

BESHERE, ROBERT C., Ph.D. "What's in a Name?": Theorizing an Etymological Dictionary of Shakespearean Characters. (2009)  
Directed by Dr. Christopher Hodgkins. 184 pp.

Just like Shakespeare's seemingly endless play on the word "will" in his sonnets, the names of his characters themselves hold context clues in their linguistic, historical, mythological, and teleological roots. These context clues inform readers, scholars, and even directors and actors of elements of the characters' personae, behaviors, and possible involvement in the plot. The dissertation will propose that Shakespeare reverses a derivation of character in which authors first determine a form for a character's name that does not necessarily reflect the character's purpose. Shakespeare, instead, creates a *purpose-driven* form, in which his characters' names reflect their individual functions in the plots. The characters' names are journeys for themselves, whether they earn the name's meanings or, not unlike the great tragic figures, fall from the grace, glory, and power that has been afforded to and associated with their names. All the while, Shakespeare is investing in the "psychology of the audience," having the audience witness and join the journey rather than dictate the journey's destination at the outset.

Thus, Juliet's inquiry -- "What's in a name?" -- carries much more than just a bemoaning of unfortunate and unlucky circumstances. Her inquiry inadvertently reveals the overwhelming potency of names, an indication that Shakespeare himself held nomenclature and the process of naming as a paramount practice in determining character. This dissertation theorizes a dictionary that categorizes all of Shakespeare's characters and explores the etymological roots of each, as well as cultural, historical, mythological, and religious allusions that the names contain.

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?": THEORIZING AN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY  
OF SHAKESPEAREAN CHARACTERS

by

Robert C. Beshere

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro

2009

Approved by

---

Committee Chair

To Mom. I'm here because of you.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Christopher Hodgkins

Committee Members \_\_\_\_\_

Jennifer Keith

\_\_\_\_\_

Hephzibah Roskelly

\_\_\_\_\_

Michelle Dowd

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Acceptance by Committee

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Oral Examination

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to my dissertation advisor Dr. Christopher Hodgkins. Our meetings shed light on much of the research that is present in the following document. I also would like to thank the members of my committee: Dr. Jennifer Keith, Dr. Hephzibah Roskelly, and Dr. Michelle Dowd. Your support and guidance during the process is and always will be greatly appreciated. Thank you all for helping me during this invaluable learning process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER   |      |
| I. A DICTIONARY DEFINED.....  | 1    |
| II. REVERLY AND FOOLERY: ONOMASTICS OF THE COMEDIES.....                    | 38   |
| III. FALLS FROM GRACE: TRAGIC ONOMASTICS .....                              | 67   |
| IV. ALTERNATIVE PASTS: ONOMASTICS OF THE HISTORIES<br>AND ROMAN PLAYS ..... | 96   |
| V. MAROONING, MYSTERY, AND MIRACLE: ONOMASTICS<br>OF THE ROMANCES .....     | 127  |
| VI. A DICTIONARY DILENEATED.....  | 157  |
| WORKS CITED.....  | 166  |
| APPENDIX: AN INDEX OF SEVERAL OF THE “B” NAMES.....                         | 171  |

CHAPTER I  
A DICTIONARY DEFINED

JULIET: O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?  
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,  
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

...

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.  
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.  
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
**What's in a name?** That which we call a rose  
By any other word would smell as sweet.

*(Romeo and Juliet, 2.1.75-86; bold mine)*

Juliet's famous inquiry to the night sky at the opening of Act 2 reveals much more than an excited adolescent girl's infatuation. It also expresses specific concern for an epic feud, the repercussions of which have tarnished two good families' names in a noble Italian city. Through this, the audience learns that this play has very little room for the love and kinship that Juliet and her beloved wish to share. They are trapped in a world where their families' spite for each other dominates the action. They are only physically together in five scenes and they share a fraction of the dialogue in the play.<sup>1</sup> The play boasts over 2000 lines of dialogue, yet the titular characters are physically present with each other for barely ten percent of its action. Finally, and perhaps most evocatively, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Only one scene of which contains the two together at the outset: 3.5. However, they only share 59 lines within it. The other four scenes are: 1.5 (for a mere eighteen lines); 2.1 (for 179 lines); 2.5 (for 21 lines); and 5.3 (in which they share no lines of dialogue but are in the same place for only 85 lines).

characters' names only appear together in the same line *once*. And it is the last two lines of the entire play: "For never was a story of more woe/Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3.308-9). Textually, they are not physically together until the very end of the play in the last, effusive breath of the actor playing Prince Escalus of Verona.

The opening sonnet also indicates the feud as the major plotline within the play.

The first four lines paint the backdrop against which the "love" story is set:

Two households both alike in dignity  
In fair Verona where we lay our scene,  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
(1.0.1-4)

This action dominates the piece, with Romeo and Juliet's *amore* occurring in secret. The scenes mentioned before happen after hours, behind closed doors, in the nooks and crannies of the story. Furthermore, only a handful of other characters (including the Nurse and the friars) know of their trysts, love, and marriage. Their story is made bare to Verona and the world only after it is too late.

However, Jacques Derrida indicates to us that through the power of names and nomenclature – ironically the very force keeping them apart – Romeo and Juliet live eternally to love one another. "Romeo and Juliet...missed each other, how they missed each other! Did they miss each other? But they also survived, *both of them*, survived *one another*, in their name through a studied effect of contrempe: an unfortunate crossing, by chance, of temporal and aphoristic series" (Derrida 417). But it is their names, their identities, which allow them to escape finally to be together. Romeo and Juliet escape to

our world (our imaginations when we read or see the play), where they can exist as the paragons of eternal love. This escape, of course, is the supposition and meaning we have placed on their existence. Engraved in our culture is the supposition that if someone loves a “Romeo” or a “Juliet” then that person is his or her one true love, regardless. Yet the play would have us believe that their togetherness is not possible, that the characters’ love and lust for one another is secondary and, in some ways, does not even exist due to the other characters’ ignorance. However, it cannot be denied that these two names now are synonymous with eternal, unrestricted love. We forget the “Montague” and the “Capulet” and think only of the adolescent attraction that blossomed into the greatest love story ever told on stage. Within this well-known tragic love story, Shakespeare also greatly emphasizes the power of nomenclature.

Thus, Juliet's inquiry -- "What's in a name?" -- holds much more than just a bemoaning of unfortunate and unlucky circumstances. Her inquiry inadvertently reveals the overwhelming potency of names, an indication that Shakespeare himself held nomenclature and the process of naming as a paramount practice in determining character. Simultaneously, her speech also displays how Shakespeare could hobble language and just as quickly take away the power afforded to names. Ironically, the names "Capulet" and "Montague" thus have turned out to matter tragically, but only in the world of the play. We forget their surnames when we think of the tragic lovers, thus answering Juliet's inquiry. But, since *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy, such an answer comes at a high cost. Once again, Shakespeare shows the inherent duality and even

polyvalence in their multiple connotations, aural and visual puns, and socio-cultural meanings such as slang or jargon in *all* language, *all* words.

Essentially, it is naïve to assume that Shakespeare was not operating similarly with proper names. He works with names the exactly as he does with common words of all parts of speech. Just as he blurs the connotations of words, he too plays with the assumption that characters' names in dramatic art are either fixed, arbitrary, or both. Proper names are malleable and can change meaning like any other part of speech in an ever-evolving language such as Early Modern English. Thus, Shakespeare answers the question that his tragic heroine poses with a resounding, "whatever we want to be in it, whatever *we* make of it." "Montague" and "Capulet" carry meanings of feuding, separation, and impossible reconciliation as well as their etymological roots; all of these meanings are paramount to the action of the play and, therefore, keep the tragic lovers apart. This is merely one example in a myriad of connotations throughout the 38 plays. Thus, I propose a volume that categorizes these potential meanings of character names – like the many volumes before that categorize the multivalent meanings of common words.

There exist dictionaries for nearly every kind of Shakespearean word. B.J. and Mary Sokol composed an entire dictionary of Shakespeare's legal language and how he uses these words. For example, the entry on "election" reads: "**Election** (A) Shakespeare often uses "to elect" or "election" to refer to either a personal choice, or the choosing of leaders. 'Election' refers to the choosing of kings of high officials of Shakespeare's Rome, Scotland, medieval England, and Denmark" (107). Most Shakespearean

dictionaries – like the Sokols’ – define the word and then how Shakespeare himself used it, bent it, changed it for his dramatic purposes. For this dissertation, I am discussing Shakespearean character dictionaries specifically. Shakespearean character dictionaries, for example, do exist and have existed for quite some time; however these dictionaries rarely address information beyond the character’s involvement in the plot, number of appearances in the play, number of lines in the play, or other such factual information. Take, for example, Francis Griffin Stokes’ *A Shakespeare Dictionary*; he exhaustively lists and categorizes all of Shakespeare’s characters but only addresses plot information:

**Aemilia** (1). D.P. *Com. Err.* An abbess, long-lost wife of Aegeon. V, 1] refuses to give up Antipholus of Syracuse, who has taken refuge in her abbey; declares that if he is mad he has been made so by his scolding wife; later, recognizes her husband on his way to execution, and reveals that she is his wife, and mother of the twin Antipholuses; bids the Duke and the assembled company come to a feast in the abbey. (4)

The entry informs a reader of her exact involvement in the plot of *Comedy of Errors*. One can read the entry and comprehend her purpose. But what of the meaning of her name? What about the fact that her name sounds like and contains similar Latinate roots of the verb *ameliorate*, or “to improve”? She is the voice of peace in the play and untangles and improves the confusing and tense plot in the end. In other words, she makes it all better.

Furthermore, because Shakespeare also included so many historical characters in his plays (most of which in the histories themselves), scholars and lexicographers have bridged the gap between actual history and alternate history (Shakespeare’s history plays). This discourse is popular; readers can consider the difference between scholarly

history and dramatic history, or the cultural afterlife and legacy of Britain's most famous mothers and fathers. For example, W.H. Thomson categorizes all of Shakespeare's historical characters in a lexicon entitled, *Shakespeare's Characters: A Historical Dictionary*. For Aubrey Vere, the entry reads:

VERE, Aubrey; was the eldest son of John de Vere, twelfth Earl of Oxford, by his wife Elizabeth Howard, cousin of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk. Like his father he was a staunch Lancastrian and both were attained on the accession of Edward IV on a charge of arranging for a Lancastrian landing on the east coast. (One account states that Aubrey betrayed his father.) Both were condemned to death and executed on Tower Hill in 1462. Aubrey married Anne Stafford, daughter of the first Duke of Buckingham, but left no issue. III *Hen. VI*, III, iii, 102. (296)

The entry provides important information for the historical personality but does not necessarily connect the character to his involvement in Shakespeare's dramatic re-creation. How does Shakespeare alter history for dramatic purposes? How can we deduce this through the name? Thomson's lexicon is not *completely* devoid of this specific kind of information; Thomson provides more of this specific information for the more prominent characters. However, it is only in cross-referenced material from other scholars:

FASTOLFE, Sir John; warrior and landowner, the son of John Fastolfe, was born at Great Yarmouth about 1378. He was educated as a page in the household of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, after whose banishment he entered the service of Thomas of Lancaster, Duke of Clarence, and accompanied him to Ireland...After the death of Henry V he continued to serve under the Duke of Bedford, who in 1423 constituted him Regent in Normandy and Governor of Anjou and Maine...“Shakespeare is credited with having bestowed on him a celebrity that is historically unauthorized [sic]. In the folio edition of Shakespeare's works Fastolfe's name is spelt Falstaff when introduced into the *First Part of Henry VI*. This may seem to give additional weight to the theory that the Sir John Falstaff of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *Merry Wives of Windsor* is a satiric portrait of Sir John Fastolfe...But that the coincidences between the

careers of the dramatic Falstaff and the historic Fastolfe are to a large extent accidental is shown by the ascertained fact that in the original draft of *Henry IV* Falstaff bore the title of Sir John Oldcastle, and the name Falstaff was only substituted in deference, it is said, to the wish of Lord Cobham, who claimed descent from Oldcastle... The historical Fastolfe was in private life an expert man of business, who was indulgent neither to himself nor to his friends. He was nothing of a jester, and was, in spite of all imputation to the contrary, a capable and brave soldier” (Lee) (119).

Though Thomson’s lexicon includes specific information regarding the legacy and meaning of Falstaff’s name, the information is secondary to the entry format of the dictionary (historical accounts of the real individuals in Shakespeare’s plays) and cross-referenced. Again, there exists no dictionary that addresses this information *primarily*; the dictionary I propose in this dissertation will address the specific linguistic and historical information regarding the characters’ names. Furthermore, I will also address the specific name-change referenced in the above entry: why Falstaff’s name was altered to Sir John Oldcastle in earlier editions and why certain modern editions of Shakespeare’s plays – such as the Oxford, used in this dissertation – include these earlier forms of the names.

Aemilia and Falstaff are merely two of hundreds of similar examples in which Shakespeare imbues his characters’ names with multiple meanings and prescribed characterizations. A dictionary categorizing these meanings does not currently exist; I find such a volume would round out not only a discussion of Shakespeare’s onomastic tendencies (or, *how* and *why* he named his characters the way he did) but also push for ideas espoused by other onomastic and lexicographic critics. For example, Clarence L. Barnhart, onomastic scholar, queries as to why proper names must be excluded from *any*

kind of dictionary, especially college dictionaries. He claims that “both types of terms [proper names and common words] belong in a popular dictionary: they have currency in the literature of the day; most of them would not be entered in any other reference work. Frequency, range, and cruciality [sic] are the criteria for including or excluding entries in a dictionary; grammatical criteria do not work” (Harder 308). Though I believe Barnhart’s ideas are both valid and fundamental to the study of onomastic lexicography, my initial concern is not that Shakespeare’s names are being excluded from dictionaries. Rather, I wish to bridge discussion of Shakespearean onomastics (which, as I will indicate throughout this dissertation, is nothing new) and the inclusion of Shakespeare’s names in lexicons. Barnhart rounds out his claim surrounding the inclusion of proper names:

The inclusion of proper names is also helpful in the explanation of names and adjectives derived from them. The proper names are located in space or time and important linguistic facts such as pronunciation and variant spellings or names are given. The definition of *Ishmael*, the secondary sense of which is “an outcast, a person like Ishamel” can be helped by the definition of the primary term. So can *Shelleyan* be helped by the entry of *Shelley*. (Harder 308-309)

Similarly, I believe it would help a reader to know both *what* Aemilia and Falstaff do in *Comedy of Errors* and the *Henriads* and *Merry Wives of Windsor* as well as *what* their names mean in the greater context of the plays themselves. The dictionary I propose will assess a character’s purpose through what can be understood in his or her name.

### **The Power of Nomenclature in Determining Purpose**

The names of Shakespeare’s characters themselves hold contextual clues in their linguistic, historical, mythological, and teleological roots. These clues inform readers,

scholars, and even directors and actors about elements of the characters' personae, behaviors, and possible involvement in the plot. The playwright, then, acts as parent, naming his or her children (or characters) with some desire in mind; just as naming a child is not an arbitrary act, neither then is the formulation of a character's name. Parents may name their children after older relatives out of honor as well as with the hope that the children may inherit the relatives' better qualities. In other words, there is a hopeful desire to be fulfilled in naming a child a certain way. Shakespeare participated in this same process by assigning Benedick the qualities of virtuous speech or by naming Horatio after one of Rome's greatest poets. In both – and most – cases, Shakespeare set out with a desire for each character he named, whether it was in honoring ancient and legendary figures or in revealing a character's true inner qualities that may not be revealed until the final act. The dictionary I propose will address these desires – or, meanings -- in individual entries for each character.

The fundamental theorization of the proposed lexicon can be underpinned by a concise and potent claim and its discussion made by Kenneth Burke on "form" in *Counter-statement*: "Form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (31). Burke's words clarify how the psychology of an audience (be it of a reading or a theatrical audience) also can be influenced by simple nomenclature and the qualities inherent in a name itself. Burke furthers his statement about art (namely dramatic art) by inciting a discussion concerning purpose and form, in that, in most art or language, artistic form (a genre, a name, a style) dictates purpose (a message, a meaning, connotation).

In dramatic art, especially with the convention of naming one's characters, one finds this *form-driven purpose* in Commedia dell'Arte: a character's stock name (e.g. Pantalone, Arlecchino) dictates his or her pre-determined attitudes, behaviors and purpose (i.e. "old, ribald man," "trickster, joker"). Shakespeare reverses this derivation of character in his nomenclature and creates, instead, a *purpose-driven form* in his characters. The characters' names are journeys for themselves, whether they earn the name's meanings or, like the great tragic figures, fall from the grace, glory, and power that has been afforded to and associated with their names. All the while, Shakespeare is investing in the "psychology of the audience," allowing the audience to witness and join the journey rather than dictate, for the audience, the journey's destination at the outset. Ultimately, what surrounds the practice in this dissertation is the general Burkean notion and definition of *form* and *audience*. Burke insists that "drama, more than any other form, must never lost sight of its audience" and "the contemporary audience hears the lines of a play...with the same equipment as it brings to reading the lines of its daily paper." Literally, the actors of a Shakespearean play never lose physical sight of the audience; thus, any playwright must compose as such. Finally, "suspense," Burke posits, "is the concern over the possible outcome of some specific detail of plot rather than for general qualities" (37-38). With so many unique and curious names in his cast lists, Shakespeare gives his audiences multiple microcosmic plots, filled with anticipation and delayed fulfillment, with each name. Audiences invest in Shakespearean names with expectations to be realized. The characters often *earn* their names, once again beginning with a purpose (the name's inherent qualities, meanings, associations, etc.) and arriving at

a specific version of form (here, the individualized connotation for the context of the play).

Shakespeare's names participate in the arousal and relief of desire that Burke argues all forms enact. Characters will rise and fall, either earning their names' true meanings or losing the nobility, honor, or prestige that their names carry. We witness the devastating fall from prosperity that King Lear suffers due to his own foolishness. We hilariously stumble to remember which Antipholus or which Dromio is which, just as the other characters attempt to put them in their proper families. We endure the creeping construction of a monster – Richard, Duke of Gloucester – throughout the first tetralogy. And, we feel the bitter sting of two kingly depositions, at once the noble Prospero and second, the savage Caliban. All of these names carry connotative weight beyond linguistic roots. They exhibit other potent meanings that both suspend and satisfy the appetites of the auditors before, during, and after a reading or viewed performance of the play (Burke 31). Again considering the Porter from *Macbeth*, readers and audience members have certain desires about the role. They see or read a position, a job, as a character on stage: his point is to open the door. Already, the linguistic meaning is met: *porter* is French for “to carry,” and *la porte* is French for “the door.” Even if readers or audience members do not speak French, they know that this position entails. However, Shakespeare hyperbolizes these presumptions – or desires – of the audience and makes the Porter much more important. He bridges two very heavy and sobering scenes with a crucial moment of levity. His drunken, half-awake stupor amuses the audience and allows some release of tragic tension that has been building. In a play where the action

does not give the audience much time to breathe or think, a moment such as the Porter's scene is vital: not only does it provide the arousal and fulfillment of the audience's desires, but it also only quickly bridges two tense scenes with a minute amount of humor. The audience feels the release, but not for much longer.

The particular kind of form argued here, then, is specifically rooted in Burke's *conventional form*. "Any form can become conventional," Burke begins, "and be sought for itself – whether it be as complex as the Greek tragedy or as compact as the sonnet...Poets who write beginnings *as beginnings* and endings *as endings* show the appeal of conventional form." Conventional form can exist as microscopically as possible, from ending all comedies with weddings down to specific words and phrases used by particular characters (e.g. most of Shakespeare's villains utter cursing words such as "S'blood"). Naming and nomenclature (and thereby the field of onomastics) in dramatic literature are rooted in convention, with Shakespeare owing much to the stock names and archetypes in Italian *Commedia dell'Arte* as indicated before. Audiences understand what the Porter's role is in the play: it is spelled out clearly in his name. If left alone at that, the conventional form of the Porter's name would clearly dictate his purpose. Shakespeare, however, does not stop at that minor understanding. While acknowledging the character's purpose (as indicated by the name), Shakespeare reverses the order and defines the character first *by* his purpose: he is going to bridge two scenes of heavy tension by being drunk, surly, and funny. Thus, the *form* here is not just "to carry or bring members outside the door in"; instead, with Shakespeare's hyperbolization, the Porter figuratively carries the entire audience to the next scene with his stumbling

courses and harmless, drunken mess. The name, then, is fitting linguistically *and* metaphorically for Shakespeare's ultimate purpose in *Macbeth*: life can be violent, quick, bloody; and little time exists to think about one's actions. The moments of relief from this onslaught are few and far between indeed, just as the Porter's scene is brief in the midst of the "bloody, bold, and resolute." Shakespeare greatly invests in his audiences' own thought processes, providing meaning and purpose that he hopes they will also transform. In a way, Shakespeare allows his audiences to act as playwrights themselves; he asks them to participate in the same process of artistic collaboration – ranging from the use of pre-existing knowledge to formulate a text to the physical collaboration with another artist.

The "psychology of the audience," then, is one that actually shares the power of naming with the playwright him or herself. Audience members, either readers or live spectators, make inferences about the names even beyond those that Shakespeare, or any playwright, may have intended. Shakespeare's onomastic practices were not arbitrary acts, and neither is the audience's reception and transformation of the meaning behind those names. This transactional process between reader and "text" (text here being offered up as both written play to be read and play as live spectacle) serves as a microcosmic example of ideas espoused by Louise Rosenblatt in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of Literary Work*. She echoes Roland Barthes' general notion of the reader's (or audience member's) agency over any form (play, poem, "text"). She quotes Barthes from his commentary on Balzac's story, *Sarrasine*. In this, he states, "[T]he goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no

longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and customer, between its author and its reader” (4, as quoted in Rosenblatt, *The Reader...*, 169). Rosenblatt even opens her book with an explicit statement of purpose:

The premise of this book is that a text, once it leaves its author’s hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work – sometimes, even, a literary work of art. It might seem, therefore, that I should allow this text to shift for itself. If it were being offered as a work of art, I should indeed honor that inference. But since the following pages call for what I shall later define as “efferent” reading, I believe it not inconsistent to offer the customary preface, with the suggestion, however, that some may prefer to read it after the final chapter. (ix)

The above quotation is extreme in shifting authority to audiences nearly completely. Seemingly Rosenblatt argues that after the writer – for the purposes of this dissertation, a playwright – finishes touching quill to parchment, after he or she finishes scribing the “d” in “End,” the text belongs to the audience. It belongs to the audience to bend, shape, and transform in any way the audience *desires*. Buried here, we can find Burke’s insistence on audience desire as paramount to a playwright’s – especially Shakespeare’s – purpose in composing his work. The psychology of any audience latches on to characters’ *names*, the labels of the literary figures that are loved or loved to be hated.

