par of 1586, one which he felt embodied the 'inward weight and finenesse' of English money. In his view the current rate and its fluctuations necessarily led to an outflow of bullion, which in turn caused prices to fall at home and forced merchants to undersell their wares abroad.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Appelby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, pp. 38-9, 44-5.

<sup>327</sup> Eileen Reeves, 'As Good as Gold: The Mobile Earth and Early Modern Economics', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 62 (1999), 126-66 (pp. 147-52). She argues that Malynes was influenced by aspects of the *Novum Organon* and the early *Essays*.

<sup>328</sup> Gerard Malynes, *Consuetudo, Vel Lex Mercatoria or The Ancient Law-Merchant* (London, 1622), p. 59.

<sup>329</sup> Reeves, 'As Good as Gold', p. 141.

The designation of ‘body’ and ‘soul’ as passive is indeed problematic as it raises the question if this entity is even alive—a jibe that Misselden made in his *Circle of Commerce*.<sup>330</sup> For an animate body, its form would be in the way it lives and acts, verging on the soul. For Bacon, form is to matter what the soul is to the body, marking that the ‘mind is the form of forms’. (*SEH IV*, 407)

The abstraction of exchange entails always a concrete element of some kind to it, as is Marx’s exchange value inseparable from at least a sense of use value, in that a physical action takes place whether it is moving, taking, giving, or saying.<sup>331</sup> This is why exchange ‘kind’ness is derived from the verbs in Bacon’s *Idols of the Marketplace*. Furthermore, there is no exchange in the body economic without some form of human agency. Motion is an essential quality of the body economic that vital spirit provides. In *The Post-Nati*, Bacon demonstrates the motion endemic to spirit with a political body allegory of the interaction of law and sovereignty:

Law no doubt is the great organ by which the sovereign power doth move, and may be truly compared to the sinews in a natural body, as sovereignty may be compared to the spirits: for if the sinews be without the spirits, they are dead and without motion; if the spirits move in weak sinews, it causeth trembling: so the laws, without the king’s power, are dead; the king’s power, except the laws be corroborated, will never move constantly, but be full of staggering and trepidation. (*SEH VII*, 646)

The body does not move without vital spirit. Like the laws with no society, money is pointless without exchange.

The interaction between the body and its parts as well as the whole they make up is what gives them a shared identity. Lives are linked to each other, bonded. The body economic of Denmark is described by Rosencrantz:

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<sup>330</sup> Edward Misselden, *The Circle of Commerce or The Ballance of Trade, in defence of free Trade* (London, 1623), p. 20: ‘the Body without the Soule or life is dead: but so was not Commerce in former times without money’. Misselden’s jibe is derived from the consideration money as the measure of trade, which if it were missing Malynes’ analogy would imply death.

<sup>331</sup>David Hawkes, *Shakespeare and Economic Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), on the difference between economics and chrematistics.

The single and peculiar life is bound,  
 With all the strength and armour of the mind,  
 To keep itself from noyance; but much more  
 That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests  
 The lives of many. The cease of majesty  
 Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw  
 What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel,  
 Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,  
 To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
 Are mortised and adjoined, which when it falls  
 Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
 Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone  
 Did the king sigh, but with a general groan. (3.2.11-23)

This congregation into a body is given an economic twist by the description of the bond, particularly being 'mortised'. While denoting the same as the attendant 'adjoined', 'mortised' is also a synonym, in its verb form, for 'amortise' denoting the 'convey[ance] of property to a corporation'.<sup>332</sup>

In *Timon* the senators are described as having 'a joint and corporate voice' (2.2.200). Bacon calls the crown a 'corporation' in describing the body politic being embedded in the natural body of the king. (SEH VII, 668) 'Corporation' denotes, of course, people being considered as a united body, in this case, the body economic. Rosencrantz links an individual body to the body of the king. He infers the feudal bonds in which 'the single and peculiar life' is bent on keeping from harm, 'noyance', and therefore is 'mortised and adjoined' to the monarch, who is equally concerned with self-preservation but even more so because 'then thousand lesser things' depend on him.

This image re-occurs in *Timon of Athens*. The Poet describes to the painter:

Sir, I have upon a high and pleasant hill  
 Feigned Fortune to be throned. The base o'th' mount  
 Is ranked with all deserts, all kind of natures  
 That labour on the bosom of this sphere  
 To propagate their states. Amongst them all  
 Whose eyes are on this sovereign lady fixed  
 One do I personate of Lord Timon's frame,

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<sup>332</sup> OED, 'mortise' v.2 1a, v.1, and 'amortise' v. 3, respectively. Bacon (*SEH VI*, 94) uses this term in attributing the rise of the middle classes ('a condition between gentlemen and cottagers or peasants') to a statute of Edward I that wanted to ensure that arable lands were put into use rather than left unused as 'depopulating inclosures and ... pasturage'.

Whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her,  
Whose present grace to present slaves and servants  
Translates his rivals.

...

All those which were his fellows but of late,  
Some better than his value, on the moment  
Follow his strides, his lobbies fill with tendance,  
Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear,  
Make sacred even his stirrup, and through him  
Drink the free air.

...

When Fortune in her shift and change of mood  
Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants,  
Which labored after him to the mountain's top  
Even on their knees and hands, let him fall down,  
Not one accompanying his declining foot. (1.1.64-72, 79-84, 85-9)

Right in the beginning of the play, the Poet figuratively predicts Timon's fate through this social allegory. This image is of the medieval Wheel of Fortune—the wheel evoked by 'sphere'—represented as another mountain where the goddess Fortuna, the embodiment of life's random vicissitudes, sits granting her favour. The Poet's depiction is of a mass of individuals seeking better fortune.

The 'grace' bestowed by Fortune 'translates', transforms Timon's adversaries to followers. But Timon is transformed as well: he becomes the figurative master of the household raised above even those of 'better value'. The 'value' indicates a further transformation into a fetishized commodity, a 'sacred' idol, a conduit for 'sacrificial whispering' to Fortune. For his 'dependants', Timon is a means for 'improvement' and 'preservation', something through which to 'drink the free air', a forerunner to be 'followed in his strides' and 'labored after'. Once Timon is passed his use-value, he is released into a social free-fall.

The similarity of these two mountain images is striking, although they focus on different aspects of the body economic. Rosencrantz emphasizes unity and is more static (no talk of movement in the wheel); whereas the Poet focuses on individual aspirations and the dynamics of fortune. These are different perspectives to the body economic. The

mountain represents a feudal social hierarchy. The wheel—or in the Poet’s case, an implied wheel—signifies vertical movement in that hierarchy. Rosencrantz fixes the king at the centre of the wheel implying an exemption to social vicissitudes, whereas the only static position allowed by the Poet is for Fortune. The wheel resembles the circle of commerce—Edward Misselden’s appropriation of the wheel of fortune image presented in terms of commercial transactions—which symbolizes the uncertainty of mercantile endeavors: ‘the gaine or losse of such Exchanging cannot bee knowne’.<sup>333</sup> In the economic bodies of Denmark and Athens the circle of commerce, as a re-working of wheel of fortune, is a suitable image to denote the inability to know the end result of reciprocal exchanges except in hindsight—we will return to this in the last section. Nevertheless, the difference in dynamics between the images is explained by the scope of the plays: *Hamlet* centers on the interaction within and between two families; while *Timon* depicts the fall of one household in relation to the wider community of Athens. The focus is different: Hamlet’s interiority contrasted with Timon’s bi-polarity.

Bacon’s ‘discourse’ and ‘association’, two of the central words describing the Idols of the Marketplace, are intertwined in the way people identify themselves. In *Hamlet*—a play that significantly begins with the demand for identification, ‘Who’s there?’ (1.1.1)—Marcellus declares himself and Horatio as ‘liegemen to the Dane.’ (1.1.12) On one level, this is an acknowledgement of inhabiting the political body of Denmark, an association of politically ‘kind’ people, like the Athenians in *Timon*. However, on deeper inspection, the declaration of being ‘liegemen to the Dane’ is not merely an acknowledgement of being part of the Danish state; rather it is stating a feudal bond to the King of Denmark, or ‘the Dane’. A moment earlier, Barnardo had identified himself by exclaiming ‘Long live the King!’

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<sup>333</sup> Misselden, *Circle of Commerce*, p. 116. Specifically, Misselden is talking of exchange rates and that the actual profit is only known after a complex procedure of exchange. For an explication on the process of exchange in that period, see Raymond de Roover, ‘What is Dry Exchange? A Contribution to the Study English Mercantilism’, *Journal of Political Economy*, 52 (1944), 250-66; and J. D. Gould, ‘The Trade Crisis of the Early 1620’s and English Economic Thought’, *Journal of Economic History*, 15 (1955), 121-33 (pp. 127-8).

(1.1.3) The Danish 'kind' is marked by an association to each other through the king: in accordance with feudal law, they owe their service to their lord in return for protection or other benefits.<sup>334</sup> Moreover, 'king' is etymologically linked to 'kin'.<sup>335</sup> Furthermore, this political 'kind'ness of the Danes verges on kinship, as intimated by Hamlet in punning on the proximity of 'kin' and 'kind'. This does not pertain merely to Hamlet's privileged position, as Bacon, writing in the *Case of the Post-Nati of Scotland*, notes that one of the roles of the king 'is that of a father, or chief of a family' (*SEH VII*, 644). This kinship is extended allegorically to the whole of Denmark becoming intermixed with the political, feudal 'kind'ness.

Athens, on the other hand, is a city state run by a senate not a king; yet feudal terminology remains, though linked less by kinship than by contracts. The 'bonds' that bring Timon's wealth to an end are documents of debt (2.1.33). However, before this change to the 'unkindness' Timon decries, Athens seemed to revolve around Timon. The Poet explains to the Painter:

You see how all conditions, how all minds,  
As well of glib and slipp'ry creatures as  
Of grave and austere quality, tender down  
Their service to Lord Timon. His large fortune,  
Upon his good and gracious nature hanging,  
Subdues and properties to his love and tendance  
All sorts of hearts[.] (1.1.53-9)

Timon is presented here in a fashion applicable to a king, with 'all conditions', 'all minds' offering 'their service'.<sup>336</sup> However, it is not his status as a feudal overlord that garners him attention but rather, instead of Timon, 'his large fortune' is the subject here, 'subduing' and appropriating 'all sorts of hearts'. The repetition of 'all' suggests a universality to Timon's appeal which, on one hand, means everyone is interested in him (or his 'fortune')

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<sup>334</sup> *OED*, 'liegemen' n. 1.

<sup>335</sup> Views differ as to the exact relation. See *OED*, 'king' n., 'Etymology'.

<sup>336</sup> Two articles have associated *Timon of Athens* with the court of James I: Coppélia Kahn, "'Magic of bounty": Timon of Athens, Jacobean Patronage, and Maternal Power', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987), 34-57; David Bevington and David L. Smith, 'James I and "Timon of Athens"', *Comparative Drama*, 33 (1999), 58-87.



but, on the other hand, implies Timon's interest in them. 'His good and gracious nature' as well as 'his love and tendance' signal Timon's philanthropy being central to the perception of him—and indeed his perception of himself—instead of feudal or contractual 'bonds'. A lord describes Timon as 'outgo[ing] | The heart of kindness' (1.1.277-8). This tells of the emotional 'kind'ness, the affectionate mode of behaving endemic to Timon's philanthropy—the 'love and tendance' and 'good and gracious nature'. The Athens of Timon is tempered by a reciprocal friendship (his interest in others and their interest in him) which adds the emotional 'kind'ness to the Athenian political one. Moreover, Bacon, in his essay 'Of Friendship', considers friendship as another type of identifying or categorizing 'kind'ness: '*a friend is another himself*' (SEH VI, 442). Bacon attributes this thought to the ancients and, indeed, for Aristotle 'the pursuit of a common social life is friendship.'<sup>337</sup> As kinship in Hamlet's Denmark, friendship in Athens becomes a *topos* of contention: Timon's 'kindness' clashes with the 'unkindness' of contractual bonds.

The identity stemming from these bodies economic provides them their form, their law of action or movement. In *Hamlet* all action is focused around the king as is the 'massy wheel'. In Timon's Athens all action is focused on climbing the mountain. However, neither of these metaphysical aspects can be fully separated from emanations in the physic—as, indeed, neither can the formal cause from the material and efficient causes in the organic body economic.

The 'body' consists of the community with individuals being its parts or smaller bodies in the larger whole. 'Body' is a flexible term as it can refer to a large assortment of things, both concrete and abstract, and in that ambiguity it adds expansive power to the allegory. The community can be a city like Athens, the 'public body' (5.2.30) of Timon, or

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<sup>337</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. by Ernest Barker, revised and ed. by R. F. Stalley (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 107 (1280b29). Here Aristotle discusses the constitution of a city, the place for 'various institutions of a common social life—marriage-connections, kin-groups, religious gatherings, and social pastimes generally' (ibid.) Interestingly, marriage and kinship is here subsumed under friendship.

the state of Denmark, a 'whole kingdom ... contracted in one brow of woe' (1.2.3-4).

Between the large communal body and the individual body fits a further intermediate body, namely the household.

In this 'Physic diffused', essentially an anatomy of the body economic, the concrete focuses on the individuals not only in their physical existence but also in the function they perform. Individuals like Claudius and Timon have a name, but some are only called by their function or title, like servants and Senators. However, the functional part verges the abstract instances, like the household as a 'configuration of matter' and propagation and preservation as 'motions' or 'appetites'. The concrete and the abstract are, due to this type of study, interwoven.<sup>338</sup>

What Bacon means with 'Configurations of Matter' is essentially a list of adjectives describing material, like heavy, light, dense, rare and so on (*SEH IV*, 356). The household consists of concrete individuals in the physical dwelling. It can be—to borrow some of the aforementioned adjectives—'Simple' or 'Compound', consisting of one family or having servants to extend it. Another type of 'compound household' consists of extending it to friends or neighbours, as is the case in Timon. Adding to this, another pair of adjectives that I consider to be important here is 'Similar, Dissimilar': a 'simple household' is made of 'similar', a shared familial connection, whereas the 'compound house' has 'dissimilar' servants adjoined. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern highlight this tension: for Hamlet, they could be 'similar' as friends but 'dissimilar' in serving Claudius. This duality is why Claudius and Gertrude use them to find out what is going on with Hamlet: Claudius calls them 'neighbourhood to [Hamlet's] youth and humour' and Gertrude declares them as 'two men there is not living | To whom [Hamlet] more adheres.' (2.2.12, 20-1) Contrariwise, Hamlet

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<sup>338</sup> The study of the whole and the particular, especially in economic terms, necessitates abstraction as noted by Marx in the Preface to the first edition of *Capital*: 'the complete body is easier to study than its cells. Moreover, in the analysis of economic forms neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of assistance. The power of abstraction must replace both.' Marx, *Capital Volume I*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 90.

emphasises ‘dissimilarity’ in suggesting that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern view him as an inanimate instrument that they ‘would play upon’, not a friend, when they come to inform him of Claudius’ displeasure—‘how unworthy a thing you make of me!’, Hamlet shouts (3.2.351-2).

Bacon comments that ‘a little kingdom is but as a great household, and a great household as a little kingdom’ (*SEH XIII*, 53). This household analogy is crucial as it pertains to the etymological root of the modern concept of ‘economy’—Xenophon terms it the ‘science of household management’ (*episteme oikonomias*).<sup>339</sup> According to Aristotle, ‘the primary and simplest elements of the household are the connection of the master and slave, that of the husband and wife, and that of parents and children.’<sup>340</sup> Although, the lords talk of ‘tast[ing] Lord Timon’s bounty’ (1.1.277), it is the servants (instead of Aristotle’s ‘slaves’) that procure, make, and serve the ‘bounty’ on offer. These subservient bodies, which process other smaller parts (commodities, food, gifts, messages, etc.), are the hands and feet of body economic that prepare nourishment. The steward is the one in charge of the household, as Flavius is for Timon; Polonius serves this role on a larger scale in Denmark as Claudius explains:

What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,  
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?  
The head is not more native to the heart,  
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father. (1.2.47-9)

In describing Polonius’ importance, Claudius inverts their relative roles in a rhetorical flair accentuating his significance for the commonweal. Linking the ‘head’ and ‘hand’ to the steward’s role underscores the vital role of the household body.

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<sup>339</sup> Xenophon, ‘Oeconomicus’, in *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*, trans. by E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1923), pp. 361-525 (II.12).

<sup>340</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253b1.

In describing the motivation of individuals, Bacon suggests that 'Self-good' is 'expressed in the familiar or [Roman] household terms of "Promus" and "Conduus,"' that are 'best disclosed in the two several appetites in creatures; the one, to preserve or continue themselves: and the other, to multiply and propagate themselves' (*SEH V*, 10-1). 'Promus', the Latin for 'steward', is the desire to 'multiply and propagate': multiplication as the extension of ourselves to withstand time through 'works and deeds'; propagation as adding 'novelty and variety' (*SEH V*, 11). 'Conduus', on the other hand, is Latin for the one who stores and refers to the desire to 'preserve or continue': preservation is the receiving and enjoying pleasures; continuation is aspiration to better or perfect oneself (*SEH V*, 12-3). The desire to further ascend the mountain, 'to propagate one's state', is the role of the 'promus'; whereas the 'conduus' is unwilling to fall. These tasks are both based on economic principles of housekeeping advocated by Xenophon: the steward is trained 'to be eager for the improvement of [the] estate'; whereas the servant 'gains most by the preservation of the goods' and therefore 'is the one who is bound to take most care of them.'<sup>341</sup> However, unlike in the following chapter, I link the 'self-good' to the workings of the body economic hence it is less about the 'self' than it is about the household or larger community.