The names – the microcosmic forms into which Shakespeare pours polyvalent meanings – become as malleable for the audience and, in extremely rare cases, can end up representing even completely opposite meanings with which Shakespeare began, as in the case with Romeo and Juliet mentioned before. Linguistically, their names don’t mean

much differently to a modern audience (i.e. “Romeo” as an Italian name, “Juliet” exhibiting meanings of “summer”). The emotional cultural meanings of their names, however, have changed: once lovers rarely together, now Romeo and Juliet are forever together in their names. Thus, Shakespeare maintains agency in delineating the purpose-driven form at the outset of his naming practice. In this dissertation, though, I discuss the aural, historic, mythological, and linguistic meanings of the names more than I do this “cultural afterlife” mentioned here and at the beginning of the dissertation. I use the “cultural afterlife” idea merely to demonstrate the potency of names (something in which Shakespeare was heavily invested) and to support some of the theory concerning audience transaction connected to this dissertation (Rosenblatt in particular). Ultimately, though, without the sounds, languages, and mythological or historical meanings attached to the names, audiences would only be receiving arbitrary assignments. They would be receiving “Beatrice” because Shakespeare needed a female name, and that was it. This is not the case for Shakespeare’s names, just as it is not the case for Shakespeare’s common words. Furthermore, the meanings of the names are connected to Shakespeare’s own context: his life, education, and participation in the theatre of the English Renaissance. After all, as Rosalie Colie indicates, “The play is a shaped thing, much from materials and by tools available to the playwright, not by systems or insights to which he could have had no access” (*Some Facts...* ix). In other words, we can espouse all the theory we wish regarding Shakespearean onomastics; Shakespeare’s names *do* mean something in particular, derived from his own context in the theatre and formulated during his

education both on and off the stage. I am attempting to decipher those meanings here, now, in the modern scholarly world.

Nevertheless, Rosenblatt and Burke offer particularly effective and fundamental ideas for the construction of this dictionary. Their analyses of the audience's control of form after the author's work is done rounds out the purpose of this dictionary/of all dictionaries: to demonstrate the fluidity of linguistic form both before, during, and after its initial use. Yet, much of Rosenblatt's argument seems to suggest that *all* the power is in the hands of the audience(s). I am not suggesting this for the purposes of constructing the dictionary. Instead, I use Rosenblatt's discussion of the audience's reception of a literary work to bolster the idea of the multi-generational audiences' *transactional participation* in Shakespearean literature. In fact, it can be argued that this dissertation itself could not exist without some of Rosenblatt's argument being valid. The audience does gain agency in shaping meaning within these characters' names; however, Shakespeare does maintain traditional authority and agency in forging the names' meanings through his purpose-driven form. My goal in this dissertation – and eventual lexicon – is to unlock the polyvalent meanings behind Shakespeare's names: those meanings that he forged *through* his purpose-driven form. It serves as a cohesive example demonstrating that Shakespeare's names were not chosen simply to act as mere labels for his audiences. Shakespeare breathed new life into the names of his characters and even created names to fit the old of his characters' purposes. The audience then responds to these names with experience and desire for the characters both within and

beyond the scopes of each play. In his very personal *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*,

M.M. Bakhtin addresses the power of experience in determining linguistic form:

Planes that are different from the abstract point of view (spatial-temporal determinateness, emotional-volitional tones, meanings) are contracted and concentrated here to form a concrete and unique unity. “High,” “above,” “below,” “finally,” “as yet,” “already,” “it’s necessary,” “ought to,” “farther,” “nearer,” etc. – all these expressions acquire not just a content/sense, i.e., assume a thinkable – only possible – [character], but acquire an actual, lived-experienced, heavy, and compelling concretely determinate validity or operativeness.... (57)

If we understand naming as an “act” – which to a parent or writer, it certainly is – then the same theory applies. Words’ meanings – proper names included -- are determined through a series of experiences both before and after an encounter with the word itself.

In other words, Shakespeare, as parent-writer,<sup>2</sup> packs his names with meanings that dictate their path of characterization; audience members, as receivers of this purpose-driven form, then accept and/or complicate the character’s meaning, adding to it their pre-existing desires constructed in their psychology mentioned earlier. Thus, naming is not an arbitrary act. The dictionary I theorize and propose addresses the *generative power of naming*. Shakespeare’s names indicate both his purpose-driven form as well as what audience members – and I especially serve as one in this dissertation – see or want within the names as well.

Dictionaries, Bakhtin notes in *The Problem of Speech Genres*, provide the neutral meanings of words, those meanings that belong to everybody (88). The nature of a dictionary, then, is to provide complete meanings for audiences. I will be considering

---

<sup>2</sup> A term here meaning the writer is a creator of a character, or child.

these multiple meanings, starting with the linguistic roots that Shakespeare used in creating his characters' identities. Also within *The Problem of Speech Genres*, Bakhtin discusses how words – or macrocosmically, forms, types, texts – belong to multiple parties. He states:

Thus, the expressiveness of individual words is not inherent in the words themselves as units of language, nor does it issue directly from the meaning of these words: it is either typical generic expression or it is an echo of another's individual expression, which makes the word, as it were, representative of another's whole utterance from a particular evaluative position. (89)

The dictionary's purpose is to assess and include multivalent meanings of words far beyond the denotative construction of an individual word itself. I plan to assess and include the multivalent meanings of Shakespeare's names – as words that have linguistic, historical, mythological, and cultural inferences – and unpack how these meanings shape the characterizations that we audiences over the centuries love, hate, study, and adopt into our own cultures. It is an ambitious and exhaustive project, the theory of which is laid out in this dissertation.

There are some roadblocks in addressing the generative power of naming in Shakespeare's characters. As the entry on Fastolfe indicates, the anticipation, desire, and fulfillment of these prove most difficult to comprehend in the histories. Assumptions, characterizations, and, simply put, history already shape perceptions of these actual figures. But, as in the case of *Richard III*, Shakespeare elects to highlight, and even hyperbolize, *one* of these perceptions for the purpose of characterization. Bert Fields, as quoted in Marjorie Garber's *Profiling Shakespeare*, on the topic of Shakespeare in film,

states:

If you are doing what purports to be a book or film about history, it's hardly rare for an author or film maker to take a position. Look at *Richard III*. There was a violent controversy between those who believed Richard was a tyrant who murdered his two nephews and those who think he was a wonderful king. Shakespeare represented one view, the view that was acceptable to his Queen. (Garber 128)

This particular brand of character assassination becomes bound to the name and reshapes the form of the questionable king's characterization.

The Shakespearean character – even the character based on an actual historical figure – is as malleable as the words that he or she utters. Shakespeare was played with the characters' names just as he was with the common words that these characters use to hurt, love, connect, deceive, dissemble, drive, and block. The notions that proper nouns are fixed and constant and indicate only identification are cast away in Shakespearean onomastics. In everyday life, individuals quickly forget or never even consider the linguistic roots of someone's name, as the name is quickly committed to the memory of a face, a personality, a person. In literature, however, we only encounter proper names linguistically; we only see the language and its roots and soon commit the name to familiarity solely for the purposes of understanding a text or performance. Authors such as Shakespeare take advantage of this audience encounter with names and enable themselves to play much more with the meanings of proper names (Grimaud 890).<sup>3</sup> In short, onomastics is a rarely considered analysis because proper names are normally

---

<sup>3</sup> For more, consider Michel Grimaud's "Hermeneutics, Onomastics, and Poetics in English and French Literature" in *Modern Language Notes* 92, No. 5. Though Grimaud discusses little of Shakespeare, the piece solidifies the rarity and importance of onomastics as an important sub-field of linguistic analysis.

words taken for granted, assumed to indicate one thing and one thing only: identification. The proposed dictionary certainly identifies the characters but more through the linguistic roots and allusions in their names. In this dissertation, I will consider each genre separately, highlighting common aspects of each and how the names also illuminate these trends. I will use Burke's notion of conventional form in identifying these traits and the names' conveyance of them.

Shakespeare wrote with polyvalent meanings and "purpose-driven form" with all words, not names only. It is no mystery why so many of the words he coined are still with us today. They break barriers of denotation and operate more fluidly like an ever-evolving language does. Shakespeare seemed to know this and expanded this manipulation of language to proper names as well. However, in any specific discussion of Shakespeare's manipulation of language (here, with proper names in this dissertation), a fundamental understanding of *how* Shakespeare seemed to operate is necessary. In *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, Russ McDonald states that Shakespeare, through the verbally sparring characters Beatrice and Benedick, explores the human damage that language can do. They hurl insults, verbal masks for their eventual love for each other. Their barbed dialogue is riddled with curses and swearing, that brand of language which is (and was) considered base and irreverent; Shakespeare, though, enjoyed treating multiple connotations of a word as equal with one another. The Latinate roots of both Beatrice's and Benedick's names refer to "blessed speech" or "blessed words, language." Indeed, "Benedick" provokes thoughts of an order of monks (Benedictine), the Latin *benedictus*, and even a benediction, or the final "good word" given by ministers to their

congregations in concluding a service; the name "Beatrice," similarly, includes the Latinate prefix *beat-*, which of course points one to the Beatitudes, arguably the most "blessed" speech delivered by Christ in the New Testament. Benedick and Beatrice are two of the most disingenuous characters with their speech and choose to slight and slander each other (and others in *Much Ado's* Messina, from whom they receive much scorn and shame) instead of conforming to proper discourse. The names and their meanings are iconic, classic examples of Shakespearean oxymoron, and one need look no further than the title page and character lists to find it, though, truly, we don't fully experience the oxymoronic qualities until well into the play. In any case, it is clear that the names hold multivalent meanings, not unlike the thousands of other words Shakespeare molded and stretched, reshaped and reformed, in his thirty-eight plays, 154 sonnets, and the body of other lyric poetry. For instance, in sonnet 135, Shakespeare endlessly plays with the word "will":

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *will*,  
And *will* to both, and *will* in overplus;  
More than enough am I that vex thee still,  
To thy sweet *will* making addition thus.  
*Wilt* thou, whose *will* is large and spacious,  
Not once vouchsafe to hide my *will* in thine?  
Shall *will* in others seem right gracious,  
And in my *will* no fair acceptance shine?  
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,  
And in abundance addeth to his store;  
So thou being rich in *will* add to thy *will*  
One *will* of mine, to make thy large *will* more.  
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;  
Think all but one, and me in that one *will*.<sup>4</sup>

(Sonnet 135, italics mine)

---

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 116.

Helen Vendler notes this excessive use of the word: “The presence of thirteen uses of *will* in a fourteen-line poem suggests, perhaps, that the woman, even to the end, has not accepted the speaker’s will (which, if she had, would add one will, making a perfect parity of lines and *will*)” (Vendler 574). The poem’s conceit is one of excess through desire; in fact, much of the entire sonnet sequence concerns longevity and posterity through excess, some addressing a young, single man about his legacy and others addressing a woman (or, possibly, women) about these subjects. Here, Shakespeare presents the polyvalent meanings of “will” to bolster this connotation. However, Shakespeare also has constructed a poem that essentially can be read as a dictionary entry for the word. Readers understand the multiple meanings of the verb and the noun (and even perhaps the proper noun of his own name) simply by reading its lines. Thus, the “excess” here *also* indicates an experiment with the word “will” and its various sounds and meanings. He stretches the word just as he stretched the malleable boundaries between the genres of his plays.

### **How it’s Divided: The Genres**

In determining a rationale for dividing the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, I have discovered the fluidity of the play genres themselves to be most appropriate. Indeed, the names of Shakespeare’s characters carry multivalent meanings and carry with them cultural afterlives in the minds and psychologies of audiences throughout generations. Dividing a dictionary is easy; simply place the names in alphabetical order. Essentially, you have 26 chapters. However, for this dissertation – for the theory supporting a dictionary – I have found the easiest method of delineating the names and

their meanings is through the natural division of *any* discussion of Shakespeare's works: the genres of comedy, tragedy, history, and romance. Besides, as Rosalie Colie claims, "Most of the 'forms' a writer uses are of course those particularly embedded in his craft – the genres, the conventions, the devices, the *topoi*, of poetics and rhetoric" (*Living Art* 5). Using Colie, I am arguing that the microcosmic "forms" – the names – that I am deciphering are particularly connected to the genres in which they reside. Furthermore, as Colie continues, "If we look for them, 'forms' are everywhere to be seen. But for the student of a particular subject – philosophy, history, art history, literature – certain forms are more important than others" (*Living Art* 6). In this dissertation, I concentrate on the nomenclature, which corresponds to the particular *schema* of the genres, even though similar names do cross generic lines (e.g. a "Baptista" in both a comedy and tragedy). After all, like the names themselves, the larger conventions and aspects of the genres bleed into one another. In other words, the plays are divided into four larger subjects, yes, but the meanings, traits, sentiments, structures, and overall feelings generated by the plays is hardly that concrete. The names function the same way, just as Shakespeare's common language does: they are fluid and polyvalent in meaning. "But Shakespeare learned something else essential to his art from the morality plays," begins Stephen Greenblatt in *Will in the World*, "he learned that the boundary between comedy and tragedy is surprisingly porous" (34). In assessing Shakespeare's aesthetic, Greenblatt makes a concise claim tied to the New Historicist idea that genre is not fixed. He continues:

The authors of the morality plays thought they could enhance the broad impact they sought to achieve by stripping their characters of all incidental distinguishing traits to get to their essences...Shakespeare grasped that the spectacle of human destiny was, in fact, vastly more compelling when it was attached not to generalized abstractions but to particular named people, people realized with an unprecedented intensity of individuation: not Youth but Prince Hal, not Everyman but Othello. (34)

By unpacking a discussion of Shakespeare's individual aesthetic (his sources, his literary background), Greenblatt arrives at the idea of genre fluidity and, more specifically, as noted in the above passage, the form of *nomenclature*. Shakespeare wanted personality in his characters; the individuality of each character would resonate with the generalized audience (and audiences for centuries to come) of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres. The personalities of each character relate back to his or her name, the outset of the character's journey. The destination is the meanings and desires that Shakespeare, as writer-parent, inscribed at the beginning. Because of the microscopic analysis of the fluidity of meaning in Shakespeare's names, I have divided the dissertation by genre, the larger, viscous, subjects that categorize Shakespeare's grander forms – the genres -- that were defined by each other just as much as they were defined by traditional conventions and tropes. Bakhtin, in *Art and Answerability*, states that, "The organizing power in all aesthetic forms is the axiological category of the *other*, the relationship to the other, enriched by an axiological "excess" of seeing for the purpose of achieving a transgredient consummation" (189). It is no surprise that the first half of *Romeo and Juliet* feels and sounds like a comedy; it is not until Mercutio's murder – or the death of Verona's clown – that the play turns toward tragedy. Yet the entirety of the play is labeled under "tragedy": *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. "In the

genre the word acquires a particular typical expression,” Bakhtin continues in *The Problem of Speech Genres*. Bakhtin then complicates this claim by highlighting the malleability of all words in all genres – typicality is only part of one individual utterance (87).

Shakespeare did adopt generic conventions, but instead of letting this form dictate his meanings, intentions, messages, or linguistic experiments, he reversed the process and began with these purposes. In turn, this reversal defined and redefined Shakespearean form. Burke cites the example of the porter's levity in the otherwise grave circumstances in *Macbeth* as a moment that interrupts audience progression of thought. To go from murder to clowning is a detour from the normal psychology of the audience's expectation. With such a basic name -- "the Porter" is a job, a task -- one might initially feel this character's purpose to be unimportant. However, Shakespeare reverses this sense of importance by providing for the audience one of the most vital scenes of levity in his tragedies. Furthermore, the Porter carries the suspense by appearing directly after the murder and offering curious puns and humorously snide remarks. His name, in English, designates a doorman or gatekeeper, while in French it literally means “to bring” or “to carry”; the Porter figuratively "opens the door between scenes" and carries the audience from one tense moment to another. He connects the vital plot points of the play together as well as bolstering the suspense felt by the audience.

Take, for example, Beatrice and Benedick from *Much Ado About Nothing*. Both characters become well known in their world (and ours) for spouting barbed insults at each other and for roguish and shrewish behavior toward the other characters of the play.

They are obstinate and stubborn, and their speech is riddled with witty banter between the two:

BENEDICK What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?

BEATRICE Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted. And I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart, for truly I love none.

BEATRICE A dear happiness to women. They would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood I am of your humour [sic] for that. I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK Well you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

(1.1.110-34)

Though completely prose, the excerpt here reads as a poetics of slander. From the outset of the play, the reader and live audiences know these two characters speak offense and ridicule. And both Beatrice and Benedick speak biting toward the other characters as well, often ignoring propriety. As the earlier analysis notes, the characters' names contain linguistic roots meaning "blessed" or "good" speech.<sup>5</sup> However, through a series of tricks instituted by the other characters in the play, Beatrice and Benedick eventually speak kindly and lovingly toward each other, attaining their purpose-driven form in the end.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, their speech is "turned orthography":

---

<sup>5</sup> It is also interesting to note the connotation of "to bless" meaning to "to curse out" or "to scold severely." Thus, their names sport a meaning that even doubles back on itself. That is, the word "to bless" refers to speaking beneficently toward someone denotatively and, connotatively, refers to speaking ill toward someone. I discuss this further in Chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> Notably, Friar Francis instigates the ultimate guile, inferring the church is a group of tricksters and schemers. This is not the only instance of this in Shakespeare. Consider also Friars John and Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, who formulate the plan for Juliet to feign her death. Similarly, the fundamental idea in Francis' plan is for Hero to feign her death as well.

BEATRICE  
 Do not you love me?  
 BENEDICK Troth no, no more than reason.  
 BEATRICE  
 Why then, my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula  
 Are much deceived, for they did swear you did.  
 BENEDICK  
 They swore that you were almost sick for me.  
 BEATRICE  
 They swore that you were welling dead for me.  
 BENEDICK  
 'Tis no such matter. Then you do not love me?  
 BEATRICE  
 No, truly, but in friendly recompense...  
 BENEDICK A miracle! Here's our own hands against our heart. Come, I will  
 have thee, but by this light, I take thee for pity.  
 BEATRICE I would not deny you, but by this good day, I yield upon great  
 persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.  
 BENEDICK (*kissing her*) Peace, I will stop your mouth.  
 (5.4.77-83; 91-7)

Physically, Benedick has to *stop* language. And though it seems he maintains agency by instigating the kiss, he too ceases his own speech and is married in front of all of their friends and family. Beatrice and Benedick arrive at their names' destinations, acquiring the characteristics Shakespeare set forth in their labels. Names, here, hardly are for identification purposes only. Such mistaken identity<sup>7</sup> and harmless beguiling fit naturally into the worlds of Shakespeare's comedies. These aspects are common for the characters in Messina, Padua, Verona, and others.

Onomastically, Shakespeare's main tragic characters act in reverse to their comedic counterparts. Shakespeare's great tragic figures witness and experience a fall from grace, glory, favor, or power; it is these meteoric downfalls which categorize the

---

<sup>7</sup> Beatrice and Benedick's names hardly aptly describe them at the outset of the play.

main tenets of Shakespearean tragedy. The names of Shakespeare's tragic figures follow in kind. While the main tragic heroes and figures (who eventually die) fall from their prosperous names and labels or choose to *cast off* their potent names, some tragic figures, usually supporting characters, must earn their names as well. Horatio, for example, has much to live up to, as his name connects his persona to arguably the greatest Roman poet, Horace. It is therefore fitting that Horatio's final epithet to his best friend Hamlet is poetically beautiful, wholesome, and pleasant, though of somber and grave disposition. Also, the names might impart important plot and scene information as well as their etymological inferences.

I already have mentioned the problems with Shakespeare's historical figures; I will explore these further in the remaining chapters. However Shakespeare also invented nick-names for some historical characters as well, rounding out their dramatic personalities for the stage. Henry Percy, for example, is afforded the nick-name "Hotspur," referring perhaps to a brash and aggressive nature for Northumberland's son in *1 Henry IV*. These and other appended names will be explored as well in the dissertation and eventual lexicon. Furthermore, the histories also are rife with repetition because of lineage and actual time: "Scrope" and the surname Percy appear across *Richard II* and *1 Henry IV*; this dissertation will assess how these characters earn their names and convey the names' eventual connotations in history across multiple plays.

Shakespeare's tragicomic characters boast similarly exotic and fantastical names, which, onomastically, drive Burke's theory of form and purpose mentioned before. Two of Shakespeare's romantic ingenues, Marina from *Pericles* and Miranda from *The*

*Tempest*, have obvious connotations of the sea and being stranded or lost at sea contained within their names. Contextually, these characters exuded these connotations through their speech and status: Marina is discovered lost at sea, and Miranda, with her powerful father Prospero, is marooned on an island. The plays leap from exotic locale to exotic locale, places which are separated by sea and stars, those tools explorers used to find their ways. Both Polixenes and Leontes from *The Winter's Tale* have constellations in their names (Pollux and Leo). Polixenes seems to be without his twin -- perhaps Leontes is a figurative Castor when the two friends, practically brothers, become separated over a jealous grudge involving Leontes' wife. This dissertation will explore such exoticism, which is bolstered by themes of friendship, family, disorientation, and reunion: those purposes of Shakespeare's that defined his romantic onomastic form.

Finally, I will conclude by bolstering ideas that such a dictionary belongs both in the library and the theater, just as the subject of this dissertation -- Shakespeare's onomastically fascinating characters -- functions in both arenas of experience. Scholar or researcher, director or actor can pick up the eventual product of this dissertation and use its purpose to develop their form (whether it be a scholarly endeavor or a fine-tuning of one's craft). Scholars would have vital information, I believe, in furthering studies of Shakespeare's dramatic purpose, and directors and actors would have a potential roadmap for a character's progression throughout the play.

Furthermore, I will explore several oddities in Shakespeare's naming practices. For example the name Autolycus translates to the unique characterization of "self-wolf"; what this could mean and possibly entails for the clown is indeed puzzling and will be

considered. Is he a lone wolf as the clown? Shakespeare often isolated his clowns as vital characters boasting some of the most beautiful and memorable passages in the canon. Also, Shakespeare bends gender by having both a male and female Baptista in his plays. The father of Kate and Bianca is quite different than *Hamlet's* Player Queen. Why such a difference with the same name? What makes this clear Biblical allusion androgynous? These unique situations will round out a clear discussion and presentation of Shakespearean onomastic tendency. Finally, this dissertation will serve as a stepping stone for the more exhaustive project following it: the dictionary itself. This dissertation serves as the theoretical framework of the larger project.

In the introduction to Rosalie Colie's *Shakespeare's Living Art*, Colie outlines her methodology for treating her subject and the reasoning behind it. The selection I have chosen is lengthy; but my methodology and reasoning behind the division of this dissertation is particularly echoic of her sentiment, and I feel it should be here in full.

She writes:

I try to work in both directions, examining what implications a large form (a genre, a mode) may have for a work at least resonating to that form's dominant notes...and examining as well the implications of its natural *milieu* carried by a particular small convention – device, *topos*, stereotype – into its new larger context.... If it is true that all such conventional forms are deeply rooted in the culture of craft and in the larger social culture as well, then of course no form-matter dichotomy can be allowed: such a form, large or small, must “inform” the work in which it occurs, most fundamentally contribute to its particularity; it must also “inform” – that is, give information to – beholders and readers about its nature and implications. One can go farther: such a form “informs” beholders and readers in yet another sense, by supplying a needed structure for understanding, providing mental set, “forming” the receiving mind. Forms are those *schemata* which by their cultural accessibility ready us to take in whatever we do take in of an environment, our own lived environment, the environment of another place or time, the environment of a given work of art. (10)

The names of Shakespeare's plays also "inform" the genres in which they occur, as well as "informing" Shakespeare's general drama as a whole. We learn that *Much Ado About Nothing* is a play centering on the splendid potency of language, as its two principal roles bear names referring to "speech" and "beauty." We can expand to comprehend that the comedies contain some of Shakespeare's greatest wordplay and most aesthetic speech. This particular facet of Shakespeare's comedies also bleeds into the other genres (e.g. the first half of *Romeo and Juliet* functions like a comedy; Titus makes darkly comic remarks about Tamora's slaughtered and cooked children in *Titus Andronicus*). Burke purports that form can be as microcosmic as the dramatic language in a sonnet or play. Thus, I argue one can extend this to the dramatic language inherent in Shakespeare's names as well. They are full of plot and metaphor, conceit and theme and can act as directions for the reading or live audience. All of these fall under Burke's idea of the arousal and fulfillment of any and all audiences' desires. Furthermore, Shakespeare includes generic<sup>8</sup> qualities in the names of his characters; thus one can expand (and reverse, as I demonstrated earlier) the Burkean notion of form.

### **The Practice: Etymological Lexicography**

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is not the dictionary itself. Though it includes an appendix (following the bibliography), which lists all of Shakespeare's "B" names and their various etymological roots, this dissertation provides the theoretical framework that such a lexicon requires. Etymology, as a study and practice, is fascinating, as it allows us to understand the root of communication: *why* and *how* we call

---

<sup>8</sup> Here, those of "genre."

ourselves what we do and *why* and *how* we use the words we use. In fact, many etymological theorists seem to agree that fascination with etymology probably began with the consideration of first and last names. Yakov Malkiel echoes this sentiment with the following:

The appeal to etymology in a magic context may well have started with proper names and be so old as to have its roots in prehistory. Parents, by giving their newborn child a name whose ‘real’ meaning is wholly transparent to those familiar with the given language (like Spanish *Dolores*, *Consuelo*, or *Amparo*, or Hebrew *Rachel*), or transparent only in part, or else to experts alone, may to some extent be motivated in their choice by this chance to encode a wish for the child’s future well-being or expected character (standard of behavior [sic]), even though several alternative motivations may prevail. (1)

Malkiel seems to spell out the purpose-driven form on the basic level. Shakespeare acts as parent to his character-children, hoping he can “encode a wish” for their future. Of course, as in the tragedies, it is not always for their well-being. Shakespeare, then, participates in what is believed to be the initial appeal of etymology: automatically aligning meaning with a person one creates. Furthermore, Malkiel concludes by indicating that our society even *favors* dictionaries and lexicons that include etymologies as part of the definitions of words and proper names (170). Etymology is the mechanics of language; we are allured by the practice because it fosters understanding -- and, as in the above example concerning parents, control -- of communication.

The inherent problem with etymological lexicons and glossaries, however, is where to draw the line. Another distinct appeal of etymological inquiries is that they seem perpetually researchable. Malkiel states in his modestly titled *Etymological Dictionaries* that these particular lexicons belong to “a reasonably well-defined genre of

scholarly inquiry and [are] neatly delimited source[s] of information” (9). Shakespeare’s names, for example, offer much more than a consideration of linguistic conjunction or a study of root languages. His characters’ monikers are perpetually illuminating, offering rich inquiries into history, culture, mythology, religious allusion, and other fascinating modes of scholastic inquiry. Shakespeare was manipulating the English language, yes, but he was also adapting and playing with the whole of English communication. He understood that the English-speaking world was not solely communicating with words; he understood the importance of symbol and representation and how these are inextricably intertwined with identification. Though Shakespeare’s scope was large, he remained focused on the root of communication: words. Ultimately, etymological dictionaries function best with morphology, or the ways in which words are formed, as the fundamental mode of inquiry. The construction of the word – or, in this case, the name – is primarily integral in understanding the further implications, or polyvalent connotations it supports. Malkiel writes, “Undeniably, the student of morphology can winnow out of a routinely arranged etymological dictionary a wealth of valuable information on various classes and combinations of affixes, on multifarious compositional designs, and the like” (47). Shakespeare formed many of his characters’ names by splicing together pieces of words and phrases from different languages to accentuate his purpose-driven form. If the construction of a word ultimately fundamentally determines the word’s placement and use in a language, then so too does the construction of a proper name.

Finally, questions regarding aesthetics are important even to the morphological

framework. Mechanically, lexicographers must decide a mode of presentation. How are the definitions of these words or names going to appear? This is an important process for all lexicographers throughout history, even including Dr. Johnson. Howard Jackson supports two modes: lumping and splitting. The “lumper” provides all potential definitions in one categorical entry paragraph, whereas the “splitter” separates the definitions onto different lines of text (42-6, 88-93). For the purposes of this dissertation and eventual lexicon, the entries will appear in the “lumping” method. The audience will be able to see the wholeness of the name without any bifurcation.

Etymological lexicography is perpetually fascinating. That is why I envision the dictionary proposed herein to take on many lives with many contributors attempting to construct what is behind Shakespeare’s names. Perhaps an answer to Juliet’s question is forthcoming. Though, again, it seems the logical response to her inquiry is, simply, “everything.”

### **An Additional Note**

For the purposes of theorizing this dictionary, I have elected *The Oxford Shakespeare* as the sole edition for name and passage reference. The *Oxford* retains older constructions and spellings of characters’ names and identities. I wish to assess the names as they were culturally present at the time. I find these versions of the names fit more with the theory supported by Burke, Rosenblatt, and Bakhtin earlier in this chapter. For instance, Falstaff’s name appears as “Sir John Oldcastle” in the *Oxford* edition; I will connect this construction of the character’s name to Falstaff and the earlier “Fastolfe,” an entry of which is included earlier in this chapter as well. Why the change? What cultural

force allowed the name to be printed thus? I will explore this “force” that caused Shakespeare to change his name, adding weight to his general claims on the power of nomenclature.

Within the general introduction of the *Oxford Shakespeare*, the editors note several problems haunting the modern editor. They note issues surrounding punctuation, stage directions and even the modernization of word and name spellings. “It is not our aim to modernize Shakespeare’s language,” they state toward the end of the introduction (Wells, et al xli). They make a similar claim regarding the proper names even:

Similar principles are applied to proper names: it is, for instance, meaningless to preserve the Folio’s “Petruccio” when this is clearly intended to represent the old (as well as the modern) pronunciation of the Italian name “Petruccio”; failure to modernize adequately here results even in the theatre in the mistaken pedantry of “Pet-rook-io.” (xli-xlii)

Essentially, the editors defend the appearance of the names in the *Oxford* with an argument regarding performance. “Theatre is an endlessly fluid medium,” they begin, and, “it is in performance that the plays lived and had their being” (xlii). It is impossible to guess perfectly the way in which the names and words originally were displayed, as Shakespeare probably only wrote one copy. The rest came from changes made to the scripts based on varying degrees of necessity for the performance at hand. I appreciate the attention paid to performance in the *Oxford* and believe it aligns with my general arguments regarding the names that I am attempting to decipher. These names were mostly originally *heard*; Shakespeare intended these names to be “performed” just as the actions and events surrounding the characters that bare the names. I find it fitting,

therefore, that the *Oxford* edition serves as my primary text for quotations and spellings of the names. I seek to blend the classic and modern by using the *Oxford* edition. The original folio and quarto versions of the texts are readily available to scholars today; such an availability is quite a boon to textual critics. I wish to use an modern edition that *corresponds* to these texts, as my dissertation is corresponding to modern ideas of audience and readership. I feel in using the Oxford edition, I retain the classical forms of the names – with thorough scholarship backing it – while attending to a mixed audience (both scholarly and general). I will, of course, be noting important changes made – such as in the case of Oldcastle and Falstaff – but mainly will use the names and their spellings from the *Oxford* edition of Shakespeare’s plays.

## CHAPTER II

### REVELRY AND FOOLERY: ONOMASTICS OF THE COMEDIES

FESTE You have said, sir. To see this age! – A sentence is but a cheverel glove to a good wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward.

VIOLA Nay, that's certain. They say that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton.

FESTE I would therefore my sister had no **name**, sir.

VIOLA Why, man?

FESTE Why, sir, her **name's** a word, and to dally with that word might make my sister wanton. But indeed words are very rascals since bonds disgraced them.

VIOLA Thy reason, man?

FESTE Troth, sir, I can yield you none without words, and words are grown so false I am loath to prove reason with them.

*(Twelfth Night 3.1.11-24, bold mine)*

In a play centering on falsehood, dissembling, and seeming, the opening of Act 3 of *Twelfth Night* acts as a volta in which Viola (here disguised as Cesario) and Feste discuss the nature of Shakespearean comedy. Here, Shakespeare has a fool – a common voice of metatheatrical reason for him – elicit how the playwright considers proper names. He reduces them to mere words and even indicates how he plays, or “dallies,” with them just as he does with other words. Feste concludes this brief discourse by expressing disgust (or “loathing”) with most words, with language, because in the world of Illyria, false seeming is commonplace. The main character must use a disguise and a change of name in order to integrate herself and get close to her family after a devastating shipwreck. Shakespearean comedies focus on characters trying their best to *fit* into the world, whereas their tragic counterparts exhibit characters desperately seeking for ways to escape the world and the world's rules that leave them little room to exist. For the

comedies, we laugh at the mishaps, mistaken identities, and general harmless, errant human behavior that ensues as the characters seek to fit in. The names of Shakespeare's comic characters involve disguise and dissembling, slander and celebration. The names are puns and double-meanings, highlighting some of Shakespeare's favorite linguistic practices in the comic texts; furthermore, the names are both innocent *and* bawdy. Shakespeare experimented in different languages, borrowing direct denotations (such as the pageboy Mote in *Love's Labor's Lost*, whose name is French for "word" and English for "dust" or "speck") to characterize his personae.

In this chapter, I will explore how the names both denotatively and connotatively echo the meanings, themes, and conceits – the conventional forms mentioned above – of Shakespeare's comedies. Deciphering the names of the comedies – just as in the other genres – is an interpretive task. I am attempting to extract meaning from the names of Shakespeare's comic characters to further support their characterizations. But, as Rosenblatt states, it is a more complex task than just the initial extraction of meaning:

[Readers] often assume that they are merely making explicit the author's particular view of human psychology...however...the reader must remain faithful to the author's text and must be alert for the potential clues concerning character and motive...[H]e must seek to organize or interpret such clues. His own assumptions will provide the tentative framework for such an interpretation. He may discover that this causes him to ignore elements in the work, or he may realize that he is imputing to the author views unjustified by the text. (*Exploration 11*)

Drawing from Benedick the meaning of "good" is not a stretch: the Latinate root is clearly there. However, there are other examples of names that require more intricate explication. Holding true to Rosenblatt's caveat above, I am attempting to extract these

meanings while still maintaining Shakespeare's goals for these characters as it exists in the plays. Benedick *does* eventually "turn orthography" himself, for example. However, what of the arbitrary? There is a degree to which Shakespeare's familiarity with the Italian language, for example, could simply have to do with a number of Italian individuals he knew during his active life in the theatre. John S. Smart writes, "In the novella on which he founded *The Merchant of Venice*, the hero is called 'Gianetto.' Shakespeare substitutes 'Bassanio.' There were actually several Italians of that name in London, natives of Venice, and musicians in the service of Queen Elizabeth" (1). I do take the possibility of the arbitrary into account; however, I am more invested in the complexity with which Shakespeare imbues even his simplest-seeming comic characters.

Karen Newman takes this idea further in stating:

Shakespeare problematizes character in his comedies by endowing his characters with what we have termed a rhetoric of consciousness; he organizes soliloquies and monologic fragments as dialogue and complicates the relation of character to context by features of style such as colloquial verse forms, caesuras and breaks in thought which counter end rhymes and iambic rhythm, and by diction which counterpoints the predictable language of romance or tragedy. (93)

Shakespeare's comic characters do exhibit this "rhetoric of consciousness" in greater ways; some of Shakespeare's greatest soliloquies come from the mouths of his clowns and fools. They still remain some of Shakespeare's greatest philosophers who discuss incredibly complex and difficult ideas and conceits in life. Their names help reflect these ideas and themes. I will consider how the major characters exhibit these complex themes both bluntly and keenly, how the supporting characters exercise these themes with varying degrees of success, and how the characters with lower-status jobs and positions

usually portray some hyperbolized characterization of the title they hold, while often being major players themselves in driving the action of Shakespeare's entangled comedic plots. I have selected five of the comedies that I believe broadly represent the various tenets of Shakespeare's comedic form and demonstrate the arc of Shakespeare's writing career from first penning to his middle and late styles. Shakespeare's purpose-driven form is most basic in his earliest comedies. The names are fairly blunt about where the character is going to end up thematically. Again, Shakespeare's onomastic form becomes complicated across the comedic chronology: the more advanced the theme, the more complex the nomenclature becomes.

### ***The Two Gentlemen of Verona: Various Kinds of Relationships***

Bibliographically, Shakespeare probably wrote *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* as one of his earliest comedies; in fact, critics tend to oscillate between this and *Comedy of Errors* as his first comedies. Regardless of this debate, Shakespeare penned the play early in his career, and the text exhibits some of his initial linguistic habits: a heightened and modified romantic plot expressed through clever wordplay and punning. It is the only other one of his plays set in Verona; however the play's plot, subject matter, and result follow comedic trends. This followed in the adoption of an earlier work:

“Shakespeare opened Montemayor's tragicomic love-triangle [*Diana*] of two women and a faithless man out into a rectangle: his addition of Valentine allowed for a formal comic ending with a double wedding in prospect” (Leech 1219). Thus its “prospect” follows similar trends in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Comedy of Errors*.

Furthermore, Shakespeare, for the first time, employs his convention (or form) of having a heroine in disguise; just like in *Comedy*, Shakespeare is setting standards of his comedic conventional habits. Methodologically, Shakespeare accomplishes this *in* his adaptation; in other words, he has the dramatic conventions in mind and modifies the pre-existing plot to conform to these techniques. This is done primarily through the addition of characters, those of which usually sport etymologically rich nomenclatures. Finally, the play also carries traits of later plays, specifically the “problem” plays. As Clifford Leech notes, the play’s “major interest lies in creating and complicating the predicaments of its characters rather than in resolving them” (1219). Thus, the play is enigmatic in that it is both trail-blazing and prototypical in Shakespearean dramatic fashion.

Onomastically, the play is rife with ingenuity. Some names appear more obvious than others. Once again, the servants of the play exhibit this: Speed, for example, is the loyal messenger to Valentine (though he returns with less-than-desired reactions from Julia to Proteus; one only has to think of the messenger god Hermes, whose “swift foot” is noted throughout Greek and Roman mythology). Naturally, Shakespeare complicates this oxymoronicly, as Speed is often tardy to planned meetings with his master. Early on, and at the basic level, Shakespeare reverses mythological form (the swift-footed messenger-servant) to dramatically enrich his purpose (a servant whose name belies his nature, a mistaken identity of sorts). Another servant, Lucetta, has her name connected to pre-existing trends in Shakespearean comedy. Lucetta engages Julia in impressively clever banter, which can border on the obscene even. The two exchanges the following in the first act:

JULIA What is't that you took up so gingerly?

LUCETTA Nothing.

JULIA Why didst thou stoop then?

LUCETTA To take a paper up that I let fall.

JULIA And is this paper nothing?

LUCETTA Nothing concerning me.

(*TGoV* 1.1.70-75)

I will consider the servants' relationships to their masters (across the comedies) later; for the purpose of this play, though, it is important to note the inference of this particular word. Shakespeare often makes different use of the word "nothing" to mean "no-thing," sexual slang for female genitalia, or, here, because all "things" Proteus concerned Julia and not Lucetta. Furthermore, Lucetta's name means "little light bearer": as most major-character servants in Shakespearean comedy, Lucetta provides important information (or "sheds light" on the situations). She also delivers an important message, or delivers illumination to other important characters in the play. The above passage even seems to poke fun at itself through the third line: it is as if the prose is "stooping" to ribald language. Russ McDonald notes the ineffable power of such prosaic elements:

Although it lacks the patterned sound of poetry, prose can be arranged into musical schemes, and since the writer is not confined to the framework of iambic pentameter, words and phrases can be employed in more various and sometimes more intricate combinations. (*Arts of Language*, 134-5)

*Two Gentlemen of Verona* exudes such an "ineffable power," even though it includes a large amount of verse, another common aspect of early Shakespearean comedy.

For the female characters, the naming is less etymologically involved and more direct references. The play's leading lady, Julia, seems a slight reference to the Spanish romance that Shakespeare adapted for his play and an even more direct reference to

Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*, another source for *Two Gentlemen* (Leech 1219). Silvia's name carries with it some Latinate reference to the woods or forest. But unlike Silvius from *As You Like It*, she is not rustic or simple; instead, she is the Duke's daughter and steals the heart of Valentine. Instead of inferring the bucolic simplicity of a country wood, she instead exemplifies the rich pageantry of a lush forest. Valentine, the male lover, naturally carries the weight and history of that name: he is an Italian lover engrossed in the beauty and sexuality of the Veronese female population. Proteus is a bit of an oddity, as the Latinate root means "to protect." Though perhaps not intended – and thus, merely it is Shakespeare using a Roman name for an Italian man – one wonders exactly what or whom Proteus is trying to protect beyond himself. Because of his fickleness (until the end) it certainly does not seem to be the feelings of others, especially other women. His name mainly resembles the Greek mythological shape-shifter, however. Proteus owes his fickle behavior and actions to the mythological figure who constantly changed form. The name even developed an adjective – "protean," referring to an ever-changing form. The classic Broadway musical even contains three characters – Proteans I, II, and III – who play all of the minor supporting roles. They are servants, soldiers, doormen, and, for the purposes of a musical, part of the chorus. They change behaviors, characterizations, and shape throughout the musical. Perhaps, then, his protective attitude resonates later in Benedick, a man protecting his manhood by exclaiming to love a woman "like a soldier" in Act 5. Like Benedick, he is finally relieved and secure to be with his true love at the end, his ultimate protective relationship.

### ***The Taming of the Shrew: Change and Malleability***

The title of Shakespeare's comedy holds pertinent information regarding an major conceit of the plot. The title infers change, specifically a reversal, of character: a "taming" would convert a shrew, an otherwise feral beast, into a modest, obedient creature. However, this conceit is not merely superficial; Katherina, as tenor of the titular metaphor, is not the only character who undergoes a transformation. Debates concerning actual transformation (or those regarding Petruchio being the dupe) are inconsequential here, as, textually, Katherina exhibits transformation, whether she was seeming or not. Shakespeare became fond of representing "seeming" and "acting" and making sure to differentiate it from "being." Shakespeare uses this metatheatrical device in several plays, disregarding generic purpose; in other words, he makes no distinction of the basic level of genre: characters use disguise, alternative personalities, *roles* to achieve desired goals. The onomastics of this play also seem to reflect change, or transformation.

Shakespeare presents two kinds of transformation in his play: that of character and physicality. Of course the obvious character transformation belongs to Kate, debates aside, as the title suggests. However, several characters undergo transformation of physicality – or disguise – to achieve their ends. First, Hortensio becomes Litio, a music tutor, to become closer to Bianca as a suitor. Primarily, something that is "lithy" is malleable, bendable, or unresistant. Hortensio chooses a name possibly meaning to change shape; appropriately, he is doing the same. Furthermore, "Litio" can also refer to the Italian *lite* (or L. *litigare*), which is a quarrel (or "to quarrel or strive" in Latin). We see this today in "litigation," or law suit, and Lucentio later even makes direct reference

to the behavior of the suitors. To him, the suitors should behave and continue as lawyers do:

Sir, I shall not be slack. In sign whereof,  
Please ye we may contrive this afternoon,  
And quaff carouses to our mistress' health,  
And do as adversaries do in law,  
Strive mightily, but eat and drink as frends.  
(1.2.271-5)

Essentially, Hortensio, or Litio, is constantly engaged in a legal battle of wits to woo successfully Bianca; each suitor presents his own case. Similarly, Lucentio disguises himself as Cambio. The prefix *cam-* refers to something that is bent, twisted, or crooked from the original. Thus, the mask of Cambio is a twisted, or different, form from the original Lucentio. However, the false name “Cambio” has an even more direct meaning. The Italian word *cambio* is and always has referred to a currency exchange. Lucentio has transformed, or changed, himself; he has exchanged his previous physical form for a more appropriate one – he thinks – in order to win Bianca.