'Promus' and 'conduus' are the agents for the greater whole. The propagating 'promus' and the conserving 'conduus' keep all activity centred on the wellbeing of the body economic instead of their own individual desires, or rather, they orientate individual actions to coincide with needs of the whole. Bacon sees this utilitarian or pragmatic thinking as 'the fundamental law of nature' that 'when there is question or case for sustaining of the more general, they forsake their own particularities and proprieties, and attend and conspire to uphold the public.' (*SEH X*, 91) Moreover, Bacon elsewhere echoes Cicero in reminding that 'The welfare of the people is the highest law.'<sup>342</sup> (*OFB XV*, 169)

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<sup>341</sup> Xenophon, 'Oeconomicus', IX.12, 16-7.

<sup>342</sup> 'Salus populi Suprema Lex'. Bacon recalls this as the conclusion to the Roman Twelve Tables, as Kiernan notes (*OFB XV*, 310).

The 'promus' function is more active and autonomous, as Polonius and Flavius can take the initiative in looking after their households, whereas the 'condus' is more passive in that they are merely agents of a greater will. Horatio keeps to the 'condus' role throughout *Hamlet*: a recorder of Hamlet's actions, whose most significant part is to '[r]eport [Hamlet] and [his] cause aright | To the unsatisfied.' (5.2.291-2) In actuality, the 'condus' action is prevalent in both plays as Claudius and the Senators act mainly to preserve their respective states. In contrast, Hamlet, Fortinbras, and Alcibiades act in accordance to the 'promus' motion wanting to further their own agenda.

Friendship as a communal principle gravitates towards the concept of love. Here it is not the modern commonplace of erotic love but rather the benevolence between fellow human beings, 'an act of kindness'.<sup>343</sup> 'What good love may I perform for you?' (*King John*, 4.1.49), is one of the phrases Arthur employs to remind Hubert, who is to burn out his eyes, of his emotional kindness. 'Love' is the keyword for human communality. Cicero makes etymological point of this: 'For it is love (*amor*), from which the word 'friendship' (*amicitia*) is derived that leads to the establishing of goodwill.'<sup>344</sup> Alike to this sense of 'love' is the 'charity' that even without its Christian connotations denote love, kindness, and natural affection; but it is those Christian connotations—God's love of man, man's love of God and their neighbour, and particularly the Christian love of fellow humans—that have an equally strong influence.<sup>345</sup> Indeed, for Jeremy Taylor, the religious writer and clergyman of the mid-seventeenth century, 'Christian Charity is friendship to all the world'.<sup>346</sup> 'Love' and 'charity' in this sense of a social 'kindness' is central element of Timon's generosity and friendship. His subdued manner of gifting jewels echoes St. Paul's description: 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

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<sup>343</sup> OED 'love' n.1 1c.

<sup>344</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Old Age, On Friendship, On Divination*, transl. by William Armistead Falconer (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1923), viii, 26.

<sup>345</sup> OED 'charity' n. 2a; 1abc.

<sup>346</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *A Discourse of the Nature, Offices, and Measures of Friendship, With Rules of conducting it* (London, 1657), p. 6.

| Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked'.<sup>347</sup>

Moreover, in presenting a gift to Alcibiades, Timon declares: 'It comes in charity to thee' (1.2.223).

As Coppélia Kahn points out, Timon is 'Shakespeare's most solitary hero [and] has no family and holds no office; he is equally estranged from women and from politics.'<sup>348</sup> Timon's solitude forces him seek company in friends. Bacon begins his essay 'Of Friendship' with the notion that human beings are essentially social: 'For it is most true that a natural and secret hatred and aversion towards society in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast' (*SEH VI*, 437). Jeremy Taylor saw friendship based in nature for 'as by nature we are made sociable to all, so we are friendly'.<sup>349</sup> We are by nature disposed to be friendly in seeking society.

However, friendship is more than mere co-habitation. 'But of all the bonds of fellowship,' Cicero declares:

there is none more noble, none more powerful than when good men of congenial character are joined in intimate friendship ... Nothing, moreover, is more conducive to love and intimacy than compatibility of character in good men; for when two people have the same ideals and the same tastes, it is a natural consequence that each loves the other as himself[.]<sup>350</sup>

Cicero underlines 'intimacy' as a central characteristic of friendship. Moreover, he is suggesting a near identity, 'kind'ness, between friends. As I mentioned earlier, Bacon considers this idea in his essay on friendship: 'it will appear that it was a sparing speech of the ancients, to say, *that a friend is another himself*; for that a friend is far more than himself.' (*SEH VI*, 442) For Bacon, the simple identity between friends is not sufficient for true friendship. According to him, there are three 'fruits' to friendship: first, 'peace in

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<sup>347</sup> 1 Corinthians 13.4-5. *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). All biblical references are to this unless otherwise specified.

<sup>348</sup> Coppélia Kahn, "'Magic of bounty': Timon of Athens, Jacobean Patronage, and Maternal Power', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987), pp. 34-57 (p. 35).

<sup>349</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *A Discourse*, p. 15. Moreover, 'Nature and the Religion are the bands of friendships' (p.10).

<sup>350</sup> Cicero, *On Duties*, I.xvii, 55-6.

affections'; second, 'support of the judgment'; and third, 'aid and bearing a part in all actions' (*SEH VI*, 442).

The first, affective 'fruit', coincides with Cicero's intimacy. Timon gives the First Lord 'a bay courser' because he 'liked it', who then apologises for it. Timon responds:

You may take my word, my lord, I know no man  
Can justly praise but what he does affect.  
I weigh my friends' affection with mine own. (1.2.214-6)

The 'bay courser' is the object of the First Lord's 'affection' in 'justly praising' it—

simultaneously this 'praise' is directed towards Timon spurring him to make the gift.

Timon's 'weighing' infuses three overlapping images: first, the scales of justice and Timon

being a judge of character; second, the merchant's scales, where Timon is weighing the

affective worth of the bay courser; and third, through the merchant, a physician to the

body economic. The last one requires further explanation: Bacon's first 'fruit' 'is the ease

and discharge of the fulness and swellings of the heart, which passions of all kinds do cause

and induce.' Bacon continues in medical terms:

We know diseases of stoppings and suffocations are the most dangerous in the body; and it is not much otherwise in the mind; you may take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain; but no receipt openeth the heart, but a true friend; to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession. (*SEH VI*, 437-8)

Timon is wanting to balance the passions of the First Lord with his gift. In doing so, he is

also 'imparting' his own joy in a frenzy of gifting.

Timon wishes for the 'intimacy' that 'good men' share, as Cicero marked earlier. In

wanting to be rid of 'ceremony' Timon wants to create an atmosphere of intimacy as he

salutes his standing guests:

Ceremony was but devised at first  
To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcomes,  
Recanting goodness, sorry ere 'tis shown;  
But where there is true friendship, there needs none.  
Pray sit. More welcome are ye to my fortunes  
Than my fortunes to me. (1.2.14-7)

Timon wants to drop all pretention from what he perceives as ‘true friendship’ in a Ciceronian vein. ‘True friendship’ is for Cicero ‘of that pure and faultless kind, such as was that of the few whose friendships are known to fame. For friendship adds a brighter radiance to prosperity and lessens the burden of adversity by dividing and sharing it.’<sup>351</sup> Bacon expresses the same idea: ‘for there is no man that imparteth his joys to a friend, but he joyeth the more; and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less.’ (*SEH VI*, 440) Cicero continues: ‘he who looks upon a true friend, looks, as it were, upon a sort of image of himself.’<sup>352</sup> In dispensing with ‘the hollow welcomes’ Timon brings his friends to the level of intimacy in which he shares all that he has. This type of ‘kindness’ is as intimate as one can get: Timon’s friends are like to himself. It is echoed in the second commandment Jesus gives to the Pharisees: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’<sup>353</sup>

This affective ‘fruit’ of Timon is closely linked to the third ‘fruit’ of actions. Bacon describes it: ‘A man hath a body, and that body is confined to a place; but where friendship is, all offices of life are as it were granted to him and his deputy. For he may exercise them by his friend.’ (*SEH VI*, 442) This is echoed by Timon:

We are born to do benefits; and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends? O, what a precious comfort ‘tis to have so many like brothers commanding one another’s fortunes! O joy’s e’en made away ere’t can be born: mine eyes cannot hold out water, methinks. (1.2.98-103)

Sharing his feelings comes hand in hand with sharing his wealth. Timon is ecstatic, overcome with emotion over his perceived closeness to his friends—shifting from ‘joy’ to tearful gratitude. He intermixes familial terms in describing a shared economy: his friends are not merely ‘brothers’ but ‘like brothers’, emphasizing the identity between them. It also describes ‘the network of credit and debt’ that keeps Athens together.

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<sup>351</sup> Cicero, *On Friendship*, vi, 22.

<sup>352</sup> Cicero, *On Friendship*, vii, 23.

<sup>353</sup> St. Matthew, 22.39.



However, Timon seems to be missing Bacon's second 'fruit'—which makes the difference to the Ciceronian friendship. Or rather, he does not have the whole 'fruit'. Part of it is the expression of thought to someone but not in the affective way of the first 'fruit' but pertaining to understanding. Bacon explains:

whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words: finally, he waxeth wiser than himself; and that more by an hour's discourse than by a days meditation. (*SEH VI, 440*)

Timon does speak a lot to friends affectively and to an extent it could be described like this. Yet, even this kind of discourse is part of that smooth, unabrasive self-identity. So far, Timon's friendship has been mainly his expression projected on passive friends, which is only part of a true friendship. In depicting this one half of the second 'fruit' Bacon offers a description that resembles Timon's interaction with his friends: 'In a word, man were better relate himself to a statua or picture, than to suffer his thoughts to pass in smother.' (*SEH VI, 440-1*) Timon's friends are like 'a statua or picture' towards whom he expresses his thoughts.

The missing part of this 'fruit' is the 'faithful counsel from a friend'; or more precisely, in the form of Bacon's medical advice: 'the best preservative to keep the mind in health is the faithful admonition of a friend.' (*SEH VI, 441*) Apemantus is seemingly the only one—other than Flavius—that tries to treat his friend's ailment. Although Timon is warned of both his waning fortune and his false friends, he does not listen. Apemantus exclaims in frustration: 'O, that men's ears should be | To counsel deaf, but not to flattery!' (1.2.250-1) 'The calling of a man's self to a strict account', Bacon comments, 'is a medicine, sometime, too piercing and corrosive.' (*SEH VI, 441*) Apemantus' style is too abrasive. In issues concerning his company, Timon listens to his own inner judge: 'I have told more of you to

myself than you can with modesty speak in your own behalf; and thus far I confirm you.'

(1.2.89-91) However, Bacon points out that this kind of inner counsel is treacherous:

So as there is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer. For there is no such flatterer as is a man's self; and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self, as the liberty of a friend. (*SEH VI*, 441)

A true friend, according to Bacon, consists not simply in the similarity, shared qualities of friends; an essential part of a friend is that they are more than an identical person, more in adding something new. Hamlet, when talking to Gertrude, describes the sentiment needed in Bacon's view: 'I must be cruel only to be kind.' (3.4.162)

For Bacon and Shakespeare, the family and the household retain a central role amongst feudal bonds notably through its allegorical efficacy. The king of Denmark, whether old Hamlet or Claudius, plays a triple role: monarch, husband, father. In the body economic, the first gives figurative potency to the latter two. For Bacon, one of 'the platforms and patterns which are found in the nature of monarchies' is

that of a father, or chief of a family; who governing over his wife by prerogative of sex, over his children by prerogative of age, and because he is *the author unto them of being*, and over his servants by prerogative of virtue and providence ... is the very model of a king. (*SEH VII*, 644, my emphasis)

This patriarchal quality is that of the leader of a household. In Baconian terms, feudal kingship appropriates the form of the 'father'. When Claudius assumes his brother's place in 1.2, he touches on all of his patriarchal subordinates. First, Gertrude, 'our sometime sister, now our queen' is 'taken to wife.' (1.2.8, 14) Then, Claudius plays the benevolent master in exalting Polonius—which we touched upon earlier—and allowing Laertes to depart (1.2.42-50, 63). Finally, comes Hamlet, who is thrice approached. Initially, Claudius calls him 'my cousin Hamlet, and my son' (1.2.64) only to be cut off by Hamlet. 'Cousin' has three interlacing denotations: first, a relative more distant than brother or a sister, often used in referring to a nephew; second, in legal language referring to someone who is next

of kin; and third, in a figurative sense, sharing a natural affinity with someone.<sup>354</sup> The first denotation being juxtaposed with 'son' is likely the offensive sense to Hamlet. In wanting to make himself recognized as that patriarchal figure, Claudius uses the full ambiguity to infer the change of his status.

Next, instead of inferring, he directly asks Hamlet to 'think of us | As a father'

(1.2.107-8). Lastly, with Gertrude by his side, Claudius performs a request:

we beseech you bend you to remain  
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son. (1.2.115-7)

Claudius' emphatic attempt to appropriate the form of the feudal lord-cum-household

father seems to stumble at the edge of the figurative: Hamlet does not appreciate

figurative effort but protests it by mourning his literal father with his 'nightly colour'

(1.2.68). Shying away from the direct possessive in 'our' (that perhaps transgressed the

figurative to the literal) Claudius' second attempt underlines his figurative attempt. The 'as

a father' is followed by an analogy:

with no less nobility of love  
Than that which dearest father bears his son  
Do I impart towards you. (1.2.110-2)

Here Claudius wants to make himself understood: he is not trying to claim the identity of

the old king but his role or function in the body economic. The final attempt is a carefully

veiled re-formulation of the original. Gertrude's presence is used to make the 'our'

ambiguous: it is either the plural possessive denoting both Gertrude and Claudius; or the

royal plural in the opening speech. Moreover, the interesting phrasing of 'beseech you

bend you' wants Hamlet to convince himself 'to remain'. Yet, there is more ambiguity with

the object of 'remain': it is either 'here' in court or 'our son'.

This scene depicts the importance of the patriarchal form to Denmark's feudal

kingship. However, since Denmark is an elective monarchy, the king cannot rely on the

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<sup>354</sup> *OED*, 'cousin' n. 1a, 1b, and 4, respectively.

absolutism of his rank. Peculiarly, the king's court revolves around two families, the royal family and the family of Polonius, the effective steward of kingdom. Like the death of his father pits Hamlet against Claudius, so does the death of Polonius incite Laertes into action verging on a near coup d'état backed by the Danish populace, who 'cry 'Choose we! Laertes shall be king.'"(4.5.104) The actions of Hamlet and Laertes are impelled by the familial duty stemming from the ancient household relations—a duty stemming from the father being 'the author unto them of being', as Bacon put it above.<sup>355</sup> This is a resurgence of the historical antagonism between blood relations and feudalism with Hamlet and Laertes choosing duty to their fathers over the duty to their figurative master, the feudal king.<sup>356</sup>

In *De Augmentis*, Bacon considers the individual as part of society and finds that the central element is duty in different forms. Bacon says:

Unto this part, touching respective duty, do also appertain the mutual duties between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant; so likewise the laws of friendship and gratitude, the civil bonds of companies, colleges, neighbourhood, and the like; but it must be kept in mind, that they are here handled ... as to the framing and predisposing of minds of particular persons towards the preservation of those bonds of society. (*SEH V*, 18)

'Mutual duties' are essential to the structure of the household and this is the base historically for our economic considerations. Denmark's feudal society being formed around the king, as in Rosencrantz's 'massy wheel', is an extended household with the bonds of 'master and servant' transferred to the lord and his liegemen. These 'mutual duties' also set the underlying structure for Athens, although the focus is more on the relations between households and their masters, in 'the laws of friendship and gratitude'.

Bacon divides the duties of the individual in relation to society to two parts:

'whereof the one treats of "the common duty of everyman" as a member of a state; the

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<sup>355</sup> Bolingbroke echoes this when addressing his father Gaunt calling him 'the earthly author of my blood' (*Richard II*, 1.3.69).

<sup>356</sup> Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, transl. by L. A. Manyon, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 1962), I, p. 123, elaborates: 'The ties based on blood relationship existed long before, and were by their very nature foreign to, the human relations characteristic of feudalism'. He describes the disintegration of the kinship structure on pp. 137-42.

other treats of “the respective of special duties of every man, in his profession, vocation, rank and character.” (SEH V, 15) As with animate spirits, individuals’ function is to keep the larger body economic alive, whether in general or in their particular offices. Cicero gives a hierarchy of bonds. He insists that ‘of our moral obligation[s] ... country would come first, and parents; for their services have laid us under the heaviest obligation; next come children and the whole family, who look to us alone for support and can have no other protection; finally, our kinsmen, with whom we live on good terms and with whom, for the most part, our lot is one.’<sup>357</sup>

In the household element to ‘the bonds of society’ Bacon leans heavily on Xenophon, who describes the familial dynamics of duty:

the gods with great discernment have coupled together male and female, as they are called, chiefly in order that they may form a perfect partnership in mutual service. For, in the first place, that the various species of living creatures may not fail, they are joined in wedlock for the production of children. Secondly, offspring to support them in old age is provided by this union. Thirdly, human beings ... obviously need shelter [and] ploughing, sowing, planting and grazing ... [to] supply the needful food.<sup>358</sup>

The ‘mutual service’—Bacon calling it ‘mutual duties’ above—extends to the whole household as an exchange relation, their shared duty keeps them alive. The children are also part of this because the parents gave them life, or as Bacon put it above they are ‘the author unto them of being’. The servants are equally bound to the household for the sake of their own livelihood. With Bacon’s notion of the king as father this duty is extended to the whole realm.