For the servants, the names resonate not as much with change and transformation (except for Tranio); however, their nomenclatures still reflect characteristics and archetypes. Grumio's name has two possible meanings; first *grumme* is an archaic verb meaning to grumble. As Petruchio's servant, Grumio does plenty of this:

Fie, fie on all tired jades, on all mad masters, and all foul ways! Was ever man so beaten? Was ever man so rayed? Was ever man so weary? I am sent before to make a fire, and they are coming after to warn them. Now, were I not a little pot and soon hot, my very lips might freeze to my teeth, my tongue to the roof of my mouth, my heart inmy belly, ere I should come by a fire to thaw me. But I with blowing the fire shall warm myself, for, considering the weather, a taller man than I will take cold. (4.1.1-10)

Secondly, his name sounds like “groom,” another archaic word meaning “man servant.” Tranio, on the other hand, also disguises, or transforms, himself. The prefix *tran-* can refer to change, as in “transvestite”; this also affirms the act of disguise, as this is purely a habitual change, or change of clothing and appearance. The name also seems to have a connection to the Italian word *tranello*, or “trap.” Tranio is setting a trap for Bianca (though she knows of the deception; the real trick is being played on Baptista) by disguising himself as his master – and suitor of Bianca – Lucentio. This exists even in the Induction: Sly, whose name’s meaning seems blatant, goes for fifteen years without knowing he is, in fact, a lord. Here, the commoner undergoes a status change; the word “sly” can refer to something going by unnoticed.

The surname Minola exhibits multivalent possibilities as well. First, the Latin *minaret* means “to subvert.” Furthermore, it is Italian for “mine”: Baptista is undermined by several of the suitors in the play. His will is constantly undermined by his fiery-tongued daughter as well. He is seen as a goldmine by several of the suitors; his treasure lay in both his dowry and beautiful daughter Bianca. His name represents an underhanded form of forced change, which multiple characters enact through disguise, chicanery, deceit, and “taming.” It is furthermore appropriate that the Minolas are the central family in the play, as the suitors all are after several “mines,” including the treasure of both women’s love and companionship. Both daughters have names which indicate purity. Bianca’s name exhibits the direct Italian for “white” or “pure.” On the other hand, Katherina the central figure of change, has a name with, in Greek, means

purity *through* change, or “catharsis.” Furthermore, Kate, or “kates,” can refer to *delicates* or the treats that Petruchio sees and attempts to tease out through the titular “taming.” Finally, Baptista’s name shares a unique relationship in the Shakespearean canon. There exists another Baptista in the complete works; the Player Queen’s character in “The Mousetrap,” the guilt-evoking play set within *Hamlet*, is also named “Baptista.” In the play, she has just been widowed; Baptista Minola begins the play as a widower. Both Kate and Bianca are without a mother. Initially, John the Baptist was and is commonly recognized as an ultimate agent of change, or transformation, in the New Testament. By becoming baptized, one became purified, as both Minola daughters’ names indicate. The central family, then, is headed by an agent of change and transformation, affirming the central conceit mentioned in the title of this comedy.

### ***Much Ado About Nothing: The “Languages” of Love***

On love, John Russell Brown’s definitive text, *Shakespeare and His Comedies*, views the play and its particular relationship with love: that of truth and judgment. Decisions are reversed completely in the play solely based on vicious and unproven slander and gossip. True feelings and love are disguised by masks of derogatory and mordant wit. Men and women lie to each other, simply, to save face. The perceived dangerous threat to the masculine and feminine characters in *Much Ado* is the revelation of true feelings concerning the opposite gender (Brown 82-123). Once again, Russ McDonald, in *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, points out that *Much Ado* is “a play in which the innocent heroine is a victim of slander, and in which Beatrice and Benedick protect their vulnerable hearts with sharp and witty words.” Indeed it is a play which

explores the extent to which language can be used to cause severe emotional damage (121). Thus, several slights at the oft-severe nature of gender relations are made: while the play carries specific definitions of “male” and “female,” it subverts the tension by suggesting an inseparability of the two and an initial claim that something so simple is mired in unwarranted anxiety. Shakespeare concerns himself with the dichotomy of male and female in this play, encouraging us to consider something so different to be virtually the same; thus, linguistically and onomastically, his use of oxymoron and conflation is wholly appropriate.

The names in *Much Ado* reflect speech, talk, business, and, in general, communication. Consequentially, all of these purpose-driven forms center on the subject of fraternal, platonic, and romantic love. They range from basic references to more complex plays with vocabulary. For example, the drunken villain Borachio exudes an inebriated speech; the drink even causes him to confess. *In vino veritas*, indeed, Shakespeare seems to suggest. Both Italian and Spanish offer directly appropriate vocabulary: a *borracia* in Italian is a flask; in Spanish, *borracho* means “drunk.” Furthermore, the names are replete with irony and contradiction as well, as they relate to *what* the speakers say.

The play concerns dissembling and masked feelings; the names of some of the characters also support this. Already I have demonstrated the specific use of Benedick and Beatrice and their purpose: to become those whose speech transforms from seething wordplay to verses of love. The specific etymology, however, I have not yet dissected. Concerning the linguistic history, the Latin adverb *benedice*, as indicated before, reveals

the contradictory dichotomy between Benedick's name and the language which he imparts on the world. The adverb means "with friendly speech," something clearly opposite to Benedick's demeanor. Beatrice, his enemy in a war of words, also has a name based in this oxymoron of spoken language. Beatrice *automatically* is stigmatized as a woman with a fiery tongue:

LEONATO By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

ANTONIO In faith, she's too curst.

BEATRICE Too curst is more than curst...

LEONATO Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly. (2.1.16-19, 74)

Though she is too "curst" in her speech, her name also resonates a meaning of blessing. The Latin *beatus* refers to "happy," "fortunate," and "blessed." Moreso, the Italian *beatitudine* means "blessed," especially in theological phraseology. This, then, connects to the Beatitudes, the commonly recognized commencement of the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. The Beatitudes are solely comprised of "blessed speech," as Christ compels his disciples to consider the less fortunate and more humble children of God and their blessed status. Shakespeare also presents the multivalent use of the verb "to bless," specifically meaning to curse or "to bless out"; in the case of Beatrice and Benedick, the two constantly "bless" each other with barbed wit and mordant language. It is this mordant language that keeps the two from exposing their true identities: two characters in love. Henry Norman Hudson states:

They study [their wit] and rely on it a good deal as their title or passport to approval and favor. Hence a *habit* of flouting and raillery has somewhat usurped the outside of their characters, insomuch as to keep their better qualities rather in

the background, and even to obstruct seriously the outcome of what is best in them. (325)

Shakespeare's purpose-driven form is at work in the Hudson's words; the two characters use their barbed wit to disguise the true meanings of their identities, their names given to them by the dramatist.

For the other romantic pair of the play, Claudio and Hero, the nomenclature helps inform speech patterns as well. Benedick lambasts Claudio directly through the young suitor's speech:

BENEDICK He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and soldier, and now is he turned orthography – his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. (2.3.18-21)

The Latin adjective *claudus* refers to something that is limping or lame. From Benedick's point of view, Claudio has undergone a verbal laming, a hobbling of language, or, more appropriately for this play, a castration. However, the Italian name seems common; here it is possible for an archetypal assignation. In other words, Shakespeare needed a common name for an Italian male lover and decided upon this one. The connection to *claudus*, though, seems appropriately forged. Hero's name carries a mythological connection to the virginal priestess of Aphrodite in the lyric *Hero and Leander*. The reference here is clear: Shakespeare presents another Bianca: the pure, virginal daughter (or in this case, cousin) set as a counterpart to the fiery, shrewish female lead. However, the Spanish *herida* refers to a wound; Hero suffers the greatest wound in a play about the damage that language can do: the venomous barbs of slander.

For the ever-so-contradictory and inept Watch, Shakespeare increases the bawdy to blunt proportions. We read Dogberry and Verges, two characters whose names can refer to testicles and the penis respectively. The “berry” reference requires little explanation, and the French *verge* refers to the penis in anatomy, while also maintaining a meaning of “a rod”; here it is further apropos, as a rod is a common tool of discipline often associated with the police. In the case of this play, though, the phallic reference cannot be ignored or dismissed. What is constructed as the “control” of the city – here, obviously male – is inept, bumbling, and foolish; Shakespeare reflects this in speech mired with malapropisms, ignorance, and general base intelligence. He asks us to reconsider male prowess and, for lack of a better word, stamina, as a controlling force. Instead, he presents these as facades for greater insecurities (seen even clearer through Benedick). Leonato’s name might also exhibit this contradiction: the first half refers to the mighty and righteous king of beasts, while the latter half, *ato* – or *ate* – resonates hubric inferences. The names of *Much Ado* are dichotomous and contradictory as the essential gender differences that Shakespeare discusses. However, in their conflated presentations, they exhibit a clever appropriateness and fitting similarity, just what Shakespeare asks us to consider between men and women, a difference which he unites through the comedic wedding.

### ***As You Like It: Questions Concerning Humanity***

*As You Like It* is a play of words and meanings derived from speech more so than it is from action or circumstances between characters. We see this especially in the role of Jaques, whom William Hazlitt posits, “is the only purely contemplative character in

Shakespear [sic]. He thinks, and does nothing” (187). He constantly considers and inquires; his speeches are riddled with questions:

Why who cries out on pride,  
That can therein tax any private party?  
Doth it not flow as hugely as the sea,  
Till that the weary very means do ebb?  
When that I say the city-woman bears  
The cost of princes on unworthy shoulders?  
(2.7.70-6)

Etymologically, *Jacques* is the French for “Jack” and carries heavy ties to “Jacob,” whose name comes from the Hebrew for “supplanter.” But Jaques is ultimately harmless, as he exists in the peaceful Arden, the forest that strips individuals of former social status. Arden is an equalizer, and Shakespeare exposes this through employment of verse and prose. Characters of lower class are allowed to speak in flowery verse, where characters of nobility and higher order are reduced to prose for communication. Silvius and Phebe are the greatest examples of this; Silvius, whose name refers to the *sylvan*, the forest, the wild, is simple and exudes a peaceful sentiment. His wild nature comes out, though, in his love for Phebe, and he is allowed to express this in beautiful verse. Through the “literary fashions of the day,” as Frank Kermode puts it, the play concerns dissembling, reversal (both of physicality and fortune), and attempts to be other than that which one is prescribed (81). These are regular attributes of Shakespearean comedy, and the names reflect these traits in a comedy where language is held paramount to action.

The two “villainous” characters of the play, both Duke Frederick and Oliver, *do* act, and their actions are malevolent. What is odd about their names, though, is they both

reflect peace and resolved conflict. “Frederick” comes from the German *frid ric*, or “peaceful ruler.” “Oliver” conjures words and images of the olive branch, a universal symbol for peace. Furthermore, the name Oliver exists also in *Le Chanson de Roland*, in which he is friends with Roland; however, in *As You Like It*, the Oliver is the sworn enemy of Orlando (the Italian of “Roland”). Thus, they are twisted from their nomenclature, reaffirming the conventions of seeming and guile commonly used in these comedies. Again, Shakespeare reverses form and instead drives the two characters to their ultimate purpose: to bring about peace and resolved conflict in Arden. The exchanges between Oliver and Frederick in *As You Like It* clearly display their maliciousness:

OLIVER O that your Highness knew my heart in this! I never lov’d my brother in my life.

DUKE FREDERICK More villain thou. Well, push him out of doors,  
And let my officers of such a nature  
Make an extent upon his house and lands.  
Do this expediently, and turn him going.

(3.1.13-18)

However, Corin, the laboring shepherd, exudes a simple and peaceful happiness and complacency: “I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man’s happiness...” (3.1.70-2). However, his name derives from words and names referring to war and agitation. Many of the names in *As You Like It* are French versions of English or Latinate names; it is Ardennes, after all. His name is the French for the Latin *quiris*, meaning “spear.” In Sabine mythology, “Quirinus” is a god identified with Mars. He owes no man hate, yet his name indicates aggression and conflict. Shakespeare flips

archetypal convention and presents a man already resolved from conflict and hate. His name is the coda of a destination, arriving at peace.

The play also concerns amorous beauty and the characters' desire and striving to acquire it. The female objects of affection – Celia, Rosalind, and Phebe – all have names referring to simple and great beauties. “Rosalind” comes from the German for “soft horse” and the Latin for “sweet rose.” To aid in her transformation, Shakespeare employs a name of great beauty, “Ganymede,” the cub-bearer to the Greek gods who stole Zeus' affections away from Hera. Celia and Phebe both have names referring to celestial objects of great beauty. Celia comes from the Latin *caelum*, or heaven; one thinks of the word “celestial” and can see the derivation. Furthermore, *cielto* is Spanish for “sky.” And, of course, *ciel* is French for “sky” (and “heaven”) as well. Once again, this is quite relevant for a play set in France; Shakespeare is not only working with inherent multivalency of names. He is also transforming the names into their proper geographical relevance and deriving new meaning from the alternate languages. This just adds more and more layers of meaning for the audiences to ingest. Phebe's name refers to the Titan Phiope who is associated with the moon and also sounds like Phoebus, the Roman name for Apollo, who represents the sun. The moon, sun, heaven, or sky, are ultimate objects of surpassing beauty and often used by poets for metaphorical ascriptions of love.

The entire world of *As You Like It* is governed by Touchstone, its greatest commentator. For once, he dislikes the life of the rustics but is eventually swayed by the lovely and bold Audrey; henceforth, he finds the bucolic life pleasant. His name refers to

an object now used to test for precious metals; its hard, finely grained, surface allows for trace amounts of soft minerals to be left behind. He is the ultimate test for all of the characters, showing beauty where it exists, even if it is microscopically visible. Also, Touchstone himself is softened by the end of the play, another transformation in another world where characters will “seem” in order to get into the action of the play.

### ***Twelfth Night: Comedy’s Twilight***

By the time Shakespeare began writing *Twelfth Night*, he had already started trekking down the darker roads of his composition: the writing of his tragedies. These plays seek answers to questions from characters who interrogate faith and consider other avenues – especially the introspective human mind – for satiating these burdensome inquiries. Shakespeare’s late comedy exhibits typical features of his other comedies (mistaken identity, using arrogance to expose foolishness, etc.); however it also exudes some deeper, unforeseeable complications. Like Jaques in *As You Like It*, Feste comments on the play’s events and elicits that “Present mirth hath present laughter;/What’s to come is still unsure” (2.3.48-9); Feste, here, comments on the bittersweet tone of the comedy, that is mostly absent in Shakespeare’s earlier comedies (Dunton-Downer and Riding 250). Furthermore, *Twelfth Night* falls almost exactly in the middle of Shakespeare’s solo career and begins similarly to *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest* (considered to be one of his earliest plays and the last play of his solo career, respectively): with a shipwreck, emphasizing disorientation, desertion, and new beginnings as primary motifs of his composition.

However, as the title suggests, this play concerns celebration; “Twelfth Night” refers to the last night of the Christmas feast. Furthermore, the play concerns the appraisal of human folly, not through long-winded soliloquies, but instead through fast-paced action; the characters of *Twelfth Night* implore the readers and spectators to follow by considering the eventfulness of the play. It seems no mistake that the play’s environment, then, centers on a noted *event*. This aligns the play with music, not only in a celebratory sense but also in one of tempo and tone (Dunton-Downer and Riding 255). The play acts as a sonata, as Shakespeare uses tone of speech to fluctuate between separate portions. Frank Kermode, in *Shakespeare’s Language*, states, “Not that the tone is always as solemn as it becomes in the closing passages of the play; there is also a movement that celebrates mirth and happiness in the world” (65). The onomastics of this play reflect this attention paid to musical art. Shakespeare has both of Viola’s onomastic personae function in this way: her actual name *is* a musical instrument, one noted for its higher-pitched, faster-paced playing, whereas her hidden identity “Cesario” conjures “cessation,” “rest,” or, even more appropriately for dramatic poetry, *caesura*. The name is also connected to “Caesar” and “caesarian,” the type of interrupted birth connected to the Roman emperor of the same name. The latter also carries meaning of “cut short” and “interrupted” or “paused.” The connection to “Caesar” conjures the grandeur and lavishness of any noble court, especially the specific court of Orsino that Viola – as Cesario – attempts to enter.

Duke Orsino commences the play with an order to continue a previously enjoyed figurative symphony:

If music be the food of love, play on,  
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,  
The appetite may sicken, and so die  
That strain again, it had a dying fall...  
(1.1.1-4)

Orsino's name bears a connection to commencement, as the Latin *orsus* means "beginning." Orsino raises the baton as a conductor of the first movement, the tone of which begins as mirthful and fancy-free.

Another arterial conceit of this play is the exposing of falsehood and using these shortcomings to mock and make fools out of certain characters. "This gives rise to a corresponding style of comedy," begins Hazlitt, "the object of which is to detect the disguises of self-love, and to make reprisals on these preposterous assumptions of vanity, by making the contrast between the real and the affected character as severely as possible" (158). This of course primarily refers to the sub-plot concerning Malvolio, whose name comes from the Italian *malvoglia*, meaning "unwillingness." Furthermore, he bears the exact opposite name as Benvolio from *Romeo and Juliet*. I will discuss Shakespeare's tragic love story in the next chapter in more detail; however, it is important to note that Malvolio's name, in Latin, simply means "bad will." He acts as villain in this play; the name's simple construction supports this path of characterization. Mostly, though, he is reluctant: Malvolio appears unwilling to relinquish his self-love, his "vanity," and thus makes himself a target of ridicule and belittlement. Furthermore, his name also has connections to *malvolere*, an Italian verb meaning "to make oneself unpopular." Malvolio essentially acts as a snitch in 2.3, after he has discovered house members acting rowdily and noisily late at night:

My masters, are you mad? Or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do ye make an ale-house of my lady's house, that ye speak out your coziers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?  
(2.3.86-91)

Clearly, Malvolio directs this at the likes of Sir Toby Belch, whose surname needs little explanation: he loves to drink and expresses his love through vomiting crude song in this scene, once again reemphasizing the importance and presence of music. Malvolio is preoccupied with manners and “good” behavior and finds trouble in his present company, which is comprised of boorish singers, revelers, and wooers. Sir Andrew Aguecheek fits the mold as an embarrassing wooer of Olivia; his surname indicates a “fevered face” or one with a tinge of red, a mark of humiliation. There, then, is a kind of humor associated with both of these gentlemen – Sir Toby and Sir Andrew – being knighted, or highly respected members of a court entrapped with a certain proper ethos. This is an underlying message of *Twelfth Night*: “His whole object is to turn the meanest or rudest objects to a pleasurable account. The relish which he has of a pun, or of the quaint humour [sic] of a low character, does not interfere with the delight with which he describes a beautiful image, or the most refined love” (159). Sir Toby rhetorically asks of Malvolio, “Art any more than a steward? Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?”(2.3.112-14) Are any of the characters more than a servant? Is anyone *really* of higher consideration than, say, Fabian, whose name rings stewardship with its ties to the Latin *faber*, meaning “workman”? For this play, the rule is revelry (the title and subtitle demand it): celebrate and act as you wish and let no man talk down to you or tell you otherwise.

The main plot of the play includes a love triangle with typical comedic misunderstanding, miscommunication, and mistaken identity. Viola enters the court of Orsino hidden as Cesario, the name of which has already been described. However, the mourning Olivia falls for Cesario, or the hidden Viola; in this circumstance Viola's name, like her personality is also hidden. "Olivia" is nearly an anagram of Viola: the letters are hidden within Olivia's name, just as her love for Viola is hidden through Cesario. Olivia's name also has connections, just as Oliver did in *As You Like It*, to the olive tree, or the overt symbol of peace. Olivia is in the figurative doldrums in this play, a state of reverent peace following her brother's death. Overall, these female characters are both in states of mourning, Olivia for her dead brother and Viola for her *supposed* deceased brother, Sebastian, whose name has Greek roots tied to *sebastos*, meaning "venerable." Because of his "death," he has entered into a state of veneration, a showed respect from other characters in the play.

But mourning for seven years is not possible in this play; though late in his comedic career, this is not yet a tragic or romantic plot. Though bittersweet, the reveling music will still play on. In the end, several characters' names refer to music: "Olivia" as peace can mean "rest"; "Viola" again is an actual musical instrument noted for producing lighter tunes; "Orsino" refers to commencement, an upbeat setting for the rest of the piece; "Sir Toby Belch" refers to noise (even if it regularly is cacophonous, in this play, it is beautiful); "Curio" could refer to a curious tone; "Sebastion" – or *sebastos* – could refer to a somber, more respectful tone. And, finally, our commentator, our emcee, Feste can, with his name, "make haste" as the Latin *festino* denotes. Regardless of tempo,

however, Feste demands revelry, celebration, and *festivity* – to shed vanity and pretense and enjoy oneself as one will.

### **The Assistants: Servants, Clowns, Wenches, and Fools**

As mentioned before, the form(s) of Shakespeare's comedies frequently concern relationships, both platonic and romantic. Shakespeare was exploring the boundaries of human interaction and the various emotional responses tied to them. Out of all of Shakespeare's earlier comedies, only *A Midsummer Night's Dream* actually deals with true love and marriage. The rest concern relationships prior to marriage: testing the strength of friendship bonds when romantic interests become involved, courtships that frequently fail, and amorous play between men and women. The general layout of Shakespeare's early Verona play is simple. Shakespeare was a novice writer at this point but still exhibited promise as a dramatist (Wells, *Shakespeare: The Poet*, 40). As a linguist, however, his prowess shines through. It is just the backdrop that is less dense and complicated. The wordplay between the two gentlemen and their servants is quick and witty, and the servants' names reflect this directly. The play barely progresses one page before audiences are riddled with this clever banter:

PROTEUS

Indeed, a sheep doth very often stray,  
An if the shepherd be a while away.

SPEED

You conclude that my master is a shepherd, then, and I a sheep?

PROTEUS I do.

SPEED

Why then, my horns are his horns, whether I wake or sleep.

PROTEUS A silly answer, and fitting well a sheep.

SPEED This proves me still a sheep....

SPEED The shepherd seeks the sheep, and not the sheep the shepherd. But I seek

my master, and my master seeks not me. Therefore I am no sheep.

PROTEUS The sheep for fodder follow the shepherd, the shepherd for food follows not the sheep. Thou for wages followest thy master, thy master for wages follows not thee. Therefore thou art a sheep.

SPEED Such another proof will make me cry 'baa'.

(1.1.74-91)

The gentlemen share friendships with their respective (and contrary) servants based on cunning wit and humor. It is almost as if they walk about, devising clever methods of communication in a kind of hilarious School of Athens. The barebones plot takes a backseat to the wordplay between master and servant, mistress and waiting-woman, servant and servant. "Speed" clearly relates the alacrity of the repartee, while "Lance" could easily represent the sharpness of the witty dialogue. Julia's waiting-woman also takes on the role as witty servant, but her name bares a double-meaning as well.

"Lucetta" carries first the Latinate meaning of "light bearer" or "illuminated"; however, audiences also hear the aural pun of "loose," perhaps indicating the sultrier side of Julia's maid. What is more probably described here, however, is the "looseness" of Lucetta's tongue when talking to her mistress. She is most liberal with her opinions and criticisms of the men of Verona as well as Julia's demeanor. First, when Julia encounters Proteus' letter:

LUCETTA

Keep tune there still. So you will sing it out.

And yet methinks I do not like this tune.

JULIA You do not?

LUCETTA

No, madam, 'tis too sharp.

JULIA

You, minion, are too saucy....

(1.2.89-93)

And, later, when Julia is attempting to disguise herself as a page to avoid the lascivious stares of the Veronese men:

LUCETTA

What fashion, madam, shall I make your breeches?

JULIA

That fits as well as 'Tell me, good my lord,  
What compass will you wear your farthingale?'  
Why, e'en what fashion thou best likes, Lucetta.

LUCETTA

You must needs have them with a codpiece, madam.

JULIA

Out, out, Lucetta. That will be ill-favoured [sic].  
(2.7.49-54)

Rarely do servants in Shakespeare's comedies actually follow traditional modes of propriety in concert with their mistresses and masters. Instead, while they maintain their status in terms of working for and accomplishing tasks for their masters, they simultaneously *raise* their status in regards to intelligence and manipulation.

Indeed, the wily, scheming, and big-mouthed Shakespearean servant resembles the Commedia stock character *Arlechinno*, the wise-cracking aide, who furthers much of the plot progression through guile, trickery, and deceit. The servants drive many of Shakespeare's comedic plots in clever schemes meant to trick their masters into falling in love, reconciling lost friendships, and generally reemerging as happier individuals in the end. As seen with Lance, Speed, and Lucetta, Shakespeare adopts naming conventions but specializes them for the characters in terms of *how* they are presented in the text. *Arlechinno* is always the beguiling servant in *Commedia* pieces. And Shakespeare's servants normally are just as beguiling of their masters -- consider the Dromii in *Comedy*

*of Errors*, who, incidentally receive the last lines of the play. As audience members, we receive more information toward the form of their characters than just the knowledge of their purpose: their deceitful, yet often helpful, intent. In assessing the names of Shakespeare's comedic servants, one must address status *and* intent to fully understand the character's purpose.

Shakespeare also uses slang or diminutive forms of names to impart lower status among his serving-class characters. Another of Shakespeare's early plays, *The Comedy of Errors*, contains the kitchen wench and servant to Adriana, Nell. The name "Nell" is the Medieval English diminutive equivalent of "Helen" and "Ellen" or "Eleanor." Before we encounter the character firsthand, we hear Dromio of Syracuse bemoan to his master the unfortunate meeting he had with the ill-tempered kitchen monster.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE What's her name?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE Nell, sir. But her name and three-quarters – that's an ell and three-quarters – will not measure her from hip to hip.

ANTIPHOLUS Then she bears some breadth?

DROMIO No longer from head to foot than from hip to hip. She is spherical, like a globe. I could find out countries in her. (1.1.61-9)

Not only is the name the lesser form of the classical beauty Helen or the sacred St. Helena<sup>9</sup>, but here it exists also to denote ugliness and lowliness. Dromio's description of the kitchen maid is far from classically beautiful or religiously pious. He paints the image of an overweight, pocked, loud, boorish, leather-skinned, and swearing troll, whose only purpose is to terrorize young men who dare try to enter Adriana's house:

---

<sup>9</sup> During the Middle Ages in England, use of the name "Helen" was more probably derived from the saint-mother of the emperor Constantine. Most of the etymological information gleaned on "Helen" and "Nell" comes from <[www.behindthename.com](http://www.behindthename.com)>, an online etymology resource.

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE Marry, sir, she's the kitchen wench, and all grease; and I know not what use to put her to but to make a lamp of her, and run from her by her own light. I warrant her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Poland winter. If she lives till doomsday, she'll burn a week longer than the whole world. (3.2.96-101)

Indeed, "Helen" comes from the Greek *helene*, or "torch." Furthermore, it's the Greek word for Greece itself: *Hellene* or *Hellas*. It is a noble assignation for one who carries truth through illumination, like the famed captive of Troy or the canonized mother of Constantine. Again, like Lucetta in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the serving wench carries, within her name's etymology, a meaning of light or lightbearer. However, in *Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare bastardizes the connotation of light and illumination by making the foundation of the servant woman's illuminating powers nothing but skin oil, sweat, and kitchen grease. It is indeed a bit nauseating and connotes a lower status. Regarding form, Shakespeare appropriately makes the character a diminutive or baser version than the paragons of beauty and piety, just as the name, structurally, is the diminutive version of the original "Helen"<sup>10</sup> or "Eleanor." As demonstrated in the comedies (and as exists in all the genres), Shakespeare used character development to reflect back and shape initial identity: this is a part of the purpose-driven form that I argue. Shakespeare demonstrates this form with the reshaping of the name Helen above.

Though they were chances simply to entertain London audiences, Shakespeare's comedies also provide answers to some of life's difficult questions. Unlike his tragic characters, however, the comic characters, for the most part, find what they are looking

---

<sup>10</sup>It is also interesting to note the play takes place in Grecian areas of the world, and the names denote this geography (Syracuse and Ephesus). Thus, Shakespeare playing on the name of the most famous Grecian woman of them all, Helen, is apropos. Shakespeare reverses this form to bolster the character's purpose: the loud and unsightly serving wench.

for. The names of Shakespeare's comic characters reflect their journeys: their searches for salvation, their hopes for the future, and even their arrivals at some destinations – as in the case of Beatrice and Benedick – that they did not think were possible. The names reflect the whimsy and cleverness associated with Shakespeare's early word play and transform into sophisticated re-presentations of philosophical questions associated with his late comedies. For the reader and live audience member, Shakespeare's comedies contain rich looks into humanity's lighter side, that side associated with mirth, revelry, and celebration, while still probing the complex inner-workings of the philosophical mind.

### CHAPTER III

#### FALLS FROM GRACE: TRAGIC ONOMASTICS

HORATIO Never believe it.

**I am more an antique Roman** than a Dane.

Here's yet some liquor left.

HAMLET As thou'rt a man,

Give me the cup. Let go. By heaven, I'll ha't.

O God, Horatio, what a wounded **name**,

Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,

Absent thee from felicity a while,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

To tell my story.

(*Hamlet*, 5.2.293-301, bold mine)

In some of Hamlet's final words, the tragic prince illuminates the inevitable result in all of Shakespeare's tragedies: the crash after the fall of a noble hero. Whether caused by acting without thinking, thinking with little action, jealousy, wrath, over-confidence, or some other hubric characteristic, Shakespeare's plummets from grace hit hard, usually resulting in death. Whereas Juliet wishes names did not matter nearly as much as they did, Hamlet bemoans the tainted name that his legacy could potentially become. He needs an envoy, here a poet, to tell his noble story. Therefore, it is fitting that Horatio refers to himself as "more an antique Roman than a Dane"; his name linguistically connects him to one of Rome's greatest poet-storytellers, Horace. Many of Shakespeare's tragic figures reflect an interest in classical roots. Here, for example, Shakespeare envelops Horatio's entire characterization in that of a classical poet. Thus,

Horatio's purpose at the end of the play – as poet and storyteller of Denmark's future – dictates the form of his nomenclature.

Shakespeare's tragedies exhibit characters in search of answers to questions regarding fate, life, death, and existence. These "big picture" questions normally remain unanswered or, at the most, answered at the last minute of the characters' lives. Normally, characters could turn toward God for these answers or at least ease from suffering. However, several of his tragic figures exist in pre-Christian societies; audiences witness these characters wandering aimlessly, struggling to make sense of life's hardest truths without a benevolent deity to salve their fears and anxieties. And those living in Christian societies, such as the characters of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, endure the all-too potent purpose of humanity: to suffer through mistakes and poor choices made.

Onomastically, Shakespeare's main tragic characters act in reverse to their comedic counterparts. Shakespeare's great tragic figures witness and experience a fall from grace, glory, favor, or power; it is these meteoric downfalls that categorize the main tenets of Shakespearean tragedy. The names of Shakespeare's tragic figures follow in kind. In this chapter, I will explore the names of some of Shakespeare's greatest tragic figures and how their meanings bolster ideas of loss, fate, hubris, and others. Shakespeare's titular tragic figures (those whose names share proximity with the word "tragedy" in his titles) all exhibit damaging human flaws. Their names become tied with these flaws as well: Othello with jealousy, Hamlet with vengeance, Macbeth with megalomania, etc. Shakespeare's tragic characters are round and deeply fascinating

because of these flaws; though the outcomes of these tragic flaws are particularly devastating, the characters adapt and change their behaviors because of them.

Shakespeare's tragic figures are working so hard *not* to be defined; Millicent Bell pushes this idea further in her *Shakespeare's Tragic Skepticism*:

It is certainly true that we think Shakespeare's characters "real" precisely because they are not easily confined to cartoon outline. They contradict themselves and change. The mostly formulaic summaries that seem to contain them also seem untrue to what we want to feel about them, and about ourselves – that we are somehow more than any of our conditions, more even than our acts, that ours is a potentiality which life will never completely exhaust. (24-25)

Bell's analysis connects Rosenblatt and Bakhtin in the idea that we are connecting to the literature – here through the characters – and, knowing that Fate wins in the end, somehow rooting for redemption, just as the characters do. In this chapter, I don't claim to "define" Shakespeare's tragic characters by their names but, instead, to unpack the *possibilities* for each character that Shakespeare embedded within the names.

Romeo and Juliet, for example, have become exalted in common culture as the paragons of tragic love. However, they must first shed their individual names<sup>11</sup> (which also connote meanings of classicism, disorientation, and wandering<sup>12</sup>); they must fall from grace from their families (or their families' names), their city, and their government in order to be together and have their names become onomastically fused. Textually, Shakespeare represents this fusion by refusing to mention or link their names together until the famous last couplet of the play. For an actor, their names are not mentioned

---

<sup>11</sup> Though they keep their Christian names; it is their surnames that they try to ignore or erase.

<sup>12</sup> Aurally you hear "Rome" and "roam" in "Romeo," and "Juliet" connotes summer, and power (one thinks of "July" and "Julius").

until the last breath that is uttered. In this dissertation, then, I will break from a mere microscopic analysis of linguistic components in names; here (and elsewhere in the tragedies) the onomastic study considers what these famous names *have come to mean* in culture as well as *what they mean* for the text and scholarship, reaffirming the earlier Burkean notion of the reversed, Shakespearean purpose-driven form.

While the main tragic heroes and figures (who eventually die) fall from their prosperous names and labels or choose to *cast off* their potent names, some tragic figures, usually supporting characters, must earn their names as well. Horatio, for example, has much to live up to, as his name connects his persona to arguably the greatest Roman poet, Horace. It is therefore fitting that Horatio's final epithet to his best friend Hamlet is poetically beautiful, wholesome, and pleasant, though of somber and grave disposition. Also, the names might impart important plot and scene information as well as their etymological inferences. For example, Banquo in *Macbeth* appears as a slain ghost during the vital banquet scene. In this scene, he terrorizes the newly appointed King of Scotland, starting him down the path towards confusion and death.

### ***Romeo and Juliet: Fate and Nobility***

By now, I have discussed at length numerous facets of Shakespeare's famous tragic "love" story. *Romeo and Juliet* is a play in which ignorance goes beyond characters simply being unaware of the play's action. Rather, ignorance in the world of the play equates to non-existence. Shakespeare's titular pair don't have a chance. How can they in the world of the Montagues' and Capulets' Verona? It's not enough that an

overwhelming majority of the characters in the play<sup>13</sup> don't even know about their love affair. More so, the parameters of the world are such that any union between the two characters (platonic *or* romantic) is virtually impossible. And that is just how Shakespeare explores irony in *Romeo and Juliet*; they are destined – through the stars – to be together eternally, yet the physical rules of Shakespeare's Verona disallow any such togetherness. Irony flourishes further because fate and eternity in *Romeo and Juliet* actually want the two to be together. Shakespeare sets this up in the opening sonnet:

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.  
(1.0.5-8)

It is in the stars, in eternity, that these two belong. Fate is just waiting for the two to get there, to enter a world in which their love can be fully understood and experienced: our world.

These are the ironic fateful circumstances of Shakespeare's play. It is commonly known, of course, that the two end up in each other's arms, hearts stopped and breath expired. On the surface, however, *Romeo and Juliet* concerns nobility and explores the supposed invulnerability experienced by wealthy and prosperous Italian families. Both the Montagues and Capulets experience a kind of impunity, though Prince Escalus chides them for their immature and aggressive behavior. Shakespeare sets the stage so that, in the end, the tarnishing of two good families' names is nowhere near as damaging as it is

---

<sup>13</sup> Lords and Ladies Montague and Capulet, Tybalt, Benvolio, Peter, Samson, Gregory, Mercutio, Escalus, Paris, Abraham, and Balthasar.

at the outset of the play. Onomastically, we as an audience are given little pretense about the prosperity of the two families. Both names exude natural and physical beauty and express notions of “the top” and “zenith.” The Latinate roots here (*cap-* and *mont-*) refer to both “head” and “mountain” respectively. Through both names, you hear and see the highest points of the human body and the highest points of the planet: heads and mountains. Thus, we know that we are reading about the proverbial *crème de la crème* in fifteenth-century Italy. This fits perfectly with Shakespeare’s tragic form and purpose: the figures and characters must be poised at some sort of peak, whether through affluence, power, influence, nobility, in order to plummet mercilessly down Fate’s endless abyss, only to crash – *hard* – on death’s floor. And the tragic plays – especially *Romeo and Juliet* – begin with the scale tipping toward death and fate. The tragic circumstances have already begun. In discussing Shakespeare’s tragic form, Robert Lanier Reid elicits:

... Shakespeare’s plays all begin *in medias res* as protagonists or secondary characters react with considerable tension to a prior crisis: war in *Titus Andronicus* and *Macbeth*, feuding in *Romeo and Juliet*, famine in *Coriolanus*, elopement in *Othello*, changing governance in *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*. (25)

Shakespeare thematically divides *Romeo and Juliet* into hierarchies, beyond the initial division of class and social status. Four main spheres operate in the play: the Montagues, the Capulets, the state, and the church. Very rarely do we witness characters crossing the boundaries of propriety into the other spheres. These moments, the intersections of the spheres’ presence, function as the moments of utmost importance for

the play's purpose. The only interaction between the Capulets and the Montagues is in the state's sphere: they always end up quarreling in the streets of Verona. However, Benvolio acts as an envoy of peace between the two families, using diplomacy to deter the families' violent behaviors. Though he does participate in the frays, Benvolio always tries to resist such action at first. We find Benvolio relating the issues to his own family members; he serves as an expository element of the play, one who is willing to present information:

Here were the servants of your adversary  
And yours, close fighting ere I did approach.  
I drew to part them. In the instant came  
The fiery Tybalt with his sword prepared,  
Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,  
He swung about his head and cut the winds  
Who, nothing hurt withal, hissed him in scorn.  
While we were interchanging thrusts and blows,  
Came more and more, and fought on part and part  
Till the Prince came, who parted either part.  
(1.1.103-12)

And we know that Benvolio speaks the truth. Shakespeare embeds Benvolio's name with almost a literal meaning of "truth." The opening of the play allows audiences to witness this purpose-driven form:

BENVOLIO (*drawing*) Part, fools. Put up your swords. You know not what you do.  
TYBALT (*drawing*)  
What, are thou drawn among these heartless hinds?  
Turn thee, Benvolio. Look upon thy death.  
BENVOLIO  
I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,  
Or manage it to part these men with me.  
TYBALT

What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word  
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.  
Have at thee, coward.

(1.1.61-9)

He does end up fighting with Tybalt, which is shortly interrupted by the city guard. But, primarily, he attempts to stop the fighting and promote, as he says, “peace.” His name reflects this nature with a two-fold Latinate meaning. First, we find the Latinate root *bene-*, which, as indicated before, refers to “good” or “well.” Second, the *vol-* part of the last two-thirds of his name refers to “willingness,” as we find in words like “volunteer.” Benvolio is always willing to avoid confrontation if necessary and attempts to deliver the news in “good” speech. He always delivers the exposition in verse, adding poetic qualities to the most grave and severe news. Furthermore, he generally is affable and congenial as Romeo’s best friend and confidante. Shakespeare first reveals this relationship to the audience upon Benvolio’s initial entrance in the play. Just after Samson replies to Gregory with, “Yes, better, sir,” the onomastic embodiment of “better” or “goodness” enters. Overall, Benvolio is a character embodying “good will,” to which his name exactly translates.

Romeo’s other ally, Mercutio, is an outsider to the world of the play. Like a classical Greek messenger, Mercutio enters the world in order to relay important information. However, this information has little to do with exposing knowledge of the play’s events to other characters. Instead, Mercutio enters to awaken Romeo to the dangers of his sworn love interest. In regards to Romeo’s emotional state, Mercutio remarks to Benvolio:

MERCUTIO Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead – stabbed with a white wench’s black eye, run through the ear with a love song, the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy’s butt-shaft; and is he a man to encounter Tybalt?  
(2.3.12-16)

Though his words are aesthetic and ornamented, and though his famous Queen Mab soliloquy pervades almost every audition session, Mercutio’s presence is incredibly grave. Throughout the first half of the play, Mercutio bolsters the comedic feel. After his involvement in the fray between the houses, however, he becomes the harbinger, the black angel, who only spells doom for the fated denizens of Verona. In fact, his death serves as the catalyst or the inciting incident of the play. After his death, Romeo slays Tybalt in rage and is forced to flee in excommunication. The onomastics of his name highlight the dramatic purpose Shakespeare enacts. The prefix *merc-* connects to several meanings, both linguistic and mythological. Of course, one can find the messenger god Mercury embedded here. Once again, however, Mercutio’s “messages” only incite the destruction of two prominent noble families. Mercutio even has a small speech at the outset of act two, which connects him to other gods and goddesses:

BENVOLIO

He ran this way, and leapt this orchard wall.

Call, good Mercutio.

[MERCUTIO]

Nay, I’ll conjure too.

Romeo! Humours! Madman! Passion! Lover!

Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh.

Speak but one rhyme and I am satisfied.

Cry but “Ay me!” Pronounce but “love” and “dove.”

Speak to my gossip Venus one fair word,

One nickname for her purblind son and heir,

Young Adam Cupid, he that shot so trim

When King Cophetua loved the beggar maid. –

He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not.  
The ape is dead, and I must conjure him. – (2.1.16)

He places himself among the Pantheon as a demi-god. As we learn soon enough, though, his existence is all but immortal.

Furthermore, Mercutio's name resonates with temperature and aggression. The word "mercurial" – or "hot-tempered" – clearly fits his persona. He is brash and impudent and often incites events with his violent temper. He is the first to brandish his weapon upon encountering the Capulets in the street. His greeting is hardly without hasty action:

TYBALT Gentlemen, good e'en. A word with one of you.  
MERCUTIO And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something: make it a word and a blow.  
TYBALT You shall find me apt enough to that, sir, an you will give an occasion.  
MERCUTIO Could you not take some occasion without giving?  
TYBALT  
    Mercutio, thou consort'st with Romeo.  
MERCUTIO 'Consort'? What, dost thou make us minstrels? An thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. [*Touching his rapier*] Here's my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance. Zounds – 'Consort'! (3.1.37-48)

Mercutio's ill-fated temper rubs off on Romeo, who, rage-induced, quickly eliminates Tybalt for slaying his beloved friend. Mercutio's name helps further polarize the two noble families. The hot-tempered fury that he brings to Verona catalyzes the events that lead to the tragic demise of the titular pair. Mercutio's purpose here, then, is to act meta-dramatically as well; he serves as Shakespeare's own envoy, a convention (though his character can hardly be called "conventional") used to incite the major events of the play. Robert Lanier Reid echoes this idea of Act 3 in his *Shakespeare's Tragic Form*:

Act 3 perfectly illustrates the *epitasis*, the crisis and turning point with its “increment of turbations.” Romeo’s entanglement in two fatal duels...In the duels Romeo engages not one but two doubles: Tybalt’s childish fury arouses Romeo’s brutish instincts, and Mercutio’s cynical wit poses a complementary threat to Romeo’s capacity for true love; in trying to mediate their proud excesses, Romeo ensures his own eventual doom. (37)

A name bearing meanings of “hot” and “quick” appropriately fits this purpose.

Mercutio’s presence in the play pushes the plot’s events to align with the metaphorical duality expressed in the title and the opening sonnet. Mercutio serves as a second string, ripping Romeo away from his ability to love Juliet. Romeo must fight in order to overcome the sharpness of both Mercutio’s wit and Tybalt’s blade; this aggressive, brash, and immature behavior supports the adolescent tone of the play and alienates Romeo from the rest of the world. He takes Mercutio’s place as the outsider, his name echoing “roam,” his new lot in life.

The death of Romeo and Juliet also mirrors the death of nobility in Verona. Both families are shamed to the point of baseness, comprehending only too late the full gravity of their actions. In typical tragic fashion, the noble characters all descend; they only retain their social statuses. Romeo’s mother even dies from grief at the sight of her son’s corpse. She also sees the death of her great name as well. Romeo dies, and the name “Montague” withers away with the premature death of Lady Montague’s ill-fated son. The grace and majesty connected to nobility is demolished and forever stained with unclean blood. Onomastically, the two families begin at the top -- “head” and “zenith” -- but meteorically crash and end up as feet and nadirs.