This friendly bond is juxtaposed and associated with the creditors bond: although Timon frees Ventidius from his ‘strait’ or tight literal bonds, rather than destroying the bonds they are transformed in to the reciprocal bond of friendship. By asking for Timon’s ‘honourable letter’ Ventidius seeks to refer to Timon’s credit. Thus the debt is transferred and transformed by Timon’s generosity to an obligation to reciprocate—a promissory form

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<sup>357</sup> Cicero, *On Duties*, I.xvii, 58.

<sup>358</sup> Xenophon, ‘Oeconomicus’, VII.18-21.

of credit in that Timon deserves, at least, a reciprocated action. The often used phrase within the play 'commend me', besides conveying greetings, recommends a 'kindly remembrance', a reminder of 'kindness' or reciprocation.<sup>359</sup> This reciprocal credit is not put into contractual bonds like those that Timon's creditors possess; rather it is based in conscience.

To understand the depth of Timon's betrayal we will need to understand economics of friendship. Lorna Hutson defines friendship as 'an economic dependency as well as an affective bond.'<sup>360</sup> Like the familial structure, it is '[a]nother strong bond of fellowship ... effected by mutual interchange of kind services; as long as these kindnesses are mutual and acceptable, those between whom they are interchanged are united by the ties of an enduring intimacy.'<sup>361</sup> Cicero is describing a society based on gift exchange. The 'economic dependency' is Cicero's 'mutual interchange of kind services' or reciprocal gift giving.

The prominent late 16<sup>th</sup> century clergyman William Perkins, in his posthumously published *Christian Oeconomie* develops the household structure:

A familie, is a natural and simple Societie of certaine persons, hauing mutuall relation one to another, vnder the priuate gouernement of one. These persons must be at the least three; because two cannot make a societie. And aboue three vnder the same head, there may be a thousand in one familie, as it is in the households of Princes, and men of state in the world.<sup>362</sup>

Perkins, also following Xenophon, echoes Bacon in the connection of state and household, but he goes further into the 'mutual duty' especially pertaining to servants. 'Next vnto parents and children, wherby the family is increased,' Perkins describing the place of

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<sup>359</sup> *OED* 'commend' v. 5.

<sup>360</sup> Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>361</sup> Cicero, *On Duties*, I.xvii, 56.

<sup>362</sup> William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie: or a short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a Familie, according to the Scriptures*, trans. Thomas Pickering (London, 1609), p. 2.

master and servant, 'is a second sort of couples, which are helps therunto.'<sup>363</sup> The master and servant relation might coincide with the discreetly familial roles of parents and children, particularly in terms of subjection to authority, but it largely extends the household beyond sheer consanguinity. Perkins describes the master as 'a member of the familie, which hath power and beareth rule ouer the seruant.'<sup>364</sup> The servant, on the other hand, 'is a person in the family subiect vnto his master.'<sup>365</sup> This master and servant relation can thus be within a family as well as extending it. When Claudius speaks of 'our dear brother' or 'our queen', he is not merely speaking in the third person plural to denote metaphysical extension of the king's body but it is also an inclusion of his subjects within the family—the possessive is a collective one. As we noted earlier, particularly in Claudius' effort to subject Hamlet under his possessive, Claudius is using patriarchal form to solidify his standing. Now, simultaneously, this can be seen also as an extension of the spirit of the monarch asserting its role in the body economic.

Claudius, for Hamlet, is continually juxtaposed with the dead father. Not only are the Hamlets closer kin being father and son but also 'kind', alike by name. Even Claudius recognises the necessity of Hamlet's mourning: 'the survivor bound | In filial obligation for some term | To do obsequious sorrow' (1.2.90-2). This 'obligation' takes an economical form, as William Gouge, the 17<sup>th</sup> century clergyman and writer remarks in his most celebrated work *Of Domesticall Dvties*: the 'duties' of children to their parents 'are particular branches of *recompense* ... [a]nd they are but a small part of requitall of all the paines, care, and charges, that parents haue been at with their children.'<sup>366</sup> Gouge sees that such a relationship is, by nature, also extended to 'heathen men' and 'vnreasonable creatures' such as the stork, whose 'Greeke name ... is taken from that *word*, which

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<sup>363</sup> Perkins, p. 152.

<sup>364</sup> Perkins, p. 152.

<sup>365</sup> Perkins, p. 156.

<sup>366</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Dvties* (London, 1622), p. 473. Original emphasis.





fully demarcate their role as servant to the royal couple in 'laying out their service freely'.

However, although they give it of their free will, service is not free.

According to Perkins, one of the principal duties of the master is to

recompence the diligence and paines of his seruant, and that three waies[:]  
First, by giuing him his due of meat and drinke for the present. ... Secondly,  
paying him his hire in the end of his seruice ... Thirdly, if the seruant in time  
of his seruice be sicke, the masters care must be by all means possible to  
procure his recouery.<sup>370</sup>

Service is a relationship based on exchange: work reciprocated in nutrition, payment, and care. Although 'service' denotes feudal allegiance and fealty or a duty given to a lord, the vocabulary of trade ('recompence', 'giving due', 'paying hire', 'procure recovery') indicates the meaning of 'service' as something that requires payment.<sup>371</sup> Furthermore, in 'freely' giving their 'service', Rosencrantz and Guildenstern signal that they are, what Perkins calls, a 'free-slave' instead of a 'bond-servant' or slave.<sup>372</sup> 'Freely' given service is 'hire for wage', requiring 'just payment'. Perkins also explicitly likens the master-slave relation to that of father and son, affirming familial role of the servant—earlier the feeding and care for health suggested it implicitly.

However, by categorically entering into this relationship with Claudius and Gertrude, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's friendship with Hamlet is compromised. Their sudden arrival at Elsinore arouses Hamlet's suspicions and he is not satisfied with the explanation of them merely paying him a visit:

Beggar that I am, I am poor even in thanks, but I thank you; and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me.  
(2.2.274-8)

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<sup>370</sup> Perkins, pp. 154-6.

<sup>371</sup> *OED* 'service', n.1 8a, 8b, and 7, respectively. In addition, although 'procuring recovery' has many legal connotations, the meaning of 'recovery' as both regaining health (4b) and the collection of debt (4c) suggests that the phrase 'procuring recovery' can be understood as 'repayment by the acquisition of something lost'.

<sup>372</sup> Perkins, pp. 157-8: 'A free-seruant is he, whom his master hireth for wages to do him seruice. To him belongs the iust payment of his hire, and in case of offence, the master hath authoritie to censure and correct him, prouided that in the execution thereof, respect bee had vnto his age, and the correction be vsed with moderation, as if hee were his sonne.'

Hamlet immediately engages Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in terms of exchange due to suspecting them of complying with a royal summons—‘visitation’ has an authoritative denotation.<sup>373</sup> ‘Thanks’ connotes repayment<sup>374</sup> and Hamlet emphasises that he is a ‘beggar’ and ‘poor’ contrasting himself to his ‘dear’ (as in expensive) visitors. Moreover, as Hibbard and Jenkins note in their editions,<sup>375</sup> the ‘too dear a halfpenny’ utterance can be understood as either referring to the worthlessness of the ‘thanks’ or of those receiving it. Nevertheless, Hamlet demonstrates an understanding of the exchange relationship entered by the bondsman and by emphasising his poverty he is making clear the difference to Claudius in the ability recompense—as well as the conflict of interests of those in Claudius’ service. ‘Own inclining’ and ‘free visitation’ particularly address this conflict. The freedom of choice is contrasted with the determination of the exchange relation. In requesting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to ‘deal justly’ with him, Hamlet is not appealing simply for honest treatment but for equal trade.

Trade is an explicit element in the form Athens’ body economic. If Denmark has internalized the marketplace, Athens is explicitly that. There are two types of exchange, two forms of ‘kind’ness, that become opposed in Timon’s case: on one hand, the contracts and bonds of debt linked with honour; on the other, an economy based on friendship.

Curtis Perry explains the emergence of these kinds of contracts:

The expansion of the commodity market in the sixteenth century, coupled with chronic shortages of coin, meant that a great deal of buying and selling at all levels of society involved informal credit. Without banks or credit card companies to mediate this kind of exchange, the default of one household might well have a significant impact upon the fortunes of others. As a result, the early development of commodity culture in England created networks of credit and debt that linked communities together by

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<sup>373</sup> *OED* ‘visitation’ n. 1: ‘The action, on the part of one in authority, or of a duly qualified or authorized person, of going to a particular place in order to make an inspection and satisfy himself that everything is in order; an instance of such inspection or supervision.’

<sup>374</sup> *OED* ‘thank’, v. 4b.

<sup>375</sup> G. R. Hibbard’s *Hamlet* in the Oxford Shakespeare series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Harold Jenkins’ *Hamlet* in the Arden Shakespeare series (London: Methuen, 1982).

making the economic success of each household dependant upon the creditworthiness of others.<sup>376</sup>

Athens reflects this kind of mutual dependance. In the Poet's imagining of Fortune's mountain, Timon's place in her favour, at the top, made others his 'dependants'. This is also made evident by the Senator, who first demands payment for his dues from Timon.

The Senator explains his decision:

My uses cry to me, I must serve my turn  
Out of mine own, his days and times are past,  
And my reliances on his fracted dates  
Have smit my credit. (2.1.20-3)

'Use' is ambiguous: the Senator could be referring to the money lent to Timon; to money borrowed from someone else; or to his own need, whether it be food, drink or some other consumable. Nevertheless, 'turn' and 'reliances' imply a network of mutual dependance as does the 'credit' 'smit' by Timon's non-payment. The mutual dependance evokes Rosencrantz's image of the 'massy wheel' with 'ten thousand lesser things' 'adjoined' to its 'spokes'. Wary of Timon causing 'boist'rous ruin'—'It cannot hold' (2.1.4, 12), the Senator declares twice—he must have his due.

Timon's credit is based on his honour, his good name and reputation. In promising to make his servant Lucilius 'an equal husband' to the Old Athenian's daughter, the Old Athenian accepts: 'Pawn me to this your honour, she is his.' (1.1.151) In doing so he is compelled to pledge himself as surety—so esteemed is Timon's promise. '[M]ine honour on my promise' (1.1.152), Timon replies. Unpaid dues are an affront to Timon's credit:

How goes the world, that I am thus encountered  
With clamorous demands of broken bonds  
And the detention of long-since-due debts,  
Against my honour? (2.2.36-9)

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<sup>376</sup> Curtis Perry, 'Commerce, Community, and Nostalgia in *The Comedy of Errors*', in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism*, ed. by Linda Woodbridge (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 39-51 (p. 40).

Here 'honour' stands in stark opposition to 'broken bonds' and 'due debts'—hitting his credit as the Senator's above. 'How goes the world' is a suitable question implying a radical change: in the beginning of the play, the Poet asks the same question of the Painter (1.1.2). This juxtaposition reminds us of the Poet's foresight on Timon's fate. Timon gaining the favour of Fortune is what, allegorically speaking, gave him honour. Writing on the topic in his *Essays*, Bacon marks: 'The winning of Honour is but the revealing of a man's virtue and worth without disadvantage.' (*SEH VI*, 505) 'Honour' is a retrospective validation of social 'worth', the best kind of credit, 'without disadvantage'. 'Winning' is the highest place in Fortune's mountain.

In the essay 'Of Ambition', Bacon notes that 'Honour hath three things in it; the vantage ground to do good; the approach to kings and principal persons; and the raising of a man's own fortunes.' (*SEH VI*, 467) Bacon ties together social and economic worth. 'Vantage ground', 'approach to kings', and 'raising' suggest a high social place, again reminiscent of Fortune's mountain. Besides 'fortune', 'vantage' connotes wealth denoting 'pecuniary profit'.<sup>377</sup> Elsewhere, Bacon again links honour to wealth: 'Riches are for spending, and spending for honour and good actions.' (*SEH VI*, 443)

In Athens, 'honour' is an indicator or measure of economic means intimately connected to social rank. 'Honour' is the capability of being affectively 'kind'; but this would be an act pertaining to social recognition, the place on Fortune's mountain. 'Honour' in *Timon*, I propose, is associated with self-interest, especially due to its intimate connection to social standing and wealth. 'Honour' is Fortune's mountain, where everyone focuses on themselves and when Timon is done, he is left to fall by himself. This self-interest is encapsulated in Sempronius' answer to Timon's plea for help: 'Who bates mine honour shall not know my coin.' (3.3.26) The refusal is based on Sempronius being the last of

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<sup>377</sup>OED 'vantage' n. 1b, now obsolete.

whom help is asked, thus lowering his social recognition, making it less in worth. 'Honour' is 'kind'ness only as a self-affirmative.

## Equivalent 'kind'ness or the mathematics of trade

Bacon has 'thought it better to designate Mathematics, seeing that they are of so much importance both in Physics and Metaphysics and Mechanics and Magic, as appendices and auxiliaries to them all.' (*SEH IV*, 370) In seeking to understand and categorize the world, Bacon links mathematics to both the theoretical and practical side of science. However, he allows mathematics only to be 'appendices and auxiliaries' 'by reason of the daintiness and pride of mathematicians, who will needs have this science almost domineer over Physic.' (*SEH IV*, 370) Bacon is wary of corrupting, ideal, influences to his material philosophy. As he notes, 'Quantity', the subject of inquiry in mathematics, 'is the most abstracted [of forms] and separable from matter'. (*SEH IV*, 370) Bacon identifies the tendency in human psychology to simplify and generalise, to abstract—a trait endemic to scholastic deduction. He elaborates:

For it being the nature of the mind of man (to the extreme prejudice of knowledge) to delight in the spacious liberties of generalities, as in a champion region, and not in the inclosures of particularity; the Mathematics of all other knowledge were the goodliest fields to satisfy that appetite. (*SEH III*, 359-60)

This sentiment is echoed in the Idol of the Tribe:

The spirit of man (being of an equal and uniform substance) pre-supposes and feigns in nature a greater equality and uniformity that really is. Hence the fancy of the mathematicians that the heavenly bodies move in perfect circles, rejecting spiral lines. (*SEH IV*, 432)

The power of the human mind allows for the generation of a simplified world, which, on one hand is a necessary tool in understanding the world and why Bacon is compelled to have mathematics as a part of his scientific endeavour but due to its misguiding potential of the inclined human mind, mathematics must be for Bacon subservient to 'Physics' or the actual workings of the material world.

This abstraction inherent to the human mind is an intrinsic part of 'kind'ness stemming from the root of identifying similarity between two things. This identification is

an abstraction or simplification to an essential shared quality—the ‘greater equality and uniformity’—which is at the root of the familial ‘kind’ness of Hamlet and Timon’s friendships. Furthermore, this speculative or theoretical activity is the basis for the operational and practical utility of abstraction. If the theoretical aspect creates an identity and affinity between two things then the practical aspect acts upon this premise, specifically, for our current interests, the exchange of one thing for another. This logic of exchange, of trade ‘in kind’ is rooted in commerce mediated by mathematics. Mathematical equality enables the establishment of a functional equivalence, as between old Hamlet and Claudius as the head of the body economic, or a credit-debt equivalency in Timon’s case, more abstractly in a pound of Antonio’s flesh for his debts (instead of money) or as Queen Margaret equates in *Richard III*: ‘Thy other Edward dead, to quit[e] my Edward’ (4.4.64). As Bacon suggests, this kind of abstraction is a form of detachment and simplification inherent to the human mind (due to the Idols of the Tribe).

Mathematics was a central element of change in the period: as astronomy calculated our place in the universe, it enabled navigation to expand commercial enterprises around the globe alongside the more mundane practices of commerce, like weighing and other trade calculations. Regarding mercantile practices, Misselden accounts his circle (of commerce) as mathematical: ‘*Mathematicall probleme, not to bee knowne without the knowledge of that Art.*’<sup>378</sup> Robert Recorde—the writer of *The Ground of Artes*, the period’s seminal book on arithmetic—in talking of equivalent proportions, presents the rule of three, ‘whiche for his excellencie is called the Golden rule.’<sup>379</sup> This rule is used by merchants to calculate proportional equivalencies, in trading of commodities or paying for them.

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<sup>378</sup> Misselden, ‘The Epistle Dedecatorie’, in *Circle of Commerce*.

<sup>379</sup> Robert Recorde, *The grounde of artes teaching the perfect worke and practise of arithmetike*, augmented by John Dee (Southwark, 1582).

Written in the form of a dialogue between a Mayster and a Scoler, *The Ground of Artes* is one of the most enduring books that teach the basics of arithmetic. Recorde's Mayster says: 'I ... wyll teache you the feate of the rule of Proportions, whiche for his excellency is called the Golden rule. Whose use is by 3 numbers knowen, to fynde out another unknowen, which you desire to knowe'.<sup>380</sup> These numbers are allotted a place with the first two marking a known relation and third is placed with the fourth unknown number or quantity. Recorde further explains: 'the first number and the thyrde be of one denomination, and also the seconde and the fourthe, for whiche you seke'.<sup>381</sup> In the 1543 edition Recorde uses examples pertaining to expenditure of money over differing periods of time, for example if three months of room and board costs sixteen shillings, then how much does eight weeks cost (42 shillings, 8 pennies).<sup>382</sup> A later edition, augmented by John Dee, the famed Elizabethan mathematician and court magician, offers extra exercise questions dealing with more straightforward mercantile exchange, such as '[i]f 15 elles of Cloth coste 7 [pounds] 10 [shillings]: what comes, 27 elles too at that price'.<sup>383</sup> In *Capital*, Marx gives a more modern annotation of the process of product exchange with the mathematical equation 'x commodity A = y commodity B'.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Robert Recorde, *The grou[n]d of artes teachyng the worke and practyse of arithmetike, moch necessary for all states of men. After a more easyer [et] exacter sorte, then any lyke hath hytherto ben set forth: with dyuers newe additions, as by the table doth partly appeare* (London, 1543), p. 102.