### ***Macbeth*: The Tragic Effects of Haste**

Following a ghostly scare at the beginning of *Hamlet*, the scene drastically shifts to characters discussing the tragic prince's pensive melancholy. Gertrude, Claudius, Ophelia, and Polonius all remark that Hamlet has turned inward and that his introspective attitude has alienated him from the rest of the Danish court. "Hamlet's exostatic, changeable, and volatile personality," Piotr Sadowski begins, "may be prone to sudden fits and losses of control, but his 'antic disposition' is, as the name indicates, a disposition, a mask consciously adopted as a means of venting and acting out his frustration" (153). Ultimately, this is Hamlet's hubris; he wastes time by thinking, talking, and *over*-thinking and *not* acting. And when he finally does act, well past the middle of the play, he accidentally slays Polonius, the wrong character. Essentially, Hamlet's solipsism caused his "rash and bloody deed" (3.4.26). Indeed, "In *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* awareness does not flinch from where it finds itself and what it has to do...For *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* the events of the world have become what is going on in their minds, and the two merge together" (Bayley 165). The two plays function similarly in how the titular characters' minds operate.

However, the fated Scottish lord of Shakespeare's plays *only* acts based on his thoughts. There is little room merely to *think* in tragic Scotland, and only time to *do*. That is, at least, what Lady Macbeth, the worm in Macbeth's ear, makes him think. Macbeth addresses the need for speed:

MACBETH

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly. If th'assassination

Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
With his surcease success: that but this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all, here,  
But here upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come.

(1.7.1-7)

Within the same scene, Macbeth speedily changes from doubt to assurance regarding the imminent murder of Duncan. Naturally, Lady Macbeth carries him through this change of opinion by tapping into Macbeth's masculine fear. She states that abstaining will threaten his manhood. However, what is more important here is the velocity with which she pushes Macbeth over the edge. Only a few lines separate his doubt from his decision:

MACBETH

We will proceed no further in this business.  
He hath honoured me of late, and I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,  
Not cast aside so soon.

(1.7.31-4)

Merely forty lines later, Macbeth and Lady exchange the following:

MACBETH

Bring forth men-children only,  
For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males. Will it not be received,  
When we have marked with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber and used their very daggers,  
That they have done't?

LADY MACBETH

Who dares receive it other,  
As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar  
Upon his death?

MACBETH

I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show.  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

(1.7.73-82)

Within the next page, Macbeth commits the atrocious murders and confesses to his wife. The alarm is sounded, and the play's action spikes. John Russell Brown concisely explains A.C. Bradley's words, which remind us that:

*Macbeth* is very much shorter than the other three tragedies [*King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*], but our experience in traversing it is so crowded and intense that it leaves an impression not of brevity but of speed. It is the most vehement, the most concentrated, perhaps we may say the most tremendous, of the tragedies.... (118)

For *Hamlet*, the inciting incident – Polonius' errant death following *The Mouse Trap* -- occurs well into Act 3, more than a thousand lines after the play's initial question. The action of *Macbeth* has barely taken off when the tragic central figure forces the fated circumstances of the play to begin.

The names of Shakespeare's infamous Scottish characters reflect the circumstance and place, reminding the audience of the locations and actions that are pivotal to an understanding of this play. Shakespeare's onomastic purpose here appears more conventional than aesthetic. He entreats the audience to be aware of the situation, which does not have that much time to unfold. In fact, if productions elect to eliminate the "Middleton additions,"<sup>14</sup> the play's length will usually fall short of two hours. In short, there is no time to digest certain meanings of names; they are quick and to the point, perhaps "bloody, bold, and resolute" even.

As for the characters' names, Shakespeare oscillates between direct meaning in the name and imbued mythological or geographical importance in the name's meaning.

---

<sup>14</sup> That is, several of the Weird Sisters scenes, especially including the one involving Hecate (3.5).

The Porter is present for less than a page, less than 50 lines of dialogue (or mostly monologue, on his part). His modest title illuminates for the audience his integral part.

Amidst seemingly incessant knocking, the Porter drunkenly stumbles and recites:

Knock, knock, knock. Who's there, i'th' name of Beelzebub?...Knock, knock, knock. Who's there, in th'other devil's name?... 'Faith, here's an English tailor come hither for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor. Here you may roast your goose....What are you?—But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further. (2.3.7-16)

He engages in brief, humorous banter with Macduff before he leaves the play entirely.

What purpose, then, could he possibly have, only being on stage for mere minutes?

Shakespeare acts slyly, giving the audience one brief moment of respite from the tremendous and speedy circumstances that Bradley commented on earlier. “Porter,” as a name, is a job. It is an occupation; in the royal palace, his Christian name would not have mattered. For the audience, Shakespeare makes sure that his Christian name does not matter either. Instead, we *hear* this job, this task, and watch as he briefly executes his duties. For the play, however, his duties are much more important. Readers and audience members have certain desires about the role. They see or read a position, a job, as a character on stage: his point is to open the door. Already, the linguistic meaning is met: *porter* is French for “to carry,” and *la porte* is French for “the door.” Even if readers or audience members do not speak French, they know what this position entails. However, Shakespeare hyperbolizes these presumptions – or desires – of the audience and makes the Porter much more important. He bridges two very heavy and sobering scenes with a crucial moment of levity. His drunken, half-awake stupor amuses the



The pleasant and ornamented conversation of a royal dinner is interrupted by the spooky and bloody apparition of one of Macbeth's victims. Banquo's name directly references the scene and location, the event, at which his character most influences the play's action. Again, Shakespeare works conventionally with the nomenclature and onomastics, telling the audience much about where, when, and *how* events will transpire in tragic Scotland.

For the most part, the names of *Macbeth* reflect the pageantry and nobility often associated with Shakespeare's tragedies. The two opposing characters both carry the prefix *Mac-* in their names, indicating that only one will survive and live on with the noble title. Onomastically, Macduff simply acts as Macbeth's counterbalance, the benevolent antagonist to Macbeth's treacherous push of the action (though much of the action's drive must be attributed to Lady Macbeth, as like Iago she forces the play's events to transpire through clever rhetoric and agency). Duncan, Malcolm, and Donalbain all maintain names of common Scottish sound. In a way, they are purer Scots than the "Macs" that populate the rest of the noble hierarchy in the play. This reflects deeply in their demise, as Macbeth is not only eliminating powerful persons in the play, but also pure Scottish blood and nobility. It will be replaced by his tainted and soured Scottish blood, as the usurping heir of the throne. The rest of the hierarchy is filled with other common Scottish names (Ross, Menteith, etc.). For the remainder of the play's characters, an audience is bombarded with a series of jobs and skills. The murderers, for example, are only known by their dirty job. They are mercenaries, and Shakespeare felt no need to conventionalize them any further with stock Scottish names. Such

conventional names would not be necessary because of the speed that overshadows any need to flesh out deep onomastic inference.

One of the only characters whose Latinate roots reflect his ultimate purpose-driven form is Banquo's son, Fleance. The Latin root of his name, *fleo*, means "to weep, to cry, to bewail, to lament." Fleance's whole world is set in depressing turmoil, after, as a child, he witnesses his father's brutal and bloody death at the hand of hired assassins. His life will now be spent lamenting his father's demise, orchestrated by someone his father has always supported and stood with on the field of battle. Shakespeare writes:

BANQUO

It will be rain tonight.

FIRST MURDERER

Let it come down.

BANQUO

O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!

Thou mayst revenge.—O slave!

THIRD MURDERER Who did strike out the light?

FIRST MURDERER Was't not the way?

THIRD MURDERER

There's but one down. The son is fled.

(3.4.16-21)

Banquo's alliterative command ("*Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!*") begs his son to act accordingly to the play's general appearance: he must speed away, as quickly as possible, without thinking. He commands his son to make haste. Fleance's name practically spells out the word "flee"; indeed his life will be spent running, while holding back the tears, as there's no room or time for mourning in the world of this play.

### ***King Lear: The Tragic Effects of Foolishness and Alienation***

As in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare situates this tragedy in Britain, calling from mythological and cultural sources to frame his narrative. The setting is familiar, but the tragic frame is new. Most of Shakespeare's tragic heroes and fated heroines are young. They have connections to one another as husbands, wives, and lovers. Lear, unfortunately has none of these connections to the other characters in the play (Honigmann 102). Instead, he is alienated from the other characters automatically at the outset. His hubristic foolishness and immaturity (for a man nearing eighty) ostracize him further from the redemptive and damning individuals in the pre-Roman British court. The play centers on this foolishness and propels Lear to his abrupt expulsion from the kingdom and eventual decline into senile insanity on the blasted heath. His only companion is his Fool, a character in which Shakespeare invests much importance and interest. Though he does care for his companion, it is only in moderation, as E.A.J.

Honigmann states:

Naturally we give him credit for thinking of others. But only "one part" in his heart feels for the Fool, Lear being preoccupied with his own troubles; and in his "prayer:" for poor naked wretches he speaks to the winds, not face to face with human misery. Fellow-feeling, in the full sense of the word, comes to him very slowly. (103)

Shakespeare's investment in Lear's Fool, however, is much greater. Indeed, the tradition of clowning and the fool in Shakespearean comedy, tragedy, history, and romance is one which has generated an engaging list of desired and covetous roles for actors in every generation. These roles are onomastically infused with meanings ranging from common

man to perceptive insight to blatant conventionality. Shakespeare uses the names of his fools and clowns to impart much of the philosophy that he will inevitably enact. Often, the fool is Shakespeare's lynch pin: all action and play within the piece becomes empirical observation for the fool; he sees the world for what it is, bypassing the insanity, ineptitude, and dimwittedness often stereotypically associated with the archetype. The fool can be a companion – as in the case of *King Lear* – loved by many, or can be a loner in the play, often endearing himself to the audience in order to express his feelings and thoughts.

William Empson, in *The Structure of Complex Words*, highlights the complexity of the simple noun itself. He shows how the entire play, in one way or another, exhibits the nature of folly. He states:

The effect is that all through the play, even in the first scene which is usually taken as just romantically strange, the idea of renunciation is examined in the light of the complex idea of folly; and this would imply that you are losing a good deal if you do not give its full weight to *fool*, a key term which is used (by the way) forty-seven times. (125)

Empson illuminates the importance of folly and “fool” in *Lear*. Furthermore, the fool provides levity in a world where it is desperately needed; Shakespeare seems to believe the tragic world constantly needed levity, relief from the harsh realizations of the humanist mind. Shakespeare's fools – like Lear's – could also be more representative of society's ills, problems, or topics of polemical discourse. Whatever the case, the fool was in no terms a throwaway convention for Shakespeare; he imbued the role, especially in the case of Lear's Fool, with as much didactic, philosophical, spiritually engaging, and

entertaining prowess as any of the hypothetical poets for whom Sydney provides an apology.

Lear's Fool is arguably the most famous fool in Shakespearean tragedy. Simply called "Fool," Lear's court jester exudes several typical component parts of the characterization. In a sense, because of the modest nomenclature, Lear's Fool is the most archetypal in the canon; he provides levity and entertainment but, most importantly, speaks sanely, a sharp contrast to Lear's perpetual, depressing spiral into madness. Even his enigmatic riddles in Act 1 stand out as logical and rational, compared to Lear's brash immaturity and foolishness:

FOOL Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll give thee two crowns.

LEAR What two crowns shall they be?

FOOL Why, after I have cut the egg i'th' middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i'th' middle and gavest away both parts, thou borest hine ass o'th' back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gavest thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so.

[Sings] Fools had ne'er less grace in a year,  
For wise men are grown foppish,  
And know not how their wits to wear,  
Their manners are so apish. (1.4.138-151)

Later, the storm in Act 3 serves as a metaphor, the tenor being Lear's descent; his Fool attempts to abate the violent insanity of his king through reason and wisdom, but also as *friend*:

LEAR

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow  
You cataracts and hurricanes, spout  
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!  
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,

Singe my white head; and thou all-shaking thunder,  
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th' world,  
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once  
That makes ingrateful man.

FOOL O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o'door. Good nuncle, in, ask thy daughters blessing. Here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools. (3.2.1-13)

The Fool begs Lear to cease and regain some shred of logic or reason. The Fool here serves as companion but also advisor to the king. His words of wisdom speak volumes more reason and rationality than practically any of Shakespeare's tragic monarchs. Lear's Fool affectionately calls Lear "nuncle," and it is in this that we find Lear to be a fool as well. The Fool acts as Lear's head-on-a-stick, or bauble, that he must equip in order to temporarily survive the torturous world in which he lives and to which he will eventually succumb. But, as the fool dies, so too does his companion. Shakespeare wants the audience to hear "fool" as much as possible in this play, as it is Lear's foolishness which eventually damns him and causes his tragic fall from grace.

Ultimately, the tragic story is about family, two families in fact. The audience witnesses two families struggling over power, lineage, and the future. Gloucester's two sons Edgar and Edmond also vie for his love. Just as in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare blatantly separates the two characters in question by just a few letters. One is the rightful son, and the other is the bastard son; it is a Cain and Abel story enveloped in the larger tragic sphere of the King. The last four letters of Edmond's name mean "the world" in French, and that is exactly what the usurping and vile son desires:

EDMOND This is the excellent foppery of the world: that when we are sick in fortune – often the surfeits of our own behavior – we make guilty of our disasters

the sun, the moon, and stars, as if we were villains of necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whore-master man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star! (1.2.115-26)

Edmond beguiles his father, casting a shadow of doubt and fear over his younger brother. And this youth is embedded in Edgar's name as well. Though both names are traditionally English – reinforcing a rare Englishness found in Shakespearean tragedy<sup>15</sup> -- it seems Shakespeare was playing with the French suffixes of each. Already, one can find “the world” in Edmond's name; his vainglorious desires reach far beyond the love of his father.

### ***Titus Andronicus: War and Familial Strife***

As demonstrated earlier, another key element to understanding Shakespearean tragedy is the consideration of the family unit and the various ways in which it can break down. *King Lear* offers for the audience two families that crack because of jealousy, intrigue, and one of Shakespeare's most favorite dramatic conventions: having a noble character make the wrong choice for succession. This “choice” here, again, parallels the mythological allusion to Arthurian legend. Arthur chooses to make Lancelot his lieutenant, but Lancelot ends up betraying Arthur with Guinevere. Shakespeare fills his tragedies with hapless Arthurs who, in turn, elect the wrong child or friend to entrust with the family's future.

---

<sup>15</sup> In fact, the only other tragedy set in Britain is *Macbeth*. Overall, excluding the histories, Shakespeare rarely set many plays in his native home, shaping much of the fictional world outside his own borders.

*Titus Andronicus*, oddly enough one of Shakespeare's earliest plays,<sup>16</sup> presents several looks into the family unit and its inevitable breakdown in the tragic world. We witness the political enmity between Saturninus and his brother Bassianus, the father-daughter relationship between Titus and Lavinia, and the disgustingly brutal relationship between Queen Tamora and her sons Chiron and Demetrius. The play is set following the brutal war between the Romans and the Goths; however, unlike *Much Ado About Nothing*, it is anything but revelry and mirth which pervade Rome following the strife over empire. The warriors return to political backstabbing and international intrigue; because of the ensuing familial problems, Titus never leaves the battlefield. Instead, he is forced into the middle, trying to keep his political situation afloat while simultaneously attempting to keep his daughter happy and his family life straight. His name resounds with both his power and position: the name "Titus" immediately conjures feelings of strength, virility, and potency. His first words are loyal and true toward Rome, though he soon discovers the stain on the empire smeared by Saturninus and his insidious brood:

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!  
Lo, as the bark, that hath discharged her fraught,  
Returns with precious jading to the bay  
From whence at first she weigh'd her anchorage,  
Cometh Andronicus, bound with laurel boughs,  
To re-salute his country with his tears,  
Tears of true joy for his return to Rome.

(1.1.70-76)

---

<sup>16</sup> Odd in that, structurally, it reads as both comedy and tragedy. He had yet to experiment with blending genre borders and doesn't seem to do so in such detail for quite some time after *Titus'* publication date (between 1593 and 1594).

Not once does the audience doubt Titus' power and stance among the nobles of Rome. He is noble and good, a true warrior and compassionate father. His tragic flaw, however, is succumbing to the taste of vengeance, thirsting for the same blood shed from his daughter's maimed body. Titus is ever-caught between his duty and his family (arguably the most important duty, one which Shakespeare makes that much more apparent in his tragic work); accordingly, Shakespeare affixes his surname with a Latinate root meaning "a passage between two walls." The Latin *andronis* succinctly describes Titus' positioning as a character in the play, trapped between his country and his family. Early on in the play, Titus essentially asks for his due, knowing that he has served Rome well; he now wishes gentle retirement and time to spend on his family. His desires here are what mimic those of Shakespeare's leading men in the romances:

LAVINIA

In peace and honour live Lord Titus long;  
My noble lord and father, live in fame!  
Lo, at this tomb my tributary tears  
I render, for my brethren's obsequies;  
And at thy feet I kneel, with tears of joy,  
Shed on the earth, for thy return to Rome:  
O, bless me here with thy victorious hand,  
Whose fortunes Rome's best citizens applaud!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Kind Rome, that hast thus lovingly reserved  
The cordial of mine age to glad my heart!  
Lavinia, live; outlive thy father's days,  
And fame's eternal date, for virtue's praise!

(1.1.157-68)

Lavinia warms his heart, and he bids her live longer than he; Titus has now "passed the torch" of the Andronicus nobility to his celebrated daughter. Then, a few passages later, he announces his retirement:

## TITUS ANDRONICUS

Rome, I have been thy soldier forty years,  
And led my country's strength successfully,  
And buried one and twenty valiant sons,  
Knighted in field, slain manfully in arms,  
In right and service of their noble country  
Give me a staff of honour for mine age,  
But not a sceptre to control the world:  
Upright he held it, lords, that held it last.

(1.1.193-200)

Ultimately, Titus' request is impossible to fill. One battle ends and another begins, just as Tamora is brought into the court of the vile Saturninus. She brings with her the terrible pair of Chiron and Demetrius, Lavinia's aggressors and rapists. Titus' family is disrupted by these two as well as Aaron the Moor, Tamora's "unrepentantly evil lover" (Dunton-Downer, 296).

Titus' daughter Lavinia, not unlike later characters in the romances, bears a name referring to purity and hope. The Latinate *lavi-* or *lavo-* means "to wash," "to bathe," and, most apropos for her name, "to wash away." Lavinia is pure, like so many of Shakespeare's other famous daughters and, like her father, gets caught between political strife and the encroaching Gothic presence in Rome. Her death, following her rape, is, as Sharon Hamilton purports, "the height of male arrogance and kill-the-messenger female subjugation. It is especially ironic when we recall that Lavinia was married, and so presumably not a virgin, and was also the innocent victim of her father's wars" (74). The "cleanliness" implied in her name deals much less with virginity – as it does with Hero, Marina, or Miranda – and more to do with innocence. She serves as the object of men's pity and the target of their bloodthirsty revenge (Hamilton 74). She, too, bears the

surname Andronicus well, as a narrow passage between walls of misguided shame (from Titus' perspective, she must die in order to regain her purity) and furied revenge. Even though he at first spurns her for her appearance and devastating ordeal, Titus eventually succumbs to the taste for revenge and kills in her name. However, all the while, he feels "impervious to guilt," as Hamilton states; this is evidenced clearly in one of his final speeches before Saturninus (74-5):

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Not I, 'twas Chiron and Demetrius.  
They ravished her, and cut away her tongue,  
And they, 'twas they, that did her all this wrong.  
(5.3.55-7)

Lavinia's death is considered a mercy killing by Titus, though she never actually receives any mercy from any man in the play. Instead, though, she is "washed away" by male arrogance, political infighting, international intrigue, and the bloody desire for revenge.

Tamora's sons are the very epitome of dramatic villainy in Shakespeare's early works. Granted, *Titus Andronicus* was composed early on in his career; thus the "high" tragic style which we as a culture have come to admire, is somewhat absent. The evil characters are a bit melodramatic in their vileness. However, the names that Shakespeare appends to these awful people relate to their active involvement in the plot. Though not nearly as blunt as a character like the Porter from *Macbeth*, the names of Shakespeare's dastardly brothers Chiron and Demetrius also deliver for the audience the particular action they will be taking. Both of their names refer to the hands, and that is exactly what they take from Lavinia when they brutally rape and mutilate the helpless daughter of the

noble Roman hero. Chiron links to both the Latin *chironomon* and *chirographum*, the former meaning “gesticular,” and the latter meaning “handwriting.” Lavinia is robbed of her gesticular capabilities, making her body language severely limited. And because she is also robbed of her tongue, she is practically completely muted by the brothers’ disgusting behavior. Within “Demetrius” is the Latin *demeto*, which means “to mow,” “cut off,” or “reap.” This meaning is a precise description; thus, together, Demetrius and Chiron “reap” or “cut off” that which “gesticulates” or “writes.” Together, the pair mutilate Lavinia’s arms and hands, leaving her communicative abilities practically nonexistent. Their abhorrent behavior is encapsulated in a stychomithic exchange late in Act 2:

DEMETRIUS

So, now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak,  
Who ‘twas that cut thy tongue and ravished thee.

CHIRON

Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,  
An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe.

DEMETRIUS

See how with signs and tokens she can scrawl.

CHIRON

Go home, call for sweet water, wash thy hands.

DEMETRIUS

She hath no tongue to call nor hands to wash,  
And so let’s leave her to her silent walks.

CHIRON

An ‘twere my cause I should go hang myself.

DEMETRIUS

If thou hadst hands to help thee knit the cord.  
(2.4.1-10)

Their vile deed is buried in their names. Shakespeare allows the audience fully to understand these characters’ villainy through a conventional description of their ensuing

action. The worlds of Shakespeare's tragedies are not meant to be understood; characters often – if they're able, unlike Lavinia – try to ask *why* but never receive answers. The names of Shakespeare's tragic characters, noble and villainous alike, only serve to close off any possible escape from fated circumstance. They desperately try to get out but only find themselves irrevocably caught – like an *andronis* – between two hard places: whether to live or to die.

## CHAPTER IV

### ALTERNATIVE PASTS: ONOMASTICS OF THE HISTORIES AND ROMAN

#### PLAYS

PISTOL

Discuss unto me: art thou officer,  
Or art thou base, common, and popular?

KING HARRY I am a gentleman of a company.

PISTOL Trail'st thou the puissant pike?

KING HARRY Even so. What are you?

PISTOL

As good a gentleman as the Emperor.

KING HARRY Then you are a better than the King.

PISTOL

The king's a bawcock and a heart-of-gold,  
A lad of life, an imp of fame,  
Of parents good, of fist most valiant.  
I kiss his dirty shoe, and from heartstring  
I love the lovely bully. What is thy **name**?

KING HARRY Harry Le Roy.

PISTOL Le Roy? A Cornish **name**. Art thou of Cornish crew?

KING HARRY No, I am a Welshman.

(Henry V, 4.1.36-52, bold mine)

Late in Shakespeare's popular wartime epic, England's cherished hero disguises himself as a common soldier and walks amongst his then-equals to absorb the sentiment at the Agincourt base camp. It is a pivotal scene in the history play, as a king shedding his royal vestments and taking on those of a commoner – even more so, a *Welsh* commoner – represents a gap between the royalty, nobility, and working-class soldiers that threatened an English victory over the French. He implores his soldiers – and, unbeknownst to them, his subjects – to treat the king as an equal, for, on the field of

battle, the hierarchy stands to implode any chance of vanquishing the enemy. Soon after speaking to a soldier named Williams, he says:

KING HARRY No, nor it is not meet he should. For though I speak it to you, I think the King is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me. All his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man, and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet when they stop, they stoop with the like wing. Therefore, when he sees reason of fears, as we do, his fears, out of doubt, be of the same relish as ours are. Yet, in reason, no man should possess him with any appearance of fear, lest he, by showing it, should dishearten his army. (4.1.100-12)

Henry's speech echoes Juliet's, begging the common fighters of England's realm to understand that a house of roses by any other name would smell just as sweet. The differences forged between king and man are *man-made*, and can easily be simplified into the "human conditions" he conjures. It is an overwhelmingly humanist speech, focusing on the *names* that men afford themselves and construct, only to separate and divide.

While Henry certainly retains the bravery and "Redcrossian" chivalry loved by both literate and illiterate English audiences, he also deconstructs himself, by name, through the voice of a common Welshman. By equalling himself with his subjects and soldiers, he robs himself of the princely title attached to the name "King Henry" and instead bolsters the colloquial name "Harry." Nicknames become massively integral for Shakespeare in re-presenting England's famous monarchs and noble figures. In his histories, Shakespeare uses linguistic means to restructure and rebuild England's historical heroes and harbingers as *men* and *women*, human beings equipped with the same flaws, the same desires, and the same tragic impulses that populate his more fictive

works. In essence, as it is commonly observed, Shakespeare's histories are hardly *historical*; instead, audiences witness alternative histories meant to reshape these individuals' names for metadramatic purposes. The resulting form ultimately resounds with more efficacy than that of a historical account. Shakespeare's purpose-driven form in the histories exists to remold and reshape the "historical" figures as well as to introduce some new characters (perhaps based on older, actual individuals) exhibiting the same purpose-driven form discussed in earlier chapters. In other words, Shakespeare has clear ideas and destinations for his "historical" characters just as he does in the tragedies and comedies. When working with actual figures from history, his method shifts slightly to rework these figures as dramatic characters, moving from "history" to "history play."

For example, most are familiar with Shakespeare's famous presentation of the English king responsible for ending the Hundred Years' War with France. Whether it be through Kenneth Branagh's pivotal film portrayal of Shakespeare's classic or required reading at the high school or college level, most audience members witness the playwright's most popular wartime piece. Shakespeare's *Henry V* focuses on the making of a cultural and historical hero, and what better medium to study and construct this than the stage? Audiences stand physically close to a re-presentation of England's noble son, he who ceased political and economic crisis with the aggressive neighbors across the channel. The names "King Harry" or "Henry the Fifth" or "Harry Le Roy" become synonymous with demi-god, savior of England, *mon dieu et mon droit* personified. Ultimately, the stage and its pages offered popular Renaissance playwrights the chance to rewrite history, to bolster ideas of heroism imbued in individuals or to assassinate a

historical individual's character, to make him or her the lampooned laughing stock or target of enmity and scorn for generations to come.

Naturally, Shakespeare took the opportunity to shape and reshape national perceptions of historical identity. Subsequently, writing under both Tudor and Jacobean patrons during his lifetime certainly framed the identities which he would be portraying. It makes sense that we now receive a demonized and insidious picture of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as Shakespeare wrote under the Tudor family that vanquished the tarnished monarch's bloody stain on the royal house. And, England has always cherished its heroes and heroines; Shakespeare followed in these traditions, linking his beautiful and poetic vocabulary to the already worshipped and idolized personages of British tradition. Onomastically, it becomes difficult to delve into the language of most of the history plays' characters. Simply put, these were *real* individuals who served either in England's honor or for her destruction. However, it is not impossible to find Shakespeare's etymological playgrounds within the historical dramas. His mode is different, though: the purpose-driven form resides in Shakespeare's decision whether to illuminate or beshadow a famous or infamous English monarch or noble.

What complicates this endeavor are the multiple other histories that abound in Shakespeare's repertoire. Often, we associate the history plays with just the English historical fictions. In other words, the title must have the word "King" in it somewhere, followed by a proper, royal, British moniker for it to be considered a history play. But, as Shakespeare bent and recreated most rules of dramatic re-presentation, "history" runs fervently throughout the canon, namely in his accounts of antiquity. Shakespeare's

Roman plays are often packed neatly with the tragedies, but there is just as much fictive history present as there is in the British historical plays. Obversely, an equal amount of “tragedy” flows throughout the histories as well. Of course it is foolish to claim Shakespeare was operating “post-modernly” with his breakdowns of generic walls – though perhaps, after witnessing the gross anachronisms in *Julius Caesar*, for example, perhaps it is not so naïve – but it is clear that Shakespeare refused to keep traditional characteristics of “poetry” contained in their proper places. Naturally, *Julius Caesar* can be typified as a Shakespearean tragedy, as much of the discourse invented within belongs to the English Renaissance. But, then again, so too do the events in *King John* and *Richard II*. Both the assassination in the Senate and the signing at Runnymede were recreated *for* the English Renaissance audience.

Thus, the names of Shakespeare’s Roman plays follow many of the same trends as those of his English histories. They were remolded and restructured to present new and alternative perceptions of some of history’s greatest lovers, heroes, and monsters. Certainly Dante Alighieri presents us with the most blunt opinion of Cassius’ and Brutus’ fate; however, Shakespeare adds to the cultural perception of traitors late in *Julius Caesar*:

CASSIUS

O coward that I am, to live so long  
To see my best friend ta’en before my face!  
Come hither, sirrah [Pindarus]. In Parthia did I take thee prisoner,  
And then I swore thee, saving of thy life,  
That whatsoever I did bid thee do  
Thou shouldst attempt it. Come now, keep thine oath.  
Now be a freeman, and, with this good sword  
That ran through Caesar’s bowels, search this bosom.

Stand not to answer. Here, take thou the hilts,  
And when my face is covered, as 'tis now,  
Guide thou the sword.

(5.3.34-43)

Shakespeare *changes* Cassius' *name* to coward. No longer is it "coward that I *am called*"; henceforth, and throughout history, it shall be "O coward that I *am*."

Shakespeare seemed to sap the Latin adjective *cassus*, only one letter away from the traitor's name, for the literal backstabber. The word means "empty, hollow, vain, futile, useless"; the Roman noble's once filled life is now empty and useless because of the cowardly and ignoble deed. I have chosen to represent the names from *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* because of the two plays' heavy political, historical, and legendary implications. I wish to show how the names of these two Roman plays connect to the meanings and definitions of Shakespeare's other "historical" pieces.

This chapter, focusing on the onomastics of Shakespeare's Roman and historical figures will prove the most difficult, as, again, most of the characters presented were *real* individuals in history. Their names *already* had meaning and importance before Shakespeare took his pen to them and altered or exaggerated them for his dramatic purpose. However, there exist still characters that Shakespeare invented for the histories (Bardolph, Pistol, Nym, Falstaff, etc.) that will be explored in the fundamental way already set forth in this dissertation.

For the historical figures, however, this chapter will consider intensively the figures as *characters* and how Shakespearean onomastics molded and bent the already traditional associations made with the individuals. It is worth restating that Shakespeare's

Richard III probably appears differently than the actual Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later crowned Richard III of England. Because Shakespeare wrote under Tudor patronage, a play riddled with hostile opinion about the defeated House of York makes sense. However, Shakespeare also fills the play with nuanced opinions that complicate this partisan view. Dramatically, Richard III is fascinating and rounded, a conflicted monster who confirms many negative associations made with the name Gloucester. Onomastically, the Roman plays fill out this chapter effectively, as the Latinate roots surveyed herein are of course everpresent in these plays. The chapter would be incomplete without the obvious wordplay Shakespeare was bending in his Roman plays.

Finally, Shakespeare considered the nick-names for these characters as well, rounding out their dramatic personalities for the stage. Henry Percy, for example, is afforded the nick-name "Hotspur," referring to a brash and aggressive nature for Northumberland's son in *1 Henry IV*. These and other appended names will be explored as well in this chapter and eventual lexicon. Furthermore, the histories also are rife with repetition because of lineage and actual time: "Scrope" and the surname Percy appear across *Richard II* and *1 Henry IV*; this chapter will assess how these characters earn their names and convey the names' eventual connotations in history across multiple plays.

### ***Richard III: The Monster as Onomastic Monarchial Standard***

Shakespeare's description of England's infamous monarch has by now entered into the historical discourse as near fact. Richard III, former Duke of Gloucester, is imagined as a hunchbacked, pock-faced, snaggle-toothed monstrosity, whose only aim was chaotically to destroy the English realm and usher in an age of murder, rape, and

deception. Of course, even Shakespeare's presentation of the king does not come that close to the above sentiment; of course the minds of audiences throughout the past four centuries have been apt to "get away from themselves" a little. Regardless, the opening picture of Richard's features strikes a chord of classic horror in the minds of the audience. He creeps from behind velvet curtains, catches the eyes and ears of the audience. We become pawns as well in his ever-winding game of trickery, deceit, and guile, distracted by the hideous monstrosity that Shakespeare has woven for us. This distraction both entrances the audience and, through some adept wielding of pathos, begins to justify the horrendously vile choices we are about to witness. He immediately acknowledges the deformity in order to instantaneously attract us to him, the emcee of chaos:

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

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 –  
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.

(1.1.14-27)

The onset of the famous soliloquy of course concerns the audience with names and how important naming and nomenclature – what the names *meant* – was to England at the end

of the fifteenth century. The Wars of the Roses offered much anxiety and crisis concerning what *name* was going to sit on the throne, York or Lancaster. Richard's first few words, like those of *Romeo and Juliet*, elicit the power and potency behind naming and nomenclature when focusing on what a name means. Instead of a fictitious noble Italian city, now Shakespeare has arguably his most infamous character demonstrate the efficacy of naming for *England*.

In the passage above, however, Richard equates his own name with deformity, with monstrosity, with "other." He is a foreigner, relatively low on the food chain, a byproduct of genetic misfiring, an ostracized and feared individual due to the makeup of his character. Naturally, Shakespeare wished to hyperbolize such characterization, both in physical presentation and actual events centered on Richard's life. Furthermore, as he wrote under a Tudor patroness, he would have wanted to take Richard's demonic presentation even further. Marjorie Garber states:

Shakespeare's use and abuse of history in the *Henry IV* plays, and particularly in *Richard III*, is often viewed as a consequence, deliberate or adventitious, of the move by Tudor historians to classify Richard III as self-evidently a villain, his deformed body a readable text. Shakespeare, in such interpretations, emerges as either an unwitting dupe of More, Hall, Holinshed, or as a co-conspirator, complicit in their design, seizing the opportunity to present the Plantagenet king defeated by Elizabeth's grandfather as unworthy of the throne, as unhandsome in person as in personality. Either the dramatist was himself shaping the facts for political purposes, or he was taken in by the Tudor revisionist desire to inscribe a Richard 'shap'd' and 'stamp'd' for villainy. (64)

Whichever of Garber's assumptions is the case, Holinshed's *Chronicles* served as a go-to sourcebook for Shakespeare during the tenure of his historical, dramatic recreations.

Annabel Patterson, in her *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, illuminates a particular

episode that would probably have been of some interest to the playwright. She cites Holinshed's own citation of Hall, a historian who noted Richard's particular cruel punishments involving censorship:

[Richard] must also extend his bloudie furie against a poore gentleman called Collingborne, for making a small rime of three of his unfortunate councellors, which were the lord Lovell, sir Richard Ratcliffe his mischievous minion, and sir William Catesbie his secret seducer, which meter or rime was thus framed:

The Cat, the Rat, and Lovell our dog,  
Rule all England under a hog.

Meaning by the hog, the dreadfull wild boare, which was the king[s] cognisance. But because the first line ended in dog, the metrician could not (observing the regiments of meter) end the second verse in boare, but called the boare a hog. This poetically schoolemaister, corrector of breiefs and longs, caused Collingborne to be abbreviated shorter by the head, and to be divided into four quarters. (3:422) (243-4)

Shakespeare ensures Richard is no stranger to censorship, rumor, intrigue, slander, and deception throughout the play. Just as Hall notes from the above passage regarding the king and his tyrannical and devious practices, Shakespeare allows much room of his play to be filled with similar sentiment. For example, in Act 4, Richard states to Catesby:

KING RICHARD

Come hither, Catesby. (*Aside to Catesby*) Rumour it abroad  
That Anne, my wife, is very grievous sick.  
I will take order for her keeping close.  
Enquire me out some mean-born gentleman,  
Whom I will marry straight to Clarence' daughter.  
The boy is foolish, and I fear not him.... (4.2.52-7)

Shakespeare continues to have Richard elicit his plot of intermarriage and deceptive insight to the audience. Many of Richard's deliveries occur in asides, baiting the audience along with his insidious rise. Richard's name, then, becomes synonymous

also with that of a clown, an actor or performer, who journeys with the audience throughout the play's events. He is one of Shakespeare's most metadramatic characters, constantly breaking the fourth wall in order to highlight a particular part of his plan for the audience. What are we to do but follow him? Shakespeare's purpose-driven form with Richard manifests itself in two ways: first to deviate and alienate Richard further from the society and world that has already shunned him; and second, to develop a rich and round host of tragic events, those events which resound in the full title of the piece, *The Tragedy of Richard the Third*. Shakespeare invests tragic elements in the history, blending generic form just as he bends Richard's name – like his twisted visage – to mean “monstrous host,” “enigmatic deceiver,” “charming abomination,” all oxymoronic challenges to one's notion of English historical leaders.

Shakespeare's character assassination is complete at the coda of the play. Henry, Earl of Richmond has strode in, valiant and noble, and has struck the vile Richard back down to the depths of the hell that bent his physical and emotional frames. Henry VII's name, then, resounds with the prosperity, nobility, and affluence associated with the now-established Tudor lineage. For the dubious trickster, it took thousands of lines to change his nomenclature from Duke to King; however, for the bold and gracious Tudor victor, it merely takes eight:

HENRY EARL OF RICHMOND

God and your arms be praised, victorious friends!  
The day is ours. The bloody dog is dead.

STANLEY (*bearing the crown*)

Courageous Richmond, well hast thou acquit thee.  
Lo, here this long usurped royalty  
From the dead temples of this bloody wretch

Have I plucked off, to grace thy blows withal.  
Wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it.  
[*He sets the crown on Henry's head*]  
KING HENRY THE SEVENTH  
Great God of heaven, say 'Amen' to all.  
(5.8.1-8)

If Shakespeare posed the same question as he has his tragic Juliet pose – “What’s in a name?” – the answer, for the purposes of history, would be “honor and justice, peace through rightful nobility,” themes which resound later in his romances and problem plays. Shakespeare frames much of what he considered important onomastically for the histories through Richard’s long and tortuous road of deceit to attain the crown (it does not occur until late in Act 4) yet quick and clumsy fall from the throne (a manner of a few scenes). Shakespeare reframes the names of his monarchs through the heroism imparted by centuries of cultural heritage and millennia of the need for a perpetual, solitary English hero, a Saint George incarnate whose name alone will lead the English to glory. For Shakespeare, under Elizabeth’s patronage, this re-presented name was, unsurprisingly, “Henry Tudor.”

### ***1 & 2 Henry IV: Nicknames and the Onomastic Price of Nobility***

As the second play forming the popular “second tetralogy” of Shakespeare’s histories, *1 Henry IV* serves to incorporate lighter tones into the oftentimes darker moments of English history. Indeed, as the editors of the *Oxford Shakespeare* note:

*1 Henry IV* is the first of Shakespeare’s history plays to make extensive use of the techniques of comedy. On a national level, the play shows the continuing problems of Henry Bolingbroke, insecure in his hold on the throne, and the victim of rebellions led by Worcester, Hotspur (Harry Percy), and Glyndwr. These scenes are counterpointed by others, written mainly in prose, which, in the

manner of a comic sub-plot, provide humorous diversion while also reflecting and extending the concerns of the main plot. (481)

The comically infused scenes, much like the Porter's in *Macbeth*, offer for the audience a chance to see history differently, through the pen of a true comedic writer. Shakespeare, here, hyperbolizes the noted "personal rebellion" of Henry's son Harry, who later becomes the prominent figure, the English king most closely considered to be Saint George himself, Henry V. Shakespeare ensures that the audience bare witness to the brash immaturity that forged Prince Harry's early career: his associating with lowly and base men, his lofty and escapist mentality, and his love of the drink. The two plays under the title of *Henry IV* serve more as precursors to the overwhelmingly popular *Henry V*. It is as if Shakespeare wished to write the prequels to his wartime epic, giving audiences a glimpse of what Harry Le Roy was like as a young lad, serving under the stern tutelage of his kingly father.

Because of several of the comic scenes, the play contains many names, the onomastic wordplays of which function similarly to those in the comedies. A fourth of the "persons of the play" is comprised of Harry's associates, comedic characters whose names more archetypically reflect on their form-driven purpose. This purpose is, of course, to provide those noted moments of levity for a grave setting. The audience notes the anxiety felt by King Henry IV due to civil and border wars within the first eighteen lines of the entire collection:

KING HENRY

So shaken as we are, so wan with care,  
Find we a time for frightened peace to pant  
And breathed short-winded accents of new broils  
To be commenced in strands afar remote.  
No more shall trenching war channel her fields,  
Nor bruise her flow'rets with the armed hoofs  
Of hostile paces. Those opposed eyes,  
Which, like the meteors of a troubled heaven,  
All of one nature, of one substance bred,  
Did lately meet in the intestine shock  
And furious close of civil butchery,  
Shall now in mutual well-beseeming ranks  
March all one way, and be no more opposed  
Against acquaintance, kindred, and allies.  
The edge of war, like an ill-sheathed knife,  
No more shall cut his master.

(1.1.1-18)

The language here is martial, reflecting the resonance of war and rebellion on the king's mind. The soldiers are "shaken" and "wan"; the audience is invited to feel the same. The land itself has been torn apart by war; horses have trampled nature with "hostile paces." As in *Romeo and Juliet*, the opening cites "civil" problems, even to the extent of "butchery." The play begins as a blend of the anxieties and worries felt by Henry, the hangovers, from *Richard II*. There is no time to breathe: one troubled circumstance leads to another.

However, immediately after only a page of this troubled discourse, Shakespeare rockets the audience into a humorously barbed dialogue between Prince Harry and his older friend and drinking companion, Sir John Oldcastle (more famously known, of course, as Falstaff). The scene begins *in medias res*, with clever word and insulting exchange (with Harry winning, naturally) already having been uttered probably for hours:

SIR JOHN Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?

PRINCE HARRY Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack, and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. What a devil has thou to do with the time of the day? Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping-houses, and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day.

SIR JOHN Indeed you come near me now, Hal, for we that take purses go by the moon and the seven stars, and not 'By Phoebus, he, that wand'ring knight so fair.' And I prithee, sweet wag, when thou art a king, as God save thy grace – 'majesty' I should say, for grace thou wilt have none—

(1.2.1-12)

Embedded in the clever play on words like “grace” and “king” is an underlying message about naming. Indeed, the price of nobility is the changing of one’s name, to become a new name, an inherited title instead of a personal representation of one’s true self.

Though Harry may be more clever and much quicker than his inebriated companion, Sir John quickly exposes the onomastic fate of a prince: he doesn’t change from boy to man, he changes from boy to *king*. Of course, any and all revelry that Harry enjoys will be replaced with statesmanship and anxieties concerning rebellious Welshmen and threatening “knocks-on-the-door” from overseas, the problems that initially frame *I Henry IV*. Could he even be called “Hal” anymore? Of course not; his name, which appropriately begins to sound like “pal” when uttered repeatedly, is robbed of all individual personality. He becomes King Henry V, a name and a number, and ceases to be Prince Harry, “Hal” to his friends and drinking buddies. This is a price which Harry considers very seriously, if he is to become “Harry the King.”

Indeed Harry’s friends become the “bad influence” that make him stray from his princely and, it is feared, kingly duties. Their names reflect colloquial meanings, forging

the divide between nobility and the commoners, the royalty and subjects. Harry's associates include Sir John Oldcastle, Edward (Ned) Poins, Russell, Harvey, Francis, Vintner, and, of course, the enigmatic Mistress Quickly who, like Falstaff, crosses genre lines to appear in the quintessential English comedy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Their names are all commonly English, save Poins, the etymology of which appears French. Perhaps he is *le poison*, or "the pest"; most appropriately, however, he is probably *le point*, or "the point." Like Oldcastle, he indicates and influences much of Harry's illicit behavior, inciting the young prince to commit acts of illegal merriment and bawdy fun:

POINS Now, my good sweet honey lord, ride with us tomorrow. I have a jest to execute that I cannot manage alone. Oldcastle, Harvey, Russell, and Gadshill shall rob these men that we have already waylaid – yourself and I will not be there – and when they have the booty, if you and I do not rob them, cut this head off from my shoulders...Well, for two of them, I know them to be as true-bred cowards as ever turned back; and for the third, if he fight longer than he sees reason, I'll forswear arms. The virtue of this jest will be the incomprehensible lies that this same fat rogue will tell us when we meet at supper....  
(1.2.158-164, 180-6)

His jests are outlawed and his plans are fraught with danger and potentially punitive results. However, the youthful Hal responds simply, "Well I'll go with thee" (1.2.188). We learn much of Hal's immature reputation through his associates, the older rascals and rogues that ignite the rebellious fire in Hal's soul. Again, King Henry already must deal with rebellions coming from the east and within; furthermore, he must react to and attempt to straighten out his own son's rebellion, who already goes by several names in an onomastic attempt to separate himself as much as possible from the royal house.