<sup>381</sup> Recorde, p. 103.

<sup>382</sup> Recorde, pp. 102-3.

<sup>383</sup> Robert Recorde, *The gronde of artes teaching the perfect vvorke and practyse of arithmetike, both in whole nu[m]bers and fractions, after a more easie ane exact sort, than hitherto hath bene set forth* (Southwark, 1582), sign. R4r-R5v. The title page gives further information about this particular edition: 'Made by M. Robert Recorde, D. in Physick, and afterwards augmented by M. Iohn Dee. And now lately diligently corrected, [and] beautified with some new rules and necessarie additions: and further endowed with a thirde part, of rules of practize, abridged into a briefer methode than hitherto hath bene published: with diverse such necessary rules, as are incident to the trade of merchandize. Whereunto are also added diuers tables [and] instructions ... By Iohn Mellis of Southwark, scholemaster.' Although, essentially the same book, this latter version has substantial additions by Dee and John Mellis, who taught bookkeeping in Southwark.

<sup>384</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. I, trans. by Ben Fowkes (Penguin: London, 1976), p. 181.



The earlier edition marks the importance of the Golden rule: '[t]his rule is profitable for all estates of men, that for this rule onely (yf there were no more but it) all men were bounde highly to esteme Arithmetike.'<sup>385</sup> In comparison, Dee's edition remarkably underlines the mercantile utility, as is evidenced by the qualifier that edition's title page: 'with diverse such necessary rules as are incident to the trade of merchandize'. Recorde marks on the extent of arithmetic: 'true fountayne of perfect number, which wrought the hole world by number & measure'—ending, furthermore, with a reference to the Christian god as a 'trinite in unite, & unite in trinite'.<sup>386</sup> Moreover, he claims that numbering 'is the ground of all mennes affayres, so that without it no tale can be tolde, communication without it can be longe continued, no bargaynyng without it can duely be endyd, nor no busyness that man hath justly completed.'<sup>387</sup> Recorde places mathematical thinking as one of the chief mediators of everyday life as it has been from the early to the modern—as it does with Bacon, being linked to both the speculative and operative, theoretical and practical ends of natural philosophy.

Commercial exchanges have a middle term around which the trade is made. The original trade 'in kind' happened between things of equal value. Value is that middle term implicit in all exchanges, which can be expressed in many ways, not just money. Malynes discusses the problem of value, especially in foreign trade:

Merchants doe not know the *weight* and *finesse* of monyes of each Countrey, and the proportions obserued between Gold and Siluer, nor the difference of seuerall Standards of coyne; a matter so necessary for them to know, to make thereby profitable returns of the prouene of our home commodities, either in *Money, Bullion* or *Wares*.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Recorde, p. 106.

<sup>386</sup> Recorde, 'Preface', *Ground of artes*.

<sup>387</sup> Recorde, p. 2. Furthermore he links the high esteem and advancement of 'clarkes', 'audytours', 'geometriars', and 'astronomers' is 'bycause that by nombre suche thynges they do fynde, whiche elles shuld farre excelle mans mynde.'

<sup>388</sup> Gerard Malynes, *The Maintenance of Free Trade, According to the Three Essentiall Parts of Traffique; Namely, Commodities, Moneys and Exchange of Moneys, by Bills of Exchanges for other Countries, Or, An answer to a Treatose of Free Trade, or the meanes to make Trade flourish, lately Published* (London: Printed by I. L. for William Sheffard, 1622), p. 4.

The explicit mediator here is money or bullion. Gold usually takes symbolic role of value, especially for the believer in the inherent value of that particular matter.

Timon talks of the power of gold: 'Thus much of this will make | Black white, foul fair, wrong right, | Base noble, old young, coward valiant.' (4.3.28-30) Here, Timon famously underlines the transformative ability of '[y]ellow, glittering, precious gold' (4.3.26). This ability is due to its privileged place in the social sphere as the substance turned commodity that forms the basis for modern exchange. In his early writings, Marx comments on this passage, marking that in it 'Shakespeare paints a brilliant picture of the nature of *money*.'<sup>389</sup> Indeed, gold as the metonym for money, is the medium or middle term that enables the (ex)change between seeming polar opposites.

Timon's characterisation of gold, and Marx's interpretation of it, is premised on historical processes that are embedded in gold as a figure or symbol. Gold, for Marx, is a particular commodity that 'by becoming the equivalent of various other commodities, directly acquires the form of a universal or social equivalent'.<sup>390</sup> The 'form of a social equivalent' is transferred to the more abstract notion of money. 'Money', Marx elaborates, 'necessarily crystallizes out of the process of exchange, in which different products of labour are in fact equated with each other, and thus converted into commodities.'<sup>391</sup> The exchange 'in kind', of one type of commodity for another, via the particular commodity of gold, is transformed into a trade in specie. Crucially, Marx utilizes a particularly Baconian sense of the word 'form' that is especially apt. As discussed in Chapter 1, a 'form' for Bacon is a 'law of action or motion'. Urbach explains that it is 'meant to convey that there is some kind of compulsion, analogous to civil law, binding the form and its manifestation, that is to say, the two are related as cause and effect.'<sup>392</sup> Timon links the large amount of gold to

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<sup>389</sup> Karl Marx, 'Money', *Early Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (Penguin: London, 1975), pp. 375-9 (p. 377).

<sup>390</sup> Marx, *Capital*, p. 183.

<sup>391</sup> Marx, *Capital*, p. 181.

<sup>392</sup> Peter Urbach, *Francis Bacon's Philosophy of Science* (Peru, Illinois: Open Court, 1987), p. 62.

extreme transformation, literally a 'form' that goes beyond itself, crosses to another one. Gold is the symbol for the exchange form, signalling the ability to make two unlike—anti-thetical, even—things be considered equal. Gold takes on the form, in the Baconian sense, of money for Timon.

In the debate on exchange rate and its relationship the 1620's depression Malynes took the position that value was grounded in the nature of things, the value of coins would not be known without the Royal Exchange telling the specific amount of gold or silver used in minting. This value then set the exchange rate, to rise and fall accordingly with the amount of bullion used in money. Malynes describes money as the 'Publica Mensura or the public measure between men and men'.<sup>393</sup>

These eternal values were countered by Misselden: 'For it is not the rate of *Exchange*, whether it be higher or lower, that maketh the price of Commodities deare or cheape, as *Malynes*, would here inferred; but it is the plenty and scarcitie of Commodities, their vse or *Non-vse*, that maketh them rise and fall in price.'<sup>394</sup> Together with Mun, Misselden effectively argued for the autonomy of the system of exchange, separating it from royal control. The implications of this shift, the uprooting of material meaning and turning it to a symbolic one.<sup>395</sup>

Mun and Misselden argue against Malynes that the exchange rate is not something that should be fixed or actively controlled but rather it is something passive which shows the current values of the things exchanged. The value is derived not from some inherent value but rather from the social perception of value, which changes. (Mun and Misselden effectively use an 'invisible hand' argument in setting the perception of value ahead of other considerations, mainly a regally controlled exchange.) Value becomes abstracted from matter, it takes on an idealist form as both mediator and measure.

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<sup>393</sup> Malynes, *Lex Mercatoria*, p. 59.

<sup>394</sup> Misselden, *Circle of Commerce*, p. 21.

<sup>395</sup> Lorna Hutson, *Usurer's Daughter*, pp. 5-6, effectively argues this about shift in male friendship in the period.

'In kind' suggests an ambiguity: it directly implies trade in commodities, an anglicised version of the Latin 'in specie' or 'in genere', specifically in contrast to in money; however, 'in specie' also explicitly refers to monetary trade. In the *OED*, the initial instances of these contrasting denotations occur in the late 1610's and early 1620's—suggestively coinciding with 1620's debate on the materiality of money.<sup>396</sup> 'In kind' and 'in specie', with their contrasting referents yet similar categorizing denotation of the type of trade, is demonstrative of the practical abstraction apparent in trade where a 'kind'ness, an equivalence, is asserted between different things as well as their monetary stand-ins.

The quantities that trade arithmetic deals with become abstracted themselves, implicit in the mercantile discourses of the plays. The Senator rails on Timon's debts:

And late five thousand. To Varro and to Isidore  
He owes nine thousand, besides my former sum,  
Which makes it five-and-twenty. Still in motion  
Of raging waste! It cannot hold, it will not. (2.1.1-4)

The Senator adds together Timon's debts arriving at the sum of twenty-five thousand, but he is ambiguous about the actual amount owed to him, Varro, and Isidore: is it 'nine thousand' to them separately or together? As the Senator conspicuously omits his 'former sum' the actual amounts owed to Timon's debtors is rendered moot. What is left is the evaluation cum judgment ('It cannot hold, it will not.') as the result of social arithmetic calculated in the body economic.

Effectively, the Senator's equation ignores the actual mathematics leaving only the outcome and its social implications. This type of omission, the implicitness of quantities and calculation, is typical for the mercantile discourse in the plays particularly due to them qualifying social relations. Moreover, this omission amounts to an explicit inability to do the calculations. Flavius addresses to the debt collecting servants: 'Believe't, my lord and I have made an end. | I have no more to reckon, he to spend.' (3.4.56-7) Like the integrity of the Senator's calculations, Flavius' calculations, or lack thereof, is to be taken on faith—

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<sup>396</sup> *OED*, 'kind' n. 15 and 9; 'specie' n. 3.

hence the imploration to 'believe'. This straightforwardly economic non-'reckoning' is echoed by Hamlet's more abstract account. In the letter to Ophelia that is read out loud by Polonius, Hamlet writes: 'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not art to reckon my groans. But that I love thee best, O most best, believe it.' (2.2.120-2) Flavius has the 'art' but nothing to count whereas Hamlet has ambiguous 'groans' 'to reckon' yet no ability to do so. 'Reckoning' is contrasted with 'believing' in both cases, suggesting that despite absence of the actual calculations their effect remains. Nevertheless, even with the actual quantities omitted, the mathematical abstraction and its logic are retained. As Bacon said above, quantity is the most abstract of forms and, by Misselden and Mun's argument, it is separable from matter—in this case even from the actual calculations.

If the soul is in charge of the body economic, the Senators (and, correspondingly, Claudius) are in this body allegory in the position of the soul. The soul controls the spirit and, through that, the body. Moreover, as form, for Bacon, is 'the law of action or motion' so is the soul 'the form of forms'. This reflects the constitutive role of the sovereign power within the body economic.

As to the function of the soul concerning exchange, Malynes refers to 'the meanes of Equalitie and Equitie, preuenting aduantage between buyers and sellers.' There are three levels to this. First, pertaining to 'equality', are the means by which a transaction is made equivalent: measurement, arithmetic, money. Malynes describes money as the 'Publica Mensura or the public measure between men and men'.<sup>397</sup> Money being a measure entails a standard of currency that is legal tender. The scales are another prototypical symbol of the merchant trade and likewise needs standardised weights to ensure exchangeability. Arithmetic is another tool that helps with equivalency of differing things and quantities. Second, stemming from 'equity', a legal system is needed to provide a stable environment for exchange and courts to arbitrate failed transactions, as happens

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<sup>397</sup> Malynes, *Lex Mercatoria*, p. 59.

in the *Merchant of Venice*. Third, also stemming from 'equity', is the third, affective aspect to 'kind'ness. According to the specific form of 'kind'ness, it is what conveys an amicable, fair feeling to exchanges.

Mathematical equality was a central element of justice in the period. Aristotle's two types of justice are mathematically based: distributive justice on 'geometrical proportion' and rectificatory justice on 'arithmetical progression'.<sup>398</sup> Distributive justice deals with 'the distribution of honour or money or such other assets as are divisible among the members of the community (for in these cases it is possible for one person to have either an equal or an unequal share with another)'; whereas rectificatory justice 'rectifies the conditions of a transaction.'<sup>399</sup> However, during Shakespeare's time these two types of justice were conflated into a mathematical problem, as Bacon suggests with his rhetorical question: 'is there not a true coincidence between commutative and distributive justice, and arithmetical and geometrical proportion?' (*SEH III*, 348) Paula Blank elaborates:

In the Renaissance, the rhetoric of mathematics not only subsumed different accounts of justice under the same terms but provided proof that they all remained deducible by mathematical "equations," all worked out to the same social result, despite the difference in the numbers attained.<sup>400</sup>

This mirrors Shakespeare's own abstraction of quantity. Justice uses the same calculus of proportions as commerce, analogising the scales of justice and those of merchants.

Recorde's Golden rule—abstracted—extends itself throughout society.<sup>401</sup>

The concept of equality is thus brought to the fore: the sovereign soul by equality and equity, as Malynes declares, assures the fairness of transactions. The Senator's judgment on the state of Timon ('it cannot hold') draws close to Hamlet's comparison of his father to Claudius—both in terms of 'equality', though in slightly differing meanings.

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<sup>398</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by J. A. K. Thomson, rev. by Hugh Tredennick (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 118-23.

<sup>399</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 118.

<sup>400</sup> Paula Blank, *Shakespeare and the Mismeasure of Renaissance Man* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 133-4.

<sup>401</sup> Paula Blank, *Shakespeare and the Mismeasure of Renaissance Man*, pp. 134-52, studies arithmetic as basis for justice in *King Lear*.

“Equal” in early modern English’, Blank explains, ‘may denote sameness or “identity” of amount, quality, or degree (as it does today)’.<sup>402</sup> The Senator speaks about the ‘identity’ of amount, whereas Hamlet touches on ‘identity’ of quality.

First, let us focus on the Senator, who views Timon as a bad merchant:

If I want gold, steal but a beggar’s dog  
And give it Timon, why, the dog coins gold.  
If I would sell my horse and buy twenty more  
Better than he, why, give my horse to Timon—  
Ask nothing, give it him—he foals me straight,  
And able horses. No porter at his gate,  
But rather one that smiles and still invites  
All that pass by. I cannot hold. No reason  
Can sound his state in safety.’ (2.1.1-13)

Timon’s generosity is a bad exchange, bad equivalence. It is not economically ‘kind’, sound. The individual functions of ‘promus’ and ‘condus’ seem to be in conflict here as the generative, procreative language of ‘foaling straight and able horses’ promises the ‘promus’ appetite extension. Yet, the conservative ‘condus’, with its preserving function, sees Timon as a threat to the body economic. The simple motion that ‘promus’ and ‘condus’ share, ‘disposition’, put the whole ahead of the particular. The ‘reason’, to which the Senator refers, is a computing capacity<sup>403</sup> that gives a detrimental result of Timon’s bad exchanges for Athens.

As the Senators judgment is a form of social arithmetic—Timon is not credit worthy or ‘Timon ≠ credit’—so is Hamlet’s assessment of Claudius. The comparison of old Hamlet and Claudius is likening ‘Hyperion to a satyr’ (1.2.140). Moreover, Hamlet continues: ‘My father’s brother ... no more like my father | Than I to Hercules’ (1.2.152-3). This comparison is further strengthened by the Ghost describing Claudius as ‘a wretch whose natural gifts

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<sup>402</sup> Blank, p. 130.

<sup>403</sup> Blank, p. 136, notes the linking of reason to the ability of computing with numbers in the Early Modern period (footnote 45).

were poor | To those of mine.’ (1.5.51-2) (This recalls Edmund comparing himself to Edgar.)

The judgment on equality here is ‘Claudius ≠ old Hamlet’.<sup>404</sup>

To make full sense what this means, we need to understand the bodily logic by which Claudius took old Hamlet’s place. ‘Kindred substance’ is one way of ‘softening the [body] parts from without’: ‘For things of kindred substance are kindly and readily embraced and taken in by the parts, and perform the proper office of emollients’ (*SEH IV*, 393). For Bacon ‘the intention of softening is not to nourish the parts from without, but only to make them apter to receive nourishment. For whatever is more dry is less active in assimilating.’ (*SEH IV*, 394) Replacing the dead Hamlet with his brother Claudius, ‘a kindred substance’, makes sense to the elective monarchy of Denmark. The marriage with Gertrude, ‘the imperial jointress’, added to this. In addition, this is the same logic by which Claudius and Gertrude thought that the presence of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern would ease Hamlet’s adjustment to the change.

The exchangeability of individual parts is central to the life and longevity of the body economic. Bacon even describes the potential: ‘Whatever can be repaired gradually without destroying the original whole is, like the vestal fire, potentially eternal.’ (*SEH V*, 218) This line of thinking erases individuality by functionally making everyone replaceable, a stark utilitarian form of social arithmetic. Hamlet, and the rise of subjectivity with him, objects to this. Nevertheless, the function of exchange is as necessary to the body economic as the linkage of exchange value to use value and has its roots in Bacon’s idols of the Tribe.<sup>405</sup> The malleability of spirit (its ability to take ‘impressions’) is a metaphor for the

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<sup>404</sup> Notably this is not the only instance where arithmetical logic is used by Hamlet: the testing of Claudius = testing the veracity of the Ghost. Or in other words: the ‘kind’ness of the ghost is proven by the ‘kind’ness of the play to elicit a reaction from Claudius. If that ‘kind’ness is true then the ghost is true. Both ‘kind’nesses equal, in the arithmetic function, the guilt of Claudius.

<sup>405</sup> The mind ‘feigns in nature a greater equality and uniformity’, as mentioned above. This means it categorises the world based on concepts, what Adorno refers to as identity thinking. Shakespeare deploys this as a comic trope best exemplified in *The Comedy of Errors*, a play placed fittingly in the world of merchants and commodities, where the identity thinking—presuming that if someone looks



mind's tendency of making things seem equal, the same. Money, impressed with sovereign power, need to function as equivalents. In this vein also works Hamlet's exchange of the letter of commission to the English, which pivots on the sovereign power of the seal.

Hamlet explains:

I had my father's signet in my purse,  
Which was the model of that Danish seal;  
Folded the writ up in the form of th'other,  
Subscribed it, gave't th'impression, placed it safely,  
The changeling never known. (5.2.50-4)

With 'the form of th'other' and the seal, 'th'impression', Hamlet could exchange his own death (by exchanging the letters) to those of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Taking the form, in a Baconian sense, is to also take its law of motion, its ability to compel. Crucially, this passage also names the functional aspect of exchangeability, especially in the body economic, which is 'place'.

Significantly, Hamlet's objections about Claudius taking the place of old Hamlet are less directed at Claudius becoming king than they are at him marrying Gertrude. Yet, the place of the father is in a patriarchal economic system linked to the king—and, Goux adds, to money.<sup>406</sup> 'Place' also has a mathematical denotation: 'The position of a figure in a series, in decimal or similar notation, as indicating its value or denomination.'<sup>407</sup> Blank, citing Recorde, underlines the importance of 'place' as zero, signifying nothing, 'can in the right *place* multiply other figures that go before it by ten, or a thousand, or a million.'<sup>408</sup> Again, 'old Hamlet ≠ Claudius'. The undertone of social arithmetic is embedded in Hamlet's vitriolic exchange with Gertrude: 'This *was* your husband. Look you now what follows. |

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like a person they know then they are *that* person—allows for the twins Antipholus (and Dromio) to be mistaken for each other. This is also central to the concept of reification for Adorno.

<sup>406</sup> Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. by Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 39.

<sup>407</sup> *OED* n.1 16. Recorde talks in these terms in various places, e.g. [img 27/8].

<sup>408</sup> Blank, p. 121. She links this to lines 15-8 in the Prologue of *Henry V* and 1.2.6-9 in the *Winter's Tale*.

Here *is* your husband' (4.3.62-3) 'Follow' is significant here: it has a mathematico-logical sense of 'com[ing] after in a sequence or series'<sup>409</sup>

'Place', figuratively and literally, plays a significant but negative role in the exchange relations. If Timon's friends were 'another himself', then he would truly be 'rich' in them (as they are in him) and they would pay his debts in his stead. Moreover, the *misplaced* Polonius dies in where Hamlet would kill Claudius: 'in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed' (3.3.90); 'Is it the King? ... I took thee for thy better' (4.3.25, 31). Misidentification in both cases lead to reactions in the form of revenge.

Mistaking Polonius for his 'better' reminds us of the social hierarchy measured in honour. Polonius himself is most explicit about the bartering power of honour. Having given Laertes fatherly advice ('Never a lender be' etc.), turns his advising abilities to Ophelia. (Has there ever been a starker difference depicted between gendered 'equals' as Polonius' advice with the-merchant-to-be-Laertes and Ophelia-as-commodity!) This is even more focused on ideas of economy tinged with a more severe tone. He describes Ophelia's place in the world, particularly in relation to Hamlet:

you yourself  
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.  
... I must tell you  
You do not understand yourself so clearly  
As it behoves my daughter and your honour. (1.3.92-3, 95-7)

Polonius underlines that Ophelia's attentions are a commodity and that, like Timon, she has been too 'free and bounteous' in this economic relationship. Her value is derived from Polonius' social standing being 'his daughter'. The implication is that the frequent 'audiences' devalue 'her honour'.<sup>410</sup> Polonius continues:

you have ta'en his tenders for true pay,  
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,  
Or ... you'll tender me a fool.' (1.3.106-9)

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<sup>409</sup> *OED*, v. 2a.

<sup>410</sup> Honour is here also linked virginity and the ability to make an 'honourable' wife, as with Mariana in *Pericles*.

This punning on 'tender' revolves around a formal or legal offer and caring affections.<sup>411</sup>

For Polonius, this type of relationship is both amorous and commercial but the emphasis is on the latter. This also underlines the inequality between Ophelia and Hamlet: without a formal offer of marriage Hamlet's 'tenders' are not worth anything. Polonius continues with the commercial language: 'Set your entreatments at a higher rate | Than a command to parley.' (1.3.122-3)

Ophelia's 'honour' has purchasing power, which Polonius drills into his daughter.

Moreover it is linked to the honour and position of Polonius, who would be a 'fool' to simply give his daughter away—for free. Honour is linked to money—we recall Sempronius: 'Who bates mine honour shall not know my coin' (3.3.26)—and it too (like gold/money) has the ability to transform as credit. Marx, commenting on *Timon*, ties in money into social esteem, honour:

I am a wicked, dishonest, unscrupulous and stupid individual, but money is respected, and so also is its owner. Money is the highest good, and consequently its owner is also good. Moreover, money spares me the trouble of being dishonest, and I am therefore presumed to be honest.<sup>412</sup>

The link of money to honour and social standing is powerfully depicted with Timon's change of fortunes: honour and social standing is lost with wealth. The social bonds of duty, service and honour stemming from friendship and kinship are represented in the form of money—the signifier of the law of action and motion in the body economic. Marx continues:

If *money* is the bond which ties me to *human* life and society to me, which links me to nature and to man, is money not the bond of all *bonds*? Can it not bind and loose all bonds? Is it therefore not the universal *means of*

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<sup>411</sup> Tender: n.2 1a, formal offer, legal; n.2 1b, offer of money to discharge a debt or other liability; n.2 3a, a commercial offer (first occurrence 1666); adj. 1a, something soft or delicate, fragile, easily broken, physical and literal sense; n.3 3, tender consideration, care, regard; adj. 3a, weak or delicate constitution, effeminate; adj. 4, delicacy of youth, immature, lack of experience; adj. 7a, tender action or instrument; adj. 8a, of persons or feelings, kind, loving, gentle; adj. 7b, the object of tender feeling; adj. 11a, susceptible to influence, impressionable; v.1 1a, the offer something in formal terms, for debts, legal; v.2 1, to become tender, intr., to grow soft; v.2 3a, to hold dear, value, esteem; v.2 3b, to regard or receive favourably.

<sup>412</sup> Marx, 'Money', p. 377.

*separation?* It is the true *agent of separation* and the true *cementing agent*, it is the *chemical* power of society.<sup>413</sup>

He calls money 'the *alienated capacity of mankind*'. This strongly echoes Bacon's *alchemical* sense of spirits, as both animate and inanimate, constructive and destructive. Equating Timon as a bad merchant, a bad exchange, as well as equating Claudius a bad exchange for old Hamlet, shifts both plays into a destructive mode. If money, in its allegorical potency, is the ultimate bond, then it is also the great separator.

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<sup>413</sup> Marx, 'Money', p. 377 [Original emphasis].

## Affective 'kind'ness or operation and magic in the body economic

This section is concerned with the economically 'kind' actions and their 'unkind' affects relating both Bacon's perception of equity and their allegorical effects within the body economic.<sup>414</sup> From the point of view of the body economic, the exchange form becomes central. The mechanics of 'kind'ness seek payment in accordance with mercantile bonds from Timon, leaving the affective bonds of friendship broken—this act elicits a different affective counter-reaction from Timon. Hamlet, on the other hand, is not happy with a simple mechanic operation of tit-for-tat but seeks a more equitable, though sinister resolution.

Timon's 'broken bonds' signal not only a failure on Timon's part to pay debts but they mark the breaking of social bonds, of friendship and the system of credit that came along it. From the point of view of justice, following Aristotle's proportional sense of it, the payment of debt should be focused on making the creditor and debtor equal. Bacon marks on the virtue of the judge 'to make Inequalitie Equall' (*OFB XV*, 166). Equality and equity in transactions, Malynes reminds us. Varro's second servant, collecting debts, comments on Timon: 'he's poor, and that's revenge enough.' (3.4.63-4) Revenge is here intermingled with monetary transaction and a proportional sense of justice: being made 'poor' is 'revenge enough'.<sup>415</sup> However, proportional judgment is only momentary—as such a decision is ultimately beyond a mere servant—and upon seeing Timon himself. His reaction

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<sup>414</sup> Bacon calls the operative natural philosophy the 'Production of Effects' in that the theoretical part is the 'mine' and the practical the 'furnace' (*SEH IV*, 343). This is divided into Mechanic and Magic. Mechanic is the equivalent of the Physic and 'is connected with physical causes' (*SEH IV*, 366). Magic, on the other hand, is 'the science which applies the knowledge of hidden forms to the production of wonderful operations' (*SEH IV*, 366-7).

<sup>415</sup> On revenge as transaction see Linda Woodbridge, *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); see also Marc Shell, *The End of Kinship: 'Measure For Measure,' Incest, and the Ideal of Universal Siblinghood* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) esp. pp. 98-109 on taliational exchange in *Measure For Measure*.

is telling<sup>416</sup>: ‘Knock me down with ’em, cleave me to the girdle. ... Cut my heart in sums. ... Tell out my blood. ... Five thousand drops pays that. What yours? And yours?’ (3.4.88, 90, 92-3) Timon’s affected response marks the disproportionality of this ‘revenge’: the bloody language of vivisection is enmeshed with mercantile vocabulary. Timon takes the abstraction of mathematics and exchange to a grotesque level signalling the affective depth of his betrayal by his friends and the breaking of bonds. This cutting action resonates with Timon calling the lords at his false feast ‘trencher-friends’ (3.7.95)—a ‘trencher’ is, among other meanings, a carving knife or person who carves.<sup>417</sup>

For Bacon, famously, ‘*Revenge* is a kinde of Wilde Justice; which the more Mans Nature runs to, the more ought Law weed it out.’ (OFB XV, 16) However, in Timon’s case law is siding with the ‘wild’, disproportionate justice.<sup>418</sup> Bacon evokes the body allegory in describing ‘Just Laws and True Policie’: ‘For they are like the Spirits, and Sinewes, that One moves with the Other.’ (OFB XV, 169) Earlier, Bacon links ‘sinews’ with law and money. In this light, Timon paying with his blood is apt, though peculiar, as blood is one form of transportation for spirits. Revenge as this type of transaction brings disproportionality together with law and money. In exploring the motives for revenge, Bacon remarks, ‘There is no man, doth a wrong, for the wrongs sake; But therby to purchase himselfe, Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, or the like.’ (OFB XV, 16) Here is a link to usury: Bacon notes that ‘it is a Vanitie to conceive that there would be Ordinary Borrowing without Profit’ (OFB XV, 126). Alcibiades calls the senators usurers (‘they have told their money and let out | Their coin upon large interest’ 3.6.105-6) and, moreover, the senator that begins the debt collecting declares as a justification: ‘My uses cry to me’ (2.1.20).

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<sup>416</sup> To ‘tell’ is a synonym for counting but sense 21a for the verb in the *OED* denotes ‘counting out in payment’.

<sup>417</sup> *OED* ‘trencher’ n.1, 1 and n.2, 1, respectively.

<sup>418</sup> The regular type of revenge is not accepted in Athens as the first senator marks about Alcibiades’ transgressed soldier: ‘To revenge is no valour, but to bear.’ (3.6.39) This echoes Bacon: ‘Certainly, in taking *Revenge*, A Man is but even with his Enemy; But in passing it over, he is Superiour: For it is a Princes part to Pardon.’ (OFB XV, 16)

Timon and his 'magic of bounty' serves as a form of interest in the body economic.

Two lords at the plays onset talk of Timon's 'kindness':

He pours it out. Plutus the god of gold  
Is but his steward; no meed but he repays  
Sevenfold above itself; no gift to him  
But breeds the giver a return exceeding  
All use of quittance. (1.1.279-83)

'Meed' is significant here in its ambiguity: it can be something given in return of a service, like wage, hire, reward, or gift; or a reward dishonestly gained, denoting corruption and bribery.<sup>419</sup> Moreover, Sempronius marks about Lucius, Lucullus, and Ventidius' bond to Timon: 'All these | Owes their estates to unto him.' (3.3.4-5) Plutus being named as Timon's steward makes Timon the font in which Athens can quench its 'promus' desire—he assists in the climbing of the mountain of Fortune. Timon's fury stems from the one-sidedness of his relationship with Athens, which Flavius points out to the debt collector servants wanting money: 'Why then preferred you not your sums and bills | When your false masters ate of my lord's meat? | Then they would smile and fawn upon his debts, | And take down th'int'rest into their glutt'nous maws.' (3.4.50-3)

Draining Timon of all his wealth is a strange way of seeking revenge: the infraction is based on breaking a signed bond or contract without taking into consideration all forms of transaction and exchange. Oddly enough, the infraction is Timon's 'kind'ness or rather un'kind'ness: as the Senator noted, Timon is too generous, the transactions are not equal. Form is key here: the law of action and movement in the voice of the Senator, Timon's philanthropic exchange is not equal and therefore it cannot, will not hold. The economy of gifts and friendship is thus countered with a stricter economy of contracts. Economy becomes formalised into written bonds that overcome Timon.

This revenge can be easily put down as minor note from a peripheral character. However, viewing Timon's treatment as revenge reveals underlying power relations. The

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<sup>419</sup> OED 'Meed' n. 1a and n. 2a.

etymological root of ‘revenge’ (via ‘avenge’) lies with ‘vindicate’ and ‘vendicate’ from the Latin *vindicare* and the Italian (and later French) *vendicare*. The modern sense of ‘vindicate’ (to clear from suspicion and doubt or to assert and make good) emerges in the mid- to late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>420</sup> Mid-16<sup>th</sup> century instances suggest denotations of ‘revenge’ and ‘punishment’ for ‘vindicate’ but also to ‘set free’ or ‘rescue’.<sup>421</sup> Curiously, ‘vendicate’ has the contemporaneous meaning of ‘claiming for oneself’ and ‘claiming ability’.<sup>422</sup> These latter denotations suggest a faint but intriguing connotation of ‘revenge’ pertaining to reclaiming agency. This is very suggestive for the motivation of the Senator: ‘I love and honour him, | But must not break my back to heal his finger.’ (2.1.23-4) The Senator views himself miniscule, fiscally, in comparison to Timon. The Senator wants to free himself from reliance on Timon: ‘his days and times are past, | And my reliances on his fracted dates | Have smit my credit.’ (2.1.21-3) Therefore, the ‘revenge’ on Timon is an independence of him and a regaining of a financial sovereignty.

The transactional nature of revenge is enmeshed with Hamlet—though a more straightforward case. Hamlet, having proven to himself the guilt of Claudius, ponders on his chance to kill Claudius:

Now I might do it pat, now a is praying  
 And now I’ll do’t and so a goes to heaven,  
 And so I am revenged. That would be scanned.  
 A villain kills my father, and for that  
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
 To heaven.  
 O, this is hire and salary, not revenge!  
 A took my father grossly, full of bread,  
 With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;  
 And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?  
 But in our circumstance and course of thought  
 ’Tis heavy with him. And am I then revenged

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<sup>420</sup> *OED* ‘vindicate’ v. 3a, c and 4.

<sup>421</sup> *OED* ‘vindicate’ v. 1a, b, c; and 2. The only place where a derivation of ‘vindicate’ appears in Shakespeare is in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Ulysses juxtaposes Hector with Troilus: ‘Manly as Hector but more dangerous, | For Hector in his blaze of wrath subscribes | To tender objects, but he in heat of action | Is more vindicative than jealous love.’ (4.6.107-10) This less merciful or ‘more vindicative’ Troilus bespeaks less constraint from the views of others and more cruel agency.

<sup>422</sup> *OED* ‘vendicate’ v. 1 and 2.



To take him in the purging of his soul,  
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?  
No. (3.3.73-87)

Hamlet is offered a moment for revenge but he is not happy with the end result of the deed, namely praying purifies Claudius, 'purges his soul' so that were he killed then, he would enter heaven. The death of Claudius is not enough for proper revenge, merely 'hire and salary'. Here Hamlet differentiates between the types of exchange: although 'hire and salary', the engagement to do a deed for which compensation is given, is a contractual form of exchange, it is not the apposite sort for this situation. It is not a 'kind' revenge: Old Hamlet and Claudius are not equal in death as Claudius is prepared for it ('fit and seasoned') whereas his father was not.<sup>423</sup>

He wants his 'revenge' to be less of a monetary exchange ('hire and salary'). Although he disdains such exchange he is still concerned with about Claudius' 'audit' denoting his day of judgment but connoting the balance sheet of his moral account. As Hamlet suggests this, he is 'auditing' his own actions by 'scanning' them, by judging, criticizing, and examining.<sup>424</sup> However, with the difference that Hamlet reflects beforehand. Revenge is part of a greater 'audit', not merely a case for murdering Claudius.<sup>425</sup> Hamlet rejects simple equivalence: first, in Claudius taking the place of his father; and second, in murdering Claudius for the murder of his father.

Both of these revenges, the Senator's and Hamlet's, are engulfed in forms of transaction. Crucially, both decisions on revenge—though different (the Senator acts on it, Hamlet does not)—are based on the 'unkind'ness of a 'kind' transaction. This shared 'unkind'ness is one of equivalence, of mathematical abstraction, 'this ≠ that'. It lacks the affective 'kind'ness. However, it produces an affective response: Timon's misanthropy and

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<sup>423</sup> The mode of dying is a significant theme in the play, not only that of Old Hamlet but of Ophelia as well.

<sup>424</sup> *OED* 'scan' v. 2a, 3a.

<sup>425</sup> See Linda Woodbridge, 'English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality', on revenge, bookkeeping and John Mellis, pp. 63-65.

Hamlet's rash murder of Polonius. Moreover, the body economic plays its part in eliciting those responses by imprisonment and ejection from the body.

'Denmark's a prison.' (2.2.246) Hamlet declares this to the visiting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They disagree and Hamlet replies: 'Why, then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.' (2.2.251-3)

Hamlet's subjectively expressed feeling arises from broken familial bonds (still a suspicion at this stage). But it is the filial bond that keeps him there to avenge his father. Timon is too held captive by bonds, by those of debt but in a more concrete way:

What, are my doors opposed against my passage?  
Have I been ever free, and must my house  
Be my retentive enemy, my jail?  
The place which I have feasted, does it now,  
Like all mankind, show me an iron heart? (3.4.80-4)

The uncanny transformation of home to prison strongly echoes Hamlet, whose prison is affective whereas Timon is affected by it (stage direction has him 'Enter ... in a rage').

But why does the body economic affect imprisonment on and in them? Bacon explains the predicament: 'Spirit given off desiccates the body and hardens it, spirit detained liquefies and softens it.' (*OFB IV*, 333) Ejecting Timon or Hamlet immediately would have a drying effect on the body economic: Timon's creditors could not fully empty him of his wealth (upon invitation to the false feast the lords thought that Timon 'did but try us', 3.7.3, believing that Timon still had means) and Claudius would lose Hamlet's legitimation if he did not stay in Elsinore as the royal couple's 'chiefest courtier, cousin, and [their and Claudius'] son.' (1.2.117) By this captivity the body economic needs to get its use of them, as Timon explains: 'Let prisons swallow 'em, | Debts wither 'em to nothing' (4.3.531-2).

Yet, if this captivity is prolonged, these spirits will start to dissolve their cells. Hamlet's danger is signalled with the killing of Polonius. Hamlet's 'liberty is full of threats to

all' (4.1.13), Claudius fears knowing that Polonius died in his stead. Dissolution and civil upheaval might ensue, Claudius bewails:

Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?  
It will be laid to us, whose providence  
Should have kept short, restrained, and out of haunt  
This mad young man. (4.1.15-8)

This hindsight justifies Hamlet's feeling of imprisonment from being a mere fiction of the mind. Moreover, the main agents of Claudius end up dead (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will follow Polonius) as they were the guards of Hamlet's figurative prison employed to keep an eye on him. Although it might be suitable to punish Hamlet severely (to 'put the strong law on him.' 4.3.3) but Claudius will not do it because '[h]e's love by the distracted multitude' (4.3.4). Ejecting Hamlet seems the most prudent and justifiably equal move for Claudius: 'To bear all smooth and even, | This sudden sending him away must seem | Deliberate pause.' (4.3.7-9)—despite Claudius seeing the danger: 'How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!' (4.3.2)

Timon gives a clear warning of the danger in his false feast to false friends. He shouts 'Burn house! Sink Athens!' (3.7.103) threatening to literally 'liquefy' the body of Athens. Timon's expulsion is mirrored by the banishment of Alcibiades who receives his punishment like Claudius fears Hamlet would: 'It comes not ill; I hate not to be banished. | It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury, | That I may strike at Athens.' (3.6.110-2)

Hamlet, the more self-reflective of the two tragic heroes, momentarily sees his 'unkind'ness, the inability to avenge his father as he is sent to England:

How all occasions do inform against me,  
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed?—a beast, no more.  
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before and after, gave us not  
That capability and god-like reason  
To fust in us unused. Now whether it be  
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple

Of thinking too precisely on th'event  
 ... —I do not know  
 Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do',  
 Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means  
 To do't. (4.4 additional passage J 23-32, 34-7 Q2)

Hamlet stands on the threshold of 'kind'ness: about to leave Denmark without fulfilling his filial duty. In this instance, 'unkind'ness is agency, the ability to act and enact revenge. 'Sith' strides this gap of ability: it can mean 'then' or 'since'.<sup>426</sup> The former suggests (with perhaps a slight pause) determination to act; the latter ponders the inability act despite being justified and able. It is again a temporal threshold of jumping to the future or weighing past implications. Moreover, there is a curious tension here regarding mercantile 'kind'ness. The 'chief good and market of his time' signifies the mercantile object or commodity, figuratively suggesting passivity. That is contrasted with god-given 'capability' and 'reason' with gets its mercantile connotation from the verb 'to fust' which is linked to especially corn becoming mouldy but also to wine and the tasting thereof.<sup>427</sup> This pertains to the activity of the merchant to know their product and be able to get 'use', profit out of them. The question in Hamlet's mind is whether to act or not to act: his prevarication on this 'simple' question suggests that he is not happy with his options.

Hamlet does not see himself as being outside of the body economic. For him it is Claudius who is at fault. However, while Hamlet bestrides the grey area of 'kind'ness, Timon sees no such doubts outside the walls of Athens. 'Timon will to the woods, where he shall find | Th'unkindest beast more kinder than mankind.' (4.1.35-6) Timon does not prevaricate whether he has been 'unkind' or not but immediately denounces the body economic of Athens as being 'unkind'. Bacon elaborates on this sentiment of broken bonds:

it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends; without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity. (*SEH VI*, 437)

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<sup>426</sup> *OED* 'sith' adv. A1a or A4.

<sup>427</sup> *OED* 'fust' v. a and b, respectively.

Bacon captures the solitude that Timon and Hamlet experience in their prison and expulsion. Timon would disagree with Bacon on the fitness for friendship. Where Bacon suggests the fault to be in the individual, Timon puts the onus on the social conventions and the assented (mis)use of friendship. Timon declares: 'Breath infect breath, | That their society, as their friendship, may | Be merely poison!' (4.1.30-2) For Timon, society takes its 'frame' from 'the beast, and not from humanity'. 'The commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts.' (4.3.349-50) Timon's alienation is the result of the body economic breaking the bonds, the principle of friendship that held it together.

The logic of friendship, of identity, a friend being 'another himselfe', is one where they are equal, 'kind' in the fullest sense. In contrast, the Athenian 'kind'ness that Timon is estranged from is 'kind'ness as 'unkind'ness. Timon asks: 'Is not thy kindness subtle, covetous, | A usuring kindness, and, as rich men deal gifts, | Expecting in return twenty to one?' (4.3.509-11) The mathematics here are abstracted beyond equivalency to an equivalency of non-equivalency. Bacon, though positive about usury, did see its boundlessness a severe problem wanting to cap in general 'to Five in the Hundred' (*OFB XV*, 127).<sup>428</sup>

The 'old mole' (1.5.164) that haunts Denmark's body economic has 'that fair and warlike form [of] the majesty of buried Denmark' (1.1.45-6) as witnessed again by Horatio. The ghost foreboding 'strange eruptions' and 'something rotten' signals towards Claudius and the 'oldest form' of crime: Cain murdering Abel. This haunts Claudius: 'O, my offence is rank! It smells to heaven. | It hath the primal eldest curse upon't, | A brother's murder.' (3.3.36-8) The stench of this 'primal' 'unkind'ness lours over the play like the witches' spell in *Macbeth*. With that 'cursed hand ... thicker than itself with brother's blood' wielding the

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<sup>428</sup> He also suggested, in special cases, that 'Certaine Persons [be] licenced to Lend, to knowne Merchants, upon Usury at a Higher Rate', at nine percent calling it 'the Licence of Nine' (*OFB XV*, 127-8).

sceptre of Denmark, the body economic is imbued with a festering 'unkind'ness that dissolves the familial, blood bonds that held it together. Claudius himself marks this:

In the corrupted currents of this world  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law. (3.3.57-60)

By this suggestion the corruption infects the Baconian form of the body economic by affecting the law. Familial 'kind'ness is 'bought out' by mercantile 'kind'ness. The exchange form, signified by the 'gilded hand', can (at least for Claudius) transform foul into fair.

Thematically, 'strange' acts as a counterpoint to 'kind': it is, foreign or alien, unfamiliar, something belonging to an other (not kin nor family), abnormal, someone unfriendly or distant.<sup>429</sup> It pops up frequently in the first scenes of *Hamlet*: Horatio and Hamlet call the appearance of the dead king's ghost 'strange' (1.1.63, 166; 1.2.220), Horatio's 'strange eruption', the Ghost's murder 'most foul, strange, and unnatural.' (1.5.27) Moreover, in 'put[ting] an antic disposition on' Hamlet warns Horatio and Marcellus that he might 'bear' himself 'strange and odd' (1.5.174, 171). 'Strangeness' signals the corruption of the 'kind' principles of the body economic. It is also frequent in *Timon*. Flavius describes his master's predicament: 'Strange, unusual blood | When man's worst sin is he does too much good! | Who the dares to be half so kind again?' (4.2.38-40) Furthermore, the various servants waiting outside Timon's house discuss of the strangeness of their assignment (of revenge):

I'll show you how t'observe a *strange* event.  
Your lord sends now for money ...  
And he wears jewels now of Timon's gift,  
For which I wait for money. ...  
Mark how *strange* it shows.  
Timon in this should pay more than he owes,  
And e'en as if your lord should wear rich jewels  
And send for money for 'em.' (3.4.20-8, my emphasis)

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<sup>429</sup> OED 'strange' adj. 1a, 7, 3, 10a, 11a, and 11b, respectively.

Although the unison of both bodies economic is less than perfect, marking these 'strange' events is still at least one step removed from opposing them. The question 'How goes the world?'—as central to *Timon* as 'Who goes there?' to *Hamlet*—is reformulated into a statement by the Strangers (!) remarking the inequity of Timon's treatment and the corruption of the body economic: 'Why, this is the world's soul, and just of the same piece | Is every flatterer's spirit.' (3.2.65-6) Finally, this dissolution of the principles of love, family and friendship, of 'kind'ness turning 'unkind', is laconically encapsulated by the Player King in *Hamlet's* play within a play: 'tis not strange | That even our loves should with our fortunes change' (3.2.191-2).

As for the individual causes of this turn to 'unkind'ness, Claudius or the Senator(s) give very little to work on. However, Bacon does suggest an 'unkind' counterpoint to the principle of love that merits a brief consideration. 'There be none of the *Affections*, which have beene noted to fascinate, or bewitch, but *Love*, and *Envy*', Bacon declares, adding that envy is 'the vilest Affection, and the most depraved' (*OFB XV*, 27, 31). The Senator's envy is likely to arise from the centrality of Timon in the body economic (this is implicit in his 'revenge' on Timon). Bacon suggests: 'Men of Noble birth, are noted, to be *envious* towards New Men, when they rise.' (*OFB XV*, 28) The vertical movement is suggestive, especially when considering the Senator's unwillingness 'break his back' to 'heal Timon's finger'. This distortion of size aligns with what Bacon calls 'a deceit of the Eye, that when others come on, they thinke themselves goe backe.' (*OFB XV*, 28) A possible source for Claudius' envy is also found in Bacon's essay 'Of Envy': 'neare Kinsfolks, and Fellowes in Office, and those that have beene bred together, are apt to *Envy* their Equals, when they are raised.' (*OFB XV*, 28) Bacon links this to Cain's envy of Abel. There are two further highly evocative images in Bacon's essay pertaining to Claudius: first, a 'strange eruption', namely that 'there seemeth to be acknowledged, in the Act of *Envy*, an Ejaculation, or Irradiation of the Eye' (*OFB XV*, 27); second, a foul stench in Denmark, 'when *Envy*, is gotten once in a State,

it traduceth even the best Actions thereof, and turneth them into an ill Odour.' (*OFB XV*, 30)

Despite the principles of the body economic becoming corrupted the 'web of things', or 'the world' as Bacon calls it, remains in place. The exchange form hastens social dissolution as revenge, as a usurious 'wild justice' takes precedence in terms of duty, service, and honour as an end in themselves rather than as markers of higher principles.

Hamlet's attempt to avenge his father leads to another dead father needing vengeance. Interestingly, while Hamlet prevaricates over 'hire and salary' not being an equal revenge, yet when killing Polonius, who he first believes to be Claudius, he shouts: 'How now, a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead.' (3.4.23) This exclamation suggests a return to 'hire and salary' way of thinking (Harold Jenkins in the Arden edition proposes that the 'ducat' is payment for killing the 'rat'). The transactional nature of revenge re-emerges, even with the reluctant mercer Hamlet.

Despite Polonius' death being a misrecognition, Laertes' duty of revenge gives Claudius the chance to be rid of Hamlet as well as rerouting Laertes anger (that was pointed at him). The relationship of Claudius and Laertes takes a transactional nature: 'Now must your conscience my acquittance seal, | And you must put me in your heart for friend' (4.7.1-2). Besides being the dismissal of a legal charge, 'acquittance' is also a payment of debt, a compensation or a settlement.<sup>430</sup> Claudius' payment is to help Laertes get revenge on Hamlet. Claudius plays on filial duty asking him, 'What would you undertake | To show yourself your father's son in deed | More than in words?' Laertes' response is significant: 'To cut his throat i'th' church.' (4.7.97-9) This takes us back to the 'hire and salary' of Hamlet and the refusal to enact a simple trade of a death for a death. Laertes has no such qualms: the abstracted equivalency of deaths is a mere trade in 'kind' with no consideration for the qualitative equivalence or even going beyond it. Bacon is suspicious

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<sup>430</sup> *OED* 'acquittance' n. 4 and 2.



of this kind of thinking: 'Certainly, in taking Revenge, A Man is but even with his Enemy; But in passing it over, he is Superiour: For it is a Princes part to Pardon.' (*OFB XV*, 16) This is echoed by the First Senator in Athens in discussing Alcibiades' transgressed soldier: 'To revenge is no valour, but to bear.' (3.6.39)

This is a truly biblical tension. On one hand, there is the *lex talionis*, or law of retaliation from the Old Testament: 'thou shalt give life for life, | Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, | Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.'<sup>431</sup> On the other hand, in the New Testament Jesus argues against the old law: 'Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you ... And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other ... And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.'<sup>432</sup> Bacon's Ciceronian take on friendship, a friend being 'another himselfe' is a reworking of Jesus' idea of love. But as the principles have eroded, Laertes reverts back to logic of simple equivalence in the transactional form that Claudius suggests: 'Requite him [Hamlet] for your father.' (4.7.112)

Nevertheless, Laertes' unflattering juxtaposition with Hamlet is far from making the prince a Jesus-like figure. Hamlet suspects that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are doing a service to the royal couple which would reap them a handsome reward considering his own importance. Indeed it was promised by Gertrude: 'For the supply and profit of our hope, | Your visitation shall receive such thanks | As fits a king's remembrance.' (2.2.24-6) Hamlet takes them to be greedy, using the analogy of 'a sponge'

that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end. He keeps them, like an ape an apple in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again. (4.2.13-20)

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<sup>431</sup> Exodus 21, 23-5.

<sup>432</sup> Luke 6, 27-31. In Matthew 5, 38-44 Jesus expressly denounces the code of Hammurabi, logic of an eye for and eye countering with his Great Commandment.

Instead of simply ‘playing’ Hamlet for rewards, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are instruments of Claudius that have very little value to him. Hamlet foretells their fate in England in his stead, sent by Claudius only to be ‘squeezed’ to death. Bacon marks a ‘useful warning’ about ‘sponges’ ‘for princes, that they commit not offices or the government of provinces to needy persons.’ (*SEH V*, 50) They were more enamoured to their ‘sponging service’ than to Hamlet, who remarks with irony that ‘they did make love to this employment’ (5.2.58)—the sexual *petit mort* replaced by an actual one.<sup>433</sup>

Service becomes a mere hunt for profit instead of the ‘perfect partnership’ of Bacon’s ‘mutual service’. As if to drive home the commodified sense of service and the circular nature of trade, a ship, the vehicle of international trade, arrives in Denmark. The (English) Ambassador comes to declare the fulfilment of his commission and ask for compensation: ‘Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. | Where should we have our thanks?’ (5.2.325-6) ‘Thanks’ is here in the sense of recompense and reward.<sup>434</sup>

The trade-like circularity of revenge is apparent in *Timon* as well, not least with Alcibiades. His banishment stems from pleading for his soldier, who has killed someone in Athens, to get his punishment on the battlefield and die there for Athens. Alcibiades’ argument has a strong transactional quality:

My lords, if not for any parts in him—  
 Though his right arm might *purchase* his own time  
 And be *in debt* to none—yet more to move you,  
 Take my *deserts* to his and join ’em both.  
 ...  
 I’ll *pawn* my victories, all my honour to you  
 Upon his *good returns*. (3.6.74-7, 80-1, my emphasis)

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<sup>433</sup> This ‘making love’ comment appears only in F. John Kerrigan, ‘Shakespeare as Reviser’, *On Shakespeare and Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 3-22 (p. 8), points to a difference in Hamlet’s suspicion of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: ‘Hamlet’s response is Folio-unique and linked to a chain of variants. Stung by Horatio’s criticism, and less sure of the pair’s complicity in F than Q2, Hamlet shrugs off blame with a bawdy jest.’ Conversely, I find the ‘bawdy jest’ consistent with Hamlet’s view of them desire-bound ‘sponges’, referring to their ‘baser nature’ (5.2.61) only a sentence later.

<sup>434</sup> *OED* ‘thank’ n. 9.

By uniting his own 'deserts'<sup>435</sup> with the future 'use' of the transgressed soldier, not only failed to purchase a suitable death for his soldier but instead bought his own banishment.

Alcibiades does get his revenge by uniting his cause with Timon (who buys his own revenge with gold). When seeking to requite their 'unkind'ness, a Senator pleads mercy from Alcibiades:

So did we woo  
Transformed Timon to our city's love  
By humble message and by promised means.  
We were not all unkind, nor all deserve  
The common stroke of war.' (5.5.18-22)

Here 'deserve' is part of an exchange rhetoric against Alcibiades' (and Timon's) revenge.

This is followed by a more calculated form of recompense: 'By decimation and a tithed death, | If thy revenges hunger for that food | Which nature loaths, take thou the destined tenth' (5.5.31-3) Death is dealt as a fine or tax with an accountant-like distance. Curiously, this mirrored by the senators' offer to Timon:

Together with a recompense more fruitful  
Than their offence can weigh down by the dram;  
Ay, even such heaps and sums of love and wealth  
As shall to thee blot out what wrongs were theirs,  
And write in thee the figures of their love,  
Ever to read them thine. (5.2.35-40)

'Love' for the senators comprises of sums and figures.<sup>436</sup> He allusion to scales performs a triple function: the scales of justice, and the scales of a merchant and apothecary.

Accordingly, 'dram' can refer to either the ancient Greek coin, drachm; to a weight (of equally Greek origin); or to measure of medicine.<sup>437</sup> The senators strangely mix the registers of death, restitution, love, and mercantile accounting. This is an affront to the affective 'unkind'ness Timon has experienced, who will not assent (though Alcibiades

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<sup>435</sup> *OED* 'desert' n.1 1a, becoming worthy of recompense; n.1 2a, an action or quality that deserves a fitting recompense (good or bad).

<sup>436</sup> Curiously, Hamlet, in a similar fit as to when he killed Polonius, succumbs to this way of thinking at Ophelia's grave: 'I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers | Could not, with all their quantity of love, | Make up my sum.' (5.1.266-8)

<sup>437</sup> *OED* 'dram' n.1 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

does). The suggestion of 'blotting out', to erase their 'unkind'ness from their ledger and moving that to Timon's ledger (transforming suffering into credit) in order to delete the transaction—and their admission of guilt—is tantamount to accounting fraud akin to Claudius' 'gilded hand' 'buying out the law'.

The social measure, honour is left in a strange situation with the social tumult. It too has some transactional value, as Alcibiades tried to 'pawn' his honour for his soldier's believing that '[a]n honour in [the soldier] buys out his fault' (3.6.17) Early in the play, Timon remarks that 'dishonour traffics with man's nature' (1.1.163) but with the loss of love it is honour that is associated with 'traffic'. Relatedly, Hamlet remarks:

Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honour's at stake. (4.4 additional passage J, 44-7 Q2)<sup>438</sup>

This cynical take on greatness suggests that honour is questionable when compelling action. Moreover, observing Fortinbras' troops marching to Poland Hamlet sees 'The imminent death of twenty thousand men... for a fantasy and trick of fame' (4.4 additional passage J, 51-2 Q2). This is juxtaposed to the notion, cited by Bacon, that 'Honour aspireth to [death]' (*OFB XV*, 10). Hamlet, ever suspicious about the cycle of death, undercuts the significance of honour in a corrupt world—fittingly, Bacon marked that 'Envy ... is the canker of Honour' (*OFB XV*, 164).

Hamlet is an unwilling participant in the cycle of revenge questioning not only its simplistic transactional character but also the whole point of revenge. Hamlet discusses Claudius to Horatio:

He that hath killed my king and whored my mother,  
Popped in between th'election and my hopes,  
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,  
And with such coz'nage—is't not perfect conscience  
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damned  
To let this canker of our nature come  
In further evil? (5.2.65-71)

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<sup>438</sup> In the Arden edition Harold Jenkins, like myself, interprets the construction as being 'true greatness is *not* this *but* that'.

I suggest an ambiguity here: does 'canker of our nature' refer to Claudius or to the urge to revenge, 'to quit' or repay Claudius?<sup>439</sup> Hamlet builds a case against Claudius, transgressing against his father, mother, and himself. Additionally, 'Cozenage' denoting deception but also being the homophone of 'cousinage' (noted by Jenkins in the Arden edition) returns us to Claudius wanting to take the triple role of king, father, and cousin. It would then follow that latter question would be a further argument for action in denouncing non-action. Yet a truly 'perfect conscience' would not forget Jesus arguing against the code of Hammurabi, especially a 'conscience' as well schooled as Hamlet is. To continue the cycle of revenge could also be the 'canker' or corruption of 'their nature'. Horatio's immediate reply draws attention back to the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and thus the cycle of revenge: 'It must be shortly known to him from England | What is the issue of the business there.' (5.2.72-3) However, Horatio does as well refer to Claudius as Hamlet's part in the cycle of revenge. Nevertheless, even this weakish ambiguity does suggest a hint of doubt in Hamlet at his most resolute right before the final scene.

Furthermore, Hamlet's mind, within a few lines, draws back to another unwilling participant in the cycle of revenge, namely Laertes. It is another sign of doubt as he is the one responsible for Polonius. Hamlet says: 'For by the image of my cause I see | The portraiture of his.' (5.2.78-9) This is a very loaded sentence: it is explicitly empathetic to Laertes but implicitly admitting culpability—the affinity is both with Laertes and Claudius. It signals the 'canker' within Hamlet's 'nature'.

The only transaction Hamlet is interested in this cycle is that with Laertes. But what is exchanged is not just deaths but also forgiveness. Laertes says to Hamlet as both are dying: 'Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. | Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, | Nor thine on me.' To this Hamlet replies: 'Heaven make thee free of it! I

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<sup>439</sup> *OED* 'quit' v. 1a, to pay a debt, penalty, or due; v. 3b, to repay or avenge; v. 3c, to be equal to, to match or balance. The equivocal character of 'quit' here suggests a strong link between commercial use, revenge, and the abstracted exchange logic.

follow thee.’ (5.2.281-4) Deaths are ‘blotted out’ from both ledgers (though Claudius’ ledger is all the more amended) and with forgiveness taking their place<sup>440</sup>—in the New Testament vein.

Although Hamlet is able to make amends with Laertes (though not Claudius), Timon goes to his grave in order *not* to make amends and perhaps to even hinder Alcibiades’ reconciliation. His final words suggest this: ‘What is amiss, plague and infection mend. | Graves only be men’s works, and death their gain. | Sun, hide thy beams. Timon hath done his reign.’ (5.2.106-8) Death is the only ‘gain’ with ‘plague and infection’ being corrective powers. Even the sun, the symbol of life, is not to touch ‘men’s works’. These are Timon’s final decrees.

Bacon’s theory of spirits and their workings in the body is a theory of death with the aim of extending life. Animate spirits repair the body and with these repairs and replacements it could potentially live forever. However, this is still speculation for Bacon.

He says:

The real truth is this. In declining age repair takes place very unequally, some parts being repaired successfully enough, others with difficulty and for the worse; so that from this time the human body begins to suffer that torture of Mezentius, whereby the living die in the embraces of the dead, and the parts that are easily repaired, by reason of their connection with the parts hardly reparable, begin to decay. (*SEH V*, 218)

Though Timon talks of diseases—which Bacon is not interested in—it is the ‘embrace of the dead’ that he wishes with his death to spread. Thinking of Timon (‘Dead | Is noble Timon, of whose memory | Hereafter more. 5.5.84-6) Alcibiades enters Athens as conqueror giving an ominous declaration: ‘I will use the olive with my sword, | Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each | Prescribe to other as each other’s leech.’ (5.5.87-9) Alcibiades depicts a situation akin to Mezentius who tied dead bodies to living ones binding war and

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<sup>440</sup> This is in line with Roberto Esposito’s negative sense of communal debt, something always owed to another, never to oneself. Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. by Timothy C. Campbell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), esp. 1-19.

peace together. So Timon becomes tied to Athens the dead to the living. *Timon* ends as *Hamlet* begins—with the embrace of dead spirits. As Timon’s death spreads to the Athenians, so did old Hamlet’s first to Polonius, then to Ophelia and everyone else in the two families. ‘Unequal’ distribution of ‘repair’ ‘unkind’ actions in the body economic: one part failing and being ‘no longer equal to their proper functions; and hence it results that very soon the whole tends to dissolution’ (*SEH V*, 218).

The cyclical character of revenge functions like the circle of commerce encapsulated in the word ‘return’ referring to money, gain, or profit as well as commodities that come back in exchange for those sent out.<sup>441</sup> ‘Return’ in three steps encapsulates *Timon of Athens*. Firstly, for an Athenian lord, gifting Timon ‘breeds the giver a return exceeding | All use of quittance.’ (1.1.282-3) Secondly, Flavius has gone to seek financial aid from Timon’s friends and reports back to him: ‘I am here | No richer in return.’ (2.2.198-9) Thirdly, beseeched by Senators to ‘return with [them]’ (5.2.44, also 89) the Athens threatened by Alcibiades Timon refuses all such suggestions forcing them to go back as Flavius did earlier: ‘Our hope in him is dead. Let us return’ (5.2.111). Revenge, money, commodities are all part of body economic’s circulation.

Interestingly, Claudius uses a metaphor of to encapsulate this polyvocality of ‘return’:

my arrows  
 Too slightly timbered for so loud a wind,  
 Would have reverted to my bow again,  
 And not where I had aimed them. (4.7.21-4)

Claudius is explaining to Laertes why he did not punish Hamlet for the killing of Polonius. In that the shot arrow returning to the bow is a potent metaphor to explain the circularity of hostility, particularly revenge. Bacon, in the essay on revenge, describes two ways of avenging: one, ‘the more Generous’, ‘when they take *Revenge*, are Desirous the party should know, whence it commeth’; but others, ‘Base and Crafty Cowards, are like the

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<sup>441</sup> OED ‘return’ n. 2a and d.

Arrow, that flyeth in the Darke.’ (*OFB XV*, 17) Shooting an arrow in the dark is like shooting an arrow in strong wind, no one knows where it will hit. They are like ‘[t]he slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’ (3.1.60) as Hamlet alludes to in his famous soliloquy. Moreover, this bow and arrow imagery returns when Hamlet apologises to Laertes: ‘I have shot mine arrow o’er the house | And hurt my brother.’ (5.2.189-90) Additionally, in *Titus Andronicus* (the bloodiest of revenge cycles) in 4.3 the Andronici begin their revenge by shooting arrows with letters to gods into the night sky towards Saturnine’s palace. Most important for us, however, is the ‘Tartar’s bow’, which for Bacon, like for Claudius, ‘do[es] shoot back’ (*SEH III*, 396) returning us to words and the Idols of the Marketplace.

Magic for Bacon is the ‘knowledge of hidden forms to the production of wonderful [why not also sinister] operations’ as mentioned above. Magic is hence not supernatural (with that definition he wishes to purify the concept of magic), it is merely beyond our immediate observation. His theory of spirits being derived in part from alchemy also belongs to this category of magic. In that, I would add the workings language under this rubric with that of money and the exchange form with their uncanny transformative ability. The ‘knowledge of hidden forms’ reminds us of Richard’s Protean powers in Chapter 1, which pale in comparison to Timon description of gold.

The cycle of revenge coinciding with the circle of revenge in the bow and arrow metaphor bespeak of a hidden operation not immediately understood nor controlled. The ‘Tartar’s bow’ is Bacon’s reflection on the obfuscating power of language, ‘the false appearances that are imposed upon us by words’. Bacon says: ‘yet certain it is that words, as a Tartar’s bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment’ (*SEH IV*, 396).<sup>442</sup> Reading this back to the bow and

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<sup>442</sup> Michael Kiernan (*OFB IV*, 311) traces this to Bacon’s parliamentary speech in 1597 where he discusses Essex’s raid on the Spanish: ‘sure I am it was like a Tartar’s or Parthian’s bow, which shooteth backward, and had a most strong and violent effect’ (*SEH IX*, 89). This refers to the ability to shoot backwards on horseback, not shooting at themselves. However, I am partial to read ‘Tartar’ as referring to Tartarus, the lowest part of Hades, which Plato in *Gorgias* described as a place of



arrow metaphors, they describe situations of unknown, unintentional, or unwanted outcomes despite the seeming control of the weapon and its projectile that find their way back to shooter. Words are like the arrows that are shot in to the wind or dark. The risk in their use resembles that of commerce: the promise of reward can bring destitution instead.

Bacon links language to money as they both have a signifying function. He marks that ‘words are the tokens current and accepted for conceits, as moneys are for values, and that it is fit men be not ignorant that moneys may be of another kind than gold and silver’ (*SEH III*, 400). By analogy, the transformative power of money, gold is possessed by language to a similar extent. This is, again, a magical relationship: the world of spells where ‘[f]air is foul, and foul is fair’ and words can produce wonderful or sinister operations.<sup>443</sup> Speaking on the union of England and Scotland, Bacon notes there is a special kind of magical effect in uniting under the same name:

For Name, though it seem but a superficial and outward matter, yet it carrieth much impression and enchantment. The general and common name of Græcia made the Greeks always apt to unite (though otherwise full of divisions amongst themselves) against other nations, whom they called barbarous. (*SEH X*, 96-7)

Though a literally nominal unity, it is the basis for a shared identity, a communal bond and indeed, as argued above, is the basis for the body economic. It is the difference between the self and other, kind and stranger. Even knowing the name of something or someone creates a bond, with a name having some power over its referent as money bears over value—this is central to the exchange form.

As has been discussed the link between sign and referent (word and action, money and value) is pivotal to exchange whatever form it takes. A basic equivalence, a ‘kind’ness needs to be in place. But in both *Hamlet* and *Timon* ‘kind’ness breaks down, especially on a

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divine punishment for the wicked. Hence, the bow of Tartarus, would be a suitable poetic name for a bow that shoots back at itself. Cf. ‘Pluto send you word, | If you will have revenge from hell, you shall.’ (*Titus Andronicus* 4.3.38-9)

<sup>443</sup> On word and magic see Paolo Rossi, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, trans. by Sacha Rabinovitch (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).

linguistic level. The seminal link that breaks is between word and action, promise and performance.

Meeting in the wilderness outside Athens the disenchanted Timon declares to Alcibiades: 'Promise me friendship, but perform none. If thou wilt promise, gods plague thee, for thou art a man. If thou dost not perform, confound thee, for thou art a man.' (4.3.73-6) What Timon suggests here is a detachment of the material and ideal as money did from gold as the bullionists feared—but even Bacon said above that 'money may be of another kind than gold and silver'. Yet what Timon is saying goes deeper: if promise is detached from performance, money no matter what form it takes is worthless. Modern money still bears this bond: the £10 note still states 'I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of ten pounds' next to the impression of the monarch.

However, it is Timon from whom this breach originates in the play. Early on Flavius laments his master's ostentatious if charitable lifestyle:

He commands us to provide and give great gifts,  
And all out of an empty coffer;  
Nor will he know his purse, or yield me this:  
To show him what a beggar his heart is,  
Being of no power to make his wishes good.  
His promises fly so beyond his state  
That what he speaks is all debt, he owes  
For every word. He is so kind that he now  
Pays interest for't. His land's put to their books.  
Well, would I were gently put out of office  
Before I were forced out.  
Happier is he that has no friend to feed  
Than such that do e'en enemies exceed.  
I bleed inwardly for my lord.' (1.2.192-205)

Here many issues intersect: kindness and friendship, words/promises and actions. Even the blood imagery ties in with Timon's own suffering-to-be. Though Timon 'owes for every word' his poverty lies in his friends. Strangeness is evident throughout: gifts out of emptiness, heart as a beggar, speaking is debt, usury in kindness, lands in books, enemies preferred to friends. Without a context this would be gibberish—which underlines the

transformative power of money and words. A word without some action or concept linked to it becomes gibberish, meaningless. However, promise without performance is a broken promise, a 'kind'ness that is unkind, a false appearance, or, as Bacon would term it, an idol. It is still something although it is declared nothing. Even a Timon without any wealth has debts. A broken bond is still a type of bond. The non-identity of promise and performance leaves a trace of what could, or more strongly, what should have been. Before heading into these ethical implications of negativity, let's first look closer at a false appearance.

Timon extends the division of promise from performance into 'seeming' and 'being': 'Pity not honoured age for his white beard; | He is an usurer. Strike me the counterfeit matron; | It is her habit only that is honest, | Herself's a bawd.' (4.3.112-5) The separation of appearance and essence is what Bacon does with his theory of the idols: we cannot immediately perceive the world as it is—we can only test what *seems* if that turns out to *be* what it seems. With no trust Timon perceives every promise, appearance as false, as a 'counterfeit'.

Hamlet too inhabits a disenchanted world. However, with no trust in familial bonds, friendship (particularly in the form of Horatio) still offers him some promise. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern prove to be the litmus test of his trust. Hamlet is trying to establish a base line for interaction with them which entails the reassessment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's character and trustworthiness. Hamlet makes a solemn appeal:

But let me conjure you by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me whether you were sent for or no.

ROSENCRANTZ (to Guildenstern) What say you?

HAMLET Nay then, I have an eye of you—if you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN My lord, we were sent for. (2.2.285-94)

This amounts to a direct confrontation on the socially binding duties by appealing to an earlier, primal shared experience. These evocations are all forms of kindness, a shared

similarity and mutuality which Hamlet appropriates as an oath, an 'obligation' to establish a kindly, equal exchange with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He 'charges' them to 'be even and direct', a demand from promise to be equated with performance. By this Hamlet wants to know if their immediate friendship is actually mediated by the bonds of service to Claudius thus making them compromised and even untrustworthy. Despite the weight or 'charge' put on their 'love' for 'direct' communication, Rosencrantz fails Hamlet's request by deflecting to Guildenstern instead of replying directly to Hamlet.

The significance of whether or not Rosencrantz and Guildenstern 'were sent for' is indeed in the division of loyalties. Hamlet confirms that 'the obligation of their ever-preserved love' is not sufficient as they are under an obligation to another. Robert Sanderson, following a legal definition, describes 'the nature and force of Obligation' as 'a Bond of Law, whereby a man is bound to pay that which he oweth.'<sup>444</sup> In being 'sent for', Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are implicitly bound to offer their service to their liege. Although Hamlet plays at offering them something 'more dear', he knows that if Claudius has gotten to them first, his devised oath of mutuality cannot supersede their obligation to Claudius. This follows the hypothesis made by Sanderson: 'An oath maketh not a former obligation void.'<sup>445</sup> Despite Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's prevarication and deflection, Hamlet's well-formulated question about loyalty in the form of being 'sent for' does not put them in conflict with their obligation to Claudius. Because, although 'the mutual obligation between the husband and wife, the father and son, the master and servant, the Prince and his subjects' cannot be 'destructive', it can be 'constructive': an oath 'may lay an obligation where there was none before, or strengthen one that lay before, but it cannot take away that which it findeth, or impose another which is repugnant to it.'<sup>446</sup> Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's obligation to Claudius is not endangered by them admitting to being

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<sup>444</sup> Robert Sanderson, *De Juramento: Seven Lectures concerning the Obligation of Promissory Oathes* (London: 1655), p. 22.

<sup>445</sup> Sanderson, p. 58.

<sup>446</sup> Sanderson, pp. 58-9.

'sent for'. Nevertheless, it reveals their divided loyalties and due to the pervasive character of the king's influence, his spirit, Hamlet cannot trust them.

Significantly, Hamlet 'conjures' this out of them. This suitably magical word means to swear together deriving from the Latin 'con-' (together) and 'iurare' (to swear, make an oath).<sup>447</sup> This delves into primordial roots of society, of the marketplace presenting the magical bond of words and money. There is a curious discrepancy between Hamlet's treatment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern when compared to Marcellus and Horatio. I suggest 'conjurat[i]on' is central here. Besides the 'kindness' of friendship, Hamlet has Marcellus and Horatio swear 'upon [his] sword' (1.5.151, 156, 162)—three times. The sword forms a cross by which Hamlet calls on god to be present, but instead is punctuated and reinforced by the Ghost always crying 'Swear' immediately after Hamlet proposes the oath 'upon the sword'.<sup>448</sup> This supernatural visitation underlines a magical, conjured bond between them—that which Hamlet does not get from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Moreover it evokes an oath of necessity by an address from beyond death. 'It is a very common tradition', Bacon writes in *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, 'that of the one oath by which the gods bound themselves when they meant to leave no room for repentance' is when 'they invoked in witness ... Styx' (*SEH VI*, 706). Bacon explains the significance: 'Necessity is elegantly represented under the figure of Styx; the fatal river across which no man can return.' (*SEH VI*, 707) This added authority invoked by the Ghost is enough to instill Hamlet with trust.

Nevertheless, this only represents a single oasis in the desert of broken oaths. Again, Gertrude's union with Claudius stands out. Hamlet chastises Gertrude of her second marriage:

Such an act ... makes marriage vows

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<sup>447</sup> *OED* 'conjure' v. I and II, also etymology section.

<sup>448</sup> See John Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Binding Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); William Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Promises* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)

As false as dicers' oaths—O, such a deed  
As from the body of contraction plucks  
The very soul, and sweet religion makes  
A rhapsody of words.' (3.4.39, 43-7).

Gertrude's 'vow', her promise is lost in performance. Hamlet links this to a body losing its soul, which reflects loss of sovereign power in the body economic. Contracts lose their meaning, they are merely 'a rhapsody of words'. With losing the soul, the equivalence and equity that it enforced, is lost as well. However, a body can live without soul: in early modern terms it would not be a human body but an animal body. Within the animal body there is still life, with animate spirits keeping it moving. For the body economic that would imply that the unfettered exchange form, the mere tool, becomes sovereign. In this, words have no meaning but only as means for gain.

Flattery is the inflation of words, it is in an inverse relation to the value of words.

Hamlet talks to Horatio denying that, in praising him, he flatters:

Nay, do not think I flatter;  
For what advancement may I hope from thee,  
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits  
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered? (3.2.54-7)

Hamlet perceives flattery as a mere means to 'advancement', to receive something back from the flattered—only rich people are to 'be flattered', like Timon.

Timon's susceptibility to flattery is noted by Flavius when speaking to him about the debts: 'O my lord, the world is but a word. | Were it all yours to give it in a breath, | How quickly were it gone.' (2.2.149-51) Further on Flavius returns to the breath imagery: 'Ah, when the means are gone that buy this praise, | The breath is gone whereof this praise is made.' (2.2.166-7) Words as 'breath' is contrasted to words as bonds or words written down. These two types of words are only equivalent when 'breath', the speaker has means—and their promise is followed by performance.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Doll in *Thomas More*, talks of More not having credit behind his words ... but gets pardon for her and becomes Lord Chancellor. This is in stark contrast to Bacon, who ended his public career in a bribing scandal ... his word could not be trusted.

Honour is in this sense a form of credit, a guarantor of 'breathy' words. Early in the play *Timon* is able to declare: 'mine honour on my promise.' (1.1.152) But again, as an equally disenchanted Falstaff, there is nothing behind honour than 'breath': 'What is honour? A word. What is in that word 'honour'? What is that 'honour'? Air.' (1 *Henry IV*, 5.1.133-5) This brings us back again to the insubstantiality of words. They are signs that have lost their referent. Yet words like money that is not gold or silver still works. 'Breath' has affective power as Gertrude hears of her husband's fratricide from Hamlet: 'Be thou assured, if words be made of breath, | And breath of life, I have no life to breathe | What thou hast said to me.' (3.4.181-3) 'Breath' alludes to spirits, Bacon's 'tenuous body' that is akin to both fire and air.

Both empty words and false coins seem to work in the corrupt, 'unkind' bodies of Denmark and Athens. This is where the magic comes in for words, money, and spirits. Both *Timon* and *Hamlet* are obsessed with false appearances and true action. *Timon's* 'counterfeit matron' contrasted with the Ghost of old Hamlet being the 'truepenny' (1.5.152) that validates oaths.<sup>450</sup> Interestingly, the poor *Timon* in presenting a false image of his former self still has the power to compel, as a lord remarks of the invitation to what is to be the 'false feast': 'He hath sent me an earnest inviting, which many my near occasions did urge me to put off, but he hath conjured me beyond them, and I must needs appear.' (3.7.9-12) *Timon's* false image compels action, appearance in the lord. But a major point is made here: despite the lord invoking 'conjunction', imperatives 'must needs', they choose to appear the false feast. Like *Misselden* and *Mun* argued against bullionists, words and money have the value society gives them. Despite *Hamlet* railing with 'counterfeit presentments' to Gertrude about the non-identity of old Hamlet and Claudius (3.5.53)

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<sup>450</sup> Another instance is *Polonius* telling *Ophelia* that *Hamlet's* 'tenders' are not 'sterling' (1.3.167-8). *OED* 'sterling' n.1 3, genuine English money; adj. 2c, figurative sense of having currency (also *Richard II* 4.1.254); adj. 4, of character, qualities, person, capable of standing every test. *Hamlet* talks to the actors: 'Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring.' (2.2.430-1). Moreover, *Apemantus* has several invectives against falsity.

Claudius is still king, chosen above Hamlet. Non-bullion money, counterfeit kings bespeak our collusion in 'unkind'ness.<sup>451</sup>

Spirits are neutral in their actions, it depends on the constitution of the body how they work or how they are commanded to work. Economy is the same: it does nothing that it is not made to do. If this tool is given a sovereign position it will still do what it is made to do; but this leaves no agency to the other parts of that body. Hence the exchange form becomes an internalised ideology that affects the workings of the body as if by some external law. This lies behind the Senator's judgment on Timon moving from 'it cannot hold' to 'it will not hold': he is merely upholding what he sees as an immutable law. An individual, in a key position in the body economic can affect the whole, as Bacon points out:

For each man brings his own idols—I am not now speaking of those of the stage, but particularly of those of the market-place and the cave—and applies them, like his own vernacular, to the interpretation of nature, snatching at any facts which fit in with his preconceptions and forcing everything else into harmony with them.<sup>452</sup>

These thoughts can be false philosophies that spread to the whole body, as they do for Hamlet and especially Timon: 'I am sick of this false world' (4.3.378).<sup>453</sup> Bacon, with youthful bile, declares: 'Your philosophers are more fabulous than poets. They debauch our minds. They substitute false coinage for the true.'<sup>454</sup>

Idols act upon the mind through fascination. Bacon elaborates:

Fascination is the power and act of imagination, intensive upon other bodies than the body of the imaginant ... And herein comes in crookedly and dangerously a palliation of a great part of Ceremonial Magic. For it may be pretended that Ceremonies, Characters, and Charms, do work not by any tacit or sacramental contract with evil spirits, but serve only to strengthen the imagination of him that useth it; as images are said by the

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<sup>451</sup> For Marx, the magic of money arises from the embedded labour in the symbols (*Capital I*, p. 187).

<sup>452</sup> Bacon, 'The Masculine Birth of Time', trans. by Benjamin Farrington, in Farrington, Benjamin, *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964).

<sup>453</sup> Moreover, the Poet and the Painter represent the embeddedness of this kind of counterfeits in culture. 'Thou counterfeit'st most lively.' Timon sarcastically declares (5.1.80).

<sup>454</sup> Bacon, 'Masculine Birth of Time', p. 63.



Roman church to fix the cogitations and raise the devotions of them that pray before them. (*SEH III*, 381).

Magic, through fascination, can direct the minds of people who partake in it.<sup>455</sup> Therefore, all the parts of the body economic can be controlled by its sovereign power. But once a thought or practice instigated by an individual becomes a guiding principle, like the exchange form as *the* idol of 'kind'ness, then it is a constitutive, *natural* part of the body economic.

Finally, returning to the negative ethics, the non-identity of promise and performance that characterises the 'unkind' economic bodies of Denmark and Athens can be challenged by the true presentation of a counterfeit as *Hamlet* and *Timon* does. The tragedy lies in the protagonists succumbing to the same logic they deplore. Their attempt at equity through revenge is highly significant. Due to the *alienation* from symbolic powers and *disenchantment* from love and charity, Hamlet and Timon revert to the crude exchange logic of *lex talionis*, which offers at least an affective and immediate result—like modern commodity transactions—though leaving a trace of dissatisfaction.

This idol of 'kind'ness is reified thought functioning as a social logic. Russ McDonald suggests reification as a virtue of Shakespeare and of theatrical language.<sup>456</sup> Although this is perfectly understandable and to an extent I agree with McDonald, this sense of 'reification' misses the ethical impetus that its technical use conveys: reification is not merely a Latinate term for things becoming thing-like, emphatically material, but it also describes the form of social relations. Reification, in its Adornian sense, is about the relationship between people becoming like the relationship between things. The relation between everyone is abstracted to be like those of objects. Thus signifiers being used like coins or tokens, merely exchangeable but not usable, uncovers 'unkind' social relations with the sovereignty of the individual is lost as words like false coins lose their 'magical' efficacy when collusion ends.

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<sup>455</sup> This is what Marx refers to with commodity fetishism in chapter 1 of *Capital I*.

<sup>456</sup> Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 8.

The 'unkind' distribution of spirits in the body economic by the implicit trace of the missing 'kind'ness. '[B]y the law of nature', Bacon suggests, 'all men in the world are naturalized one towards another; they were all made of one lump of earth, of one breath of God; they had the same common parents; nay, at first they were, as the Scripture sheweth, *unius labii*, of one language' (*SEH VII*, 664).

## Conclusion

The main argument of this thesis is that the idols of nature both hide and facilitate the (self)destructive causality of fate in Shakespeare's tragedies. Building on Bacon's idols of the mind, I demonstrated how the mind as the medium is susceptible to manipulation, both on an individual and a societal level, thus influencing actions. Taking on the complex conceptual guise of nature, these idols produce a seemingly unquestionable ideology, a seemingly sheer facticity that justifies hostile actions. The idols of nature create an interpretation either through suggestion and skewed evidence or through a societal spirit of commercial, abstracting logic and discourse that overrides alternative modes of thinking.

In the introduction, I demonstrated how the causality of fate is a prevalent issue not only in Shakespeare's plays but also touched on by many critics. However, no one has attempted to answer how the causality of fate can happen, even though it is so well-known as a phenomenon. As I argued, Bacon is in a unique position to help address this problem, particularly through his well-known but under-examined theory of idols of the mind. Indeed, Bacon's idols offer the central premise of this thesis: his idols are a description of the mechanism of human nature as a theory of the embodied socially influenced mind. Bacon's theory of the idols gives the form (in the Baconian sense) of our nature but does not prescribe the content. The social influence is a necessary part of the mind, but susceptible to change. This mechanism opens up the possibility of freedom in a determined world. Indeed, it is the very idea of nature and the natural, in all its complexity, that played a thematically central part in this thesis. That very complexity, coupled with our embodied being, is why Bacon put such a strong emphasis on interpretation: the mind mediates, with its distorting idols, everything we perceive. Therefore, as I argued, ideology is not something from which we can escape. In order to get to any semblance of actual nature,

interpretation is necessary. This Baconian twist on facticity has implications for ethical action, as chapters 1 and 2 demonstrated, with regards to Shakespearean tragedy.

Of course, I could have chosen any combination of Shakespearean tragedies to analyse in the Baconian light. For example, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* read through Bacon's idols of the cave would offer a lot to analyse in terms of the rise of the individual in the early modern period. However, my choice of plays is not random by any means. I had two starting points: one looked at villainy, how an individual works on society; the other at alienation, how society works on the individual. The destruction wrought by Richard, early in the Shakespearean canon, was paralleled by Timon's fall from grace, a late play. Richard found a partner in Iago and Timon in Hamlet, or rather Athens in Denmark. The stage villains shared a devotion to their nearly successful villainy as well as a dramatic flair akin to the medieval Vice-characters. Athens and Denmark, on the other hand, shared a figurative connection in the conjoined allegories of the giant wheel and the mountain.

Moreover, the starting point in terms of the idols was effectively chosen by the plays themselves: the idols of the theatre was obvious for *Richard III* and *Othello* as was the idols of the marketplace for *Timon of Athens* and *Hamlet*. These idols were also the most important for Bacon: idols of the marketplace were expressly 'the biggest nuisance of all' (*JSNO*, 48), whereas Bacon spilt the most ink on the idols of the theatre. However, in order to answer the problem posed by the causality of fate, the reliance on a simple application of these idols was not sufficient. On one hand, Bacon's idols were intertwined, implicit in each other. The plays themselves, on the other hand, influenced my reading of the idols.

Chapter 1 argued that the deception perpetrated by Richard and Iago happens by manipulating the interpretation of appearance. Although, the idols of the theatre describe ideological operations, *Richard III* and *Othello* put the focus on the agency of the villains—they play an active role in the manipulation. As Bacon does not really address this type of agency regarding his idols, the plays made me look not at what Bacon was describing but at

the natural philosopher doing the describing. Reading the villains as wicked natural philosophers framed the idols of the theatre only as the most important of the tools used. The other idols, as I demonstrated, played their part too. The focus of villainous agency brought dissemblance to the fore: the Protean bifurcation creates a deceptive appearance; whereas the Machiavellian dissection is about the nature dominating attitude of activity and instrumental reason. These idols of (dis)semblance, the ability and will to deceive, create an illusion of natural superiority and dominance for the villains that hide the downfall by their very own instruments.

In chapter 2 I argued that Shakespeare in *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens* represents and implicitly criticises how an early modern form of reification operates in the societies of Denmark and Athens: the dominant mode of thinking alienates its members and turns them against themselves and their respective communities. As with the previous chapter, the plays forced me to look more deeply into the imagery Bacon used for idols of the marketplace. Bacon's interest in equivalency (words and their referents) struck a chord with Hamlet's justification of being cruel in order to be kind. Thus 'kind'ness in its three forms superseded Bacon's idols of the marketplace. Although, words in Bacon's critique still played an important part, economic thinking and its abstractive logic of exchange (stemming from the idols of the tribe) became the dominating idol of nature. Here, nature as a (culturally constructed) given gave the idols of 'kind'ness their power.

This thesis had several aims: first and foremost, to explain how destructive actions become self-destructive and how self-destructive actions are linked to a broader social hostility. I have demonstrated how this happens through what I named the idols of nature. I explored these through two main categories, both of which focused on two Shakespearean tragedies. Second, I wanted to highlight an underread part Bacon's works, namely his theory of idols, in the contexts of philosophical Shakespeare criticism and modern continental philosophy—especially in relation to the ideology critique both of

these share. Third, building on the previous aim, I wanted to emphasise the epistemological and ethical problems with regard to questions of nature, emerging especially in recent literary criticism and theory.

While I did achieve these aims, particularly with regards to the workings of the causality of fate, the final aim merits a more direct engagement, which I could not fit here. Moreover, although I did explain how the idols of nature work, the reasons why it works merits more research: is there a yearning for a simplified ethical life, morally black and white with less shades of grey? Furthermore, the argument of this thesis could be further enhanced with an additional two chapters, looking at more Shakespearean tragedies in conjunction with Bacon's idols of the cave and tribe.

Nevertheless, all of my aims come together in the underlying topic of this thesis, namely that the mind is the medium of experience, perception, and action. While the form of the mind can be naturally structured—as suggested by Bacon's idols—the content is socially constructed. This is evident in the Baconian idol-structure of both idols of (dis)semblance and 'kind'ness. The idols of the tribe play a crucial role in the workings of both idols of nature: the dissembling ability is premised on the embodied and sense-bound cognition; the abstracting quality of the human mind (which 'pre-supposes and feigns in nature a greater equality and uniformity that really is', *SEH IV*, 432) in the idols 'kind'ness is derived from the *idola tribus*. The social constructedness of mind, on the other hand, is evident from the fact that mind can be manipulated whether by villains or social mores.

The idols of nature, by facilitating tragedy, have an implicit negative ethics linked to it. Instrumental reason, prevalent in both chapters, suggests bringing back a focus on the ends of humans: Richard need not be determined as a villain, nor Timon be abandoned by his friends. Indeed, the whole tension in tragedy is that it need not happen even though it does. If the tragedy presents us with an 'is', we feel that it 'ought not'. This is the conundrum the causality of fate, in my speculatively aesthetic reading of Shakespeare,

points to: if there is indeed a causality to ethical action, we need not be fatefully determined.

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