Sir John Oldcastle, later Falstaff, represents a mode of characterization from a

different time. He is older, as his name indicates, and attempts to live vicariously through the vibrant youth of his prince. The “castle” in his name clearly indicates the protecting force that Oldcastle provides for Hal. Hal cannot find the guidance he craves in the stuffy and anxiety-ridden courts that his father holds. All the advisors, tutors, and assistants could never measure up to the comradery and companionship that Hal finds in his older, lewder, and base friends of the tavern. Furthermore, Oldcastle enlightens Hal as to how important Hal is in his life:

SIR JOHN O, thou hast damnable iteration, and art indeed able to corrupt a saint. Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal, God forgive thee for it. Before I know thee, Hal, I knew nothing; and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked. I must give over this life, and I will give it over. By the Lord, an I do not, I am a villain. I'll be damned for never a king's son in Christendom. (1.2.90-7)

Hal rejuvenates Oldcastle, helping to gradually fade the “old” in his name. Though his buddies eventually put one over on Sir John, his inclusion at all in the youthful and invigorating play brightens an otherwise sullen and surly character. Of course, there exists a great amount of controversy surrounding the Oxford editors' decision to retain this older version of Falstaff's name. It is generally agreed that including Oldcastle's name in the original texts would have probably offended William Brooke, an attendant and eventual Lord Chamberlain around the time of Henry IV. Douglas A. Brooks writes, “The restoration of Oldcastle to the Oxford edition makes it the first authoritative text to undo an alteration which, as scholars have long suspected, Shakespeare himself must have made sometime between a non-extant 1596 performance text and the 1598 quarto edition of the play” (333). I find this alteration important, as Shakespeare's original

purpose-driven form for the character seemed to be invested in the name “Oldcastle.” For the purposes of this dissertation, then, I have chosen also to retain the earlier name. Shakespeare had to modify his purpose-driven form with “Oldcastle” and develop a new one befitting the witty fool of Falstaff, though not necessarily changing the outcome of the character. In a way, shifting to Falstaff reverses the *reversal* of the Burkean form mentioned above. Though it is not a “purpose” concerning the character within the play’s parameters, Shakespeare still altered his “form” on “purpose” as to not offend. Shakespeare himself included words of this controversy at the end of *2 Henry IV*. In the Epilogue, he states:

One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Catherine of France; where, for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat – unless already a be killed with your hard opinions. For Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man. My tongue is weary; when my legs are too, I will bid you good night, and so kneel down before you – but, indeed, to pray for the Queen. (Epilogue 24-33)

Once again, Shakespeare takes another chance to exhibit the generative power of nomenclature in the very text and performance of the play. And, Oldcastle’s presence nevertheless helps drive the action of the play to a face-off between father and son.

The volta of the play, in Act 3, presents a tense dialogue between king and prince over the cost of a noble name. The entire exchange centers on the importance of one’s name and lineage, where one comes from and who one is currently. Over the course of two pages and nearly 200 lines, King Henry bombards Harry with a lesson in righteousness, what is afforded to him by his princely title:

KING HENRY

...Tell me else,  
Could such inordinate and low desires,  
Such poor, such bare, such lewd, such mean attempts,  
Such barren pleasures, rude society,  
As thou art matched withal and grafted to,  
Accompany the greatness of thy blood,  
And hold their level with thy princely heart?  
(3.2.11-17)

Harry is cornered by his father, learning gravely why his name, Harry (soon-to-be King Henry), is so vitally important to the realm. King Henry continues, however, speaking about the failures of his predecessor, Richard II:

KING HENRY

The skipping King, he ambled up and down  
With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits,  
Soon kindled and soon burnt, carded his state,  
Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools,  
Had his great **name** profaned with their scorns....

PRINCE HARRY

I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord,  
Be more myself.

(3.2.60-4, 92-3)

His promise, though difficult to manage at first, eventually sinks in; Hal accepts his name and thus becomes Prince Harry, soon-to-be King Henry. Shakespeare's purpose-driven form works similarly, here, as it does in his comedies – an appropriate connection, as *1 Henry IV* includes as many comic scenes as it does “historical” and dramatic ones. Harry must *earn* what his name means; counter to a tragic history like *Richard III*, in which a character falls away from his onomastic entitlement, the more comedic *1 Henry IV* presents a character who works toward such gifts. In a difficult scene in which boy

becomes man, Harry spurns Sir John. The scene is indeed troubling to watch because the audience witnesses the foolishness and pathetic sadness associated with an older man who merely wished to rediscover his own hot, youthful days. It is like watching a son punish his father for being silly and inept. The young man scolds his elder (as royal subject) and humiliates him for being a drunk:

SIR JOHN

If Percy be alive thou gett'st not my sword;  
But take my pistol if thou wilt.

PRINCE HARRY Give it me. What, is it in the case?

SIR JOHN Ay, Hal;

'Tis hot, 'tis hot. There's that will sack a city.

*The Prince draws it out, and finds it to be a bottle of sack.*

PRINCE HARRY

What, is it time to jest and dally now?

*He throws the bottle at him. Exit.*

SIR JOHN Well, if Percy be alive, I'll pierce him. If he do come in my way, so; if he do not, if I come in his willingly, let him make a carbonado of me. I like not such grinning honor as Sir Walter hath. Give me life, which if I can save, so; if not, honor comes unlooked for, and there's an end.

(5.3.51-4)

This is only the beginning of Harry's distancing from his common friends. Alas, the most difficult scene to witness occurs at the very end of *2 Henry IV*. By this point, Harry has indeed accepted his fate; however, it is hardly tragic. He has attained the highest honor, something which Sir John takes pains to discuss at length as integral to humanity: honor. Onomastically, the nick-names and vulgar labels afforded to him in Harry's youth have now become obsolete, indicators of a past characterization. Importantly, Shakespeare does revisit these youthful and common impulses felt by the ever-so heroic king. Later, in *Henry V*, he does eventually disguise himself as, frankly,

his former self. His walk through the camp, mingling with common soldiers, indicates, like for Sir John, a desire to retrace his past. He must relearn the camaraderie and fellowship that he garnered as a young lad with friends like Falstaff and company. For the purposes of the war, though, it is vital to discover the slump in morale and know exactly the words needed to rouse his troops. For now, the revels have here ended, as *King Harry*, at the very end of *2 Henry IV*, delivers one final blow to Sir John's old foolishness:

SIR JOHN God save thee, my sweet boy!

KING HARRY

My Lord Chief Justice, speak to that vain man.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE

Have you your wits? Know you what 'tis you speak?

SIR JOHN

My king, my Jove, I speak to thee, my heart!

KING HARRY

I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.

How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester!

I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,

So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;

But being awake, I do despise my dream...

For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,

That I have turned away my former self;

So will I those that kept me company. (5.4.44-51)

The important facet of his name is now "King"; he must accept his onomastic transformation for now he speaks as England herself. His name *is* England. Shakespeare uses four plays (*Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V*), he uses two *names* of three kings, to create heroes for England.

### ***Coriolanus*: The Historical Price of Politics and Great Power**

*Coriolanus*, much like *Richard III* and varying from *1 Henry IV*, presents a tragic, historical recreation of one of the ancient world's greatest leaders. Once again, Shakespeare spins a history that reads as a tragedy and notes it thus in the full title, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*. It is a play in which words are gravely important in determining the fate of the titular character. Anne Barton, in "Shakespeare and the Limits of Language," observes that, "*Coriolanus*...presents a Roman world of rhetoric and persuasion in which the hero alone resists the value placed on verbal formulations. To a surprising extent, the tragedy of *Coriolanus* is worked out in terms of the hero's attitude towards words....Essentially, *Coriolanus* despises words" (27). For someone who hates the words of flattery and abuse so much, *Coriolanus* realizes his existence and power depends on them. Furthermore, his power is determined through his shift in nomenclature. The play is a dark and winding narrative, exploring the depths of human pride and power and how the citizenry can destroy a leader just as easily as it can make one.

The play has appeal as a "history" through the names and nomenclature and the ways in which the characters earn and live with their labels. The titular character witnesses a transformation in nomenclature; he gains the surname "Coriolanus" after demonstrating military prowess and great leadership skills. Indeed, even the audience is not fully aware of his potency and fame from the outset. Levin L. Schucking insists that:

His *Coriolanus* later on is arranged according to an essentially different plan, and begins by showing the hero engaged in the greatest undertaking of his life, so that we are not required, during the whole succession of scenes, to trust implicitly to

the author for the hero's greatness. Coriolanus was unknown to his audience. In the case of Julius Caesar, such a procedure was unnecessary; his greatness was proclaimed loudly enough in universal history. (46)

The audience soon comes to learn about the pride and power associated with the central figure, who, in the beginning of the play, is named "Caius Martius." His initial surname "Martius" carries with it the weight of generations of venerated military figures, all connected linguistically to Mars, the Roman god of war. "Martial," "Martius," and names bearing the deified Roman root promote an individual forged in the gears of war. From his first entrance, Martius' speech is riddled with aggressive and martial words and phrases, offering much to support his name:

MARTIUS

He that will give good words to thee will flatter  
Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs  
That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you,  
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,  
Where he should find you lions finds you hares,  
Where foxes, geese....

(1.1.165-170)

Moments later within the same scene, Martius devises quick punishments for those who threaten the very core of Roman civility. When asked how to deal with the rioters, starving and frenzied and encroaching on food stores, Martius responds:

MARTIUS

What's their seeking?

MENENIUS

For corn at their own rates, whereof they say  
The city is well stored.

MARTIUS

Hang 'em! They say?

They'll sit by th' fire and presume to know  
What's done I'th' Capitol, who's like to rise,  
Who thrives and who declines; side factions and give out

Conjectural marriages, making parties strong  
And feeling such as stand not in their liking  
Below their cobbled shoes.

(1.1.187-193)

Not unlike Othello and Macbeth, Martius, later Coriolanus, is a tragic – and, here, historical – figure whose hubristic flaw is too much action and little thought. His impulsive rise to the surface of Rome’s military elite foreshadows the hefty cost he will pay when those he thought would support him end up turning away. Martius is a deeply proud individual, bordering on vain, and has these flawed characteristics nurtured and nourished by his power-hungry mother Volumnia. Onomastically, Shakespeare represents a world in which the name ends up enveloping the individual. A name can destroy its carrier, especially when the name is donated to the person him or herself. Martius is incapable of neither accepting nor giving praise and flattery; ultimately, his stoic behavior pulls him down from the grace to which he was elected. *Coriolanus* is Shakespeare’s greatest consideration of democracy, literally *demos krateos* or “people’s power.” Shakespeare explores what happens when democracy is threatened both externally and internally and how a great leader can easily be swayed by and consumed by the thirst for nobility and prominence (Downer 379-81). The names of *Coriolanus* reflect all that which concerns a troubled democracy: external threats of force, internal threats of intrigue and betrayal, the potential for power, and ultimately the voice and the mind of the people.

Martius’ noted friend and advisor Menenius Agrippa, for example, carries a name that reflects his mediation between the people and the government. He is a witty

individual, whose ability to reason with both commoner and senator is noted throughout Rome:

SICINIUS Menenius, you are known well enough too.

MENENIUS I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying Tiber in't; said to be something imperfect in favoring the first complaint, hasty and tinder-like upon too trivial motion; one that converses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning. What I think, I utter, and spend my malice in my breath...I cannot say your worships have delivered the matter well, when I find the ass in compound with the major part of your syllables.

(2.1.45-53, 56-8)

His speeches within this scene are all delivered in prose, thus connecting him with a lower set of individuals. His first name "Menenius" carries meanings that support this ability to relate to the common people of Rome. Primarily, one hears the word "men" and immediately thinks of the word meaning individuals and persons, citizens. The Latinate roots of *mens* and *mentis* are also present; these words refer to "mind, understanding; feelings, heart; idea, plan, purpose; and courage." All of these are appropriate to Menenius' character, an individual who speaks as the body politic and common of Rome. In more ways than one, Menenius *is* the voice of the people, bridging the prosperity gap as a representative in the smaller body of elected Roman officials.

Another character, Cominius, functions as the most important convention in the play: he suggests the name "Coriolanus" for the victorious leader. From the first appearance and utterance of his name Cominius echoes the word "common" in the audience's ear, again asserting and bolstering the notion that it is from the people's mouth that nobility is acquired in democracy.





VOLUMNIA I pray you, daughter, sing, or express yourself in a more comfortable sort. If my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honor than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love....

VIRGILIA But had he died in the business, madam, how then?

VOLUMNIA Hear me profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike, and none less dear than thine and my good Martius', I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

(1.3.1-5, 18-25)

Coriolanus' female companions nurture both his martial and human sides, each tearing him in different directions. Ultimately, and as a part of his hubristic choice, Coriolanus sides with the onomastic presentation of power and the voluminous size of it afforded to him as a Roman leader. His modes become tyrannical and because of listening to this Roman Lady Macbeth, he too succumbs to the historically tragic effects of hasty action in the quest for power.

### ***Julius Caesar: The Quest for Power as Conclusion***

Early in the action of *Julius Caesar*, Cassius engages in a dialogue with his fellow conspirator, Brutus, concerning the equivocation of man and emperor. Like *Coriolanus*, much of *Julius Caesar* deals with John Wilkes Booth's infamous words, *sic semper tyrannus*, "ever thus to tyrants." The characters immerse themselves in conversations about the borders between leader and dictator, citizen and subject. Shakespeare, in his histories and Roman plays, invites the audience to participate in this discourse common to the parameters of humanist thought. Just as he exhausts the discourse regarding love's preservation through verse in over a hundred sonnets, Shakespeare repeatedly explores the love and acquisition and subsequent obsession with power in his histories and Roman plays. Nomenclature, then, operates somewhat differently in these pieces. Certainly,

Shakespeare plays with etymologies and onomastics with several of the non-historical figures in the plays (Bardolph, Pistol, Nym, etc.); primary characters – the historical individuals – however, have their names tied to notions of power and leadership.

Cassius' lengthy near-soliloquy in Act 1 bears repeating here:

I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,  
As well as I do know your outward favor.  
Well, honor is the subject of my story.  
I cannot tell what you and other men  
Think of this life; but for my single self,  
I had as lief not be, as live to be  
In awe of such a thing as I myself.  
I was born free as Caesar, so were you.  
We both have fed as well, and we can both  
Endure the winter's cold as well as he.  
For once upon a raw and gusty day,  
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,  
Said Caesar to me 'Dar'st thou, Cassius, now  
Leap in with me into this angry flood,  
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,  
Accoutred as I was plunged in,  
And bade him follow. So indeed he did.  
The torrent roared, and we did buffet it  
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside,  
And stemming it with hearts of controversy.  
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,  
Caesar cried 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'  
Ay, as Aeneas our great ancestor  
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder  
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber  
Did I the tired Caesar. And this man  
Is now become a god, and Cassius is  
A wretched creature, and must bend his body  
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.  
He had a fever when he was in Spain,  
And when the fit was on him, I did mark  
How he did shake. 'Tis true, this god did shake.  
His coward lips did from their color fly;  
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world  
Did lose his luster....

Ye gods, it doth amaze me  
A man of such a feeble temper should  
So get the start of the majestic world,  
And bear the palm alone!

(1.2.92-133)

Though verbose and repetitive, Cassius' speech bolsters the concept that these thoughts are by no means original, even when set in classical Rome. "Julius Caesar" becomes synonymous with "tyrant" in the minds of the conspirators and traitors. It also becomes synonymous with coward ("His coward lips") and a man unable to swim in the rough seas of emperorship ("I sink!"). He is exposed as a villain and coward and unfit to rule. As they are the direct conveyance of the play's action and dialogue, we, too, as audience members, connect Caesar to this connotation. Antony, even, notes the god-like name of Caesar's when he utters, "I shall remember: When Caesar says 'Do this,' it is performed" (1.1.12-13). Furthermore, Caesar's name simply is repeated over and over, forcing itself into the ears and minds of the audience. Madeline Doran, in "What should be in that 'Caesar'?: Proper Names in *Julius Caesar*," illuminates how the repetition of the name alone is integral to the form and presentation of the play. She claims:

If it does nothing else, keeping Caesar's name so insistently before us tells us that the play is certainly in some sense about Caesar. In an affective way, the repetition accompanies every movement of the plot...Caesar's name is dinned into our ears in waves of iteration until the end of the funeral oration. (120-121)

We are made aware of the potency of a character's name, a name synonymous with power itself.

The names of Shakespeare's "historical" figures become titles, representative of

the methodology by which they acquired power. Many become tyrants; some remain modest men. Some, in rare instances, lose all humanity and become monsters in their quests for power. Shakespeare explores these transformations by using the historical names as metaphors and conceits in the texts. Instead of using the language within the names, Shakespeare unpacks the names as symbols themselves, taking on new meanings of power, intrigue, violence, glory, honor, battle, and blood – all of those concepts that helped shape the popular Roman and British myths, which contribute just as much to a people's culture as "actual" history does. Flavius' desire to "let no images be hung with Caesar's trophies" indeed is impossible with poets and writers. Historical perception is complicated by artists' images, no matter how bright a historical individual's trophies shine.

## CHAPTER V

### MAROONING, MYSTERY, AND MIRACLE: ONOMASTICS OF THE ROMANCES

#### TIME

I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror  
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,  
Now take upon me, in the **name** of Time,  
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime  
To me or my swift passage, that I slide  
O'er sixteen years and leave the growth untried  
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power  
To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour  
To plant and o'erwhelm custom...I witness to  
The times that brought them in; so shall I do  
To the freshest things now reigning and make stale  
The glistening of this present, as my tale  
Now seems to it....  
I mentioned a son o' the king's, which Florizel  
I now **name** to you; and with speed so pace  
To speak of Perdita, now grown in grace  
Equal with wondering.

*(The Winter's Tale 4.1.1-9, 11-15, 22-25)*

The volta of *The Winter's Tale* comes later than normal, as Time the character steps out on stage to deliver the passage himself. The audience bears witness to an actor playing a concept, not unlike a medieval mystery or miracle play or a Renaissance allegorical poem. Time is personified here, as a figure, and he describes the process by which he forwards our minds several years into the future. We have left a world of fighting, jealousy, accusation, and darkness and are reborn to a time of spring, fertility, life, and renewal. In the very beginning of 4.2, Camillo and his master's now-rival Polixenes share a dialogue regarding this passage of time:

POLIXENES I pray thee, good Camillo, be no more importunate. 'Tis a sickness denying thee anything, a death to grant this.

CAMILLO It is sixteen years since I saw my country. Though I have for the most part been aired abroad, I desire to lay my bones there. Besides, the penitent King, my master, hath sent for me, to whose feeling sorrows I might be some allay – or I o'erween to think so – which is another spur to my departure.

(4.2.1-9)

Time has just finished noting for the audience that sixteen years have passed, and much has changed regarding the two enemy kings' children, yet we have another character reiterate this temporal information. Camillo's designation would have sufficed for an audience to understand the difference in time; however, Shakespeare designates Time to be a character in the action of the play.

“Time,” as a personified character, served as a convention of Shakespeare's throughout his entire career. Most often do we as a readerly audience find the character personified in his sonnets. There, Time always stands as an immortal enemy, an irrefutable and impenetrable force that destroys all that which is beautiful and young.

Sonnet 12 reads:

When I do count the clock that tells the **time**,  
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;  
When I behold the violet past prime,  
And sable curls, all silvered o'er with white;  
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,  
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,  
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves,  
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,  
Then of thy beauty do I question make,  
That thou among the wastes of time must go,  
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake  
And die as fast as they see others grow;  
And nothing 'gainst **Time's** scythe can make defence  
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence. (Sonnet 12, 1-14, bold mine)

Here, “time” is mentioned twice, once as an intangible concept in line 1 and then again as the anthropomorphized character in line 13, the first line of the rhymed couplet. For Time to appear in Shakespeare’s drama was only a matter of, well, time; the re-presentation of time-as-person seemed an obsession for the poet and playwright. Time’s name – the onomastics of the now-realized characterization – became synonymous with death occasionally. However, as in the case in *The Winter’s Tale*, Time simply takes on the traits associated with the concept. He has a merely human voice, imparting important information to a human audience.

Many of Shakespeare’s plays that have been discussed in this dissertation include some narrative force, a character or figure who provides exposition and conveys other key elements, similar to the famous Greek chorus of classical drama. Shakespeare eliminated the entire chorus, save one figure – his Thespis – who sometimes was even called, simply, “Chorus.” Here, however, Shakespeare imbues his oft-villainous Time with expository powers, relaying to the audience the pertinent information and indication that we are now sixteen years in the future. And the normal association of Time with Death is strikingly absent. He simply names further characters in the piece – Leontes’ daughter Perdita and Polixenes’ son Florizel – and paints their backstory quickly so that an audience may be familiar when they burst onto the stage during a harvest feast and party. It is no mystery why Time appears in *The Winter’s Tale*, one of Shakespeare’s most popular romances, or “late” plays. The romances are filled with magic, mystery, and ephemeral beings – spirits, ghosts, fairies, monsters – as well as prototypically post-modern conceptualizations such as Time’s personification on stage. Shakespeare’s

twilight career saw a compounding and complication of previous dramatic tenets and conventions from his other three or more genres. The romances, then, carry sentiment belonging to comedies, histories, tragedies, and even multiple allusions to classical works beyond his repertoire. Shakespeare explored the magic of composition, the conjuring of a piece of literature and art through the blending together of pre-existing modes of dramatic presentation and re-presentation.

Some have noted that the major points of Shakespeare's playwriting career are marked by shipwrecks. *The Comedy of Errors* begins with Aegeon, in another moment of exposition, explaining the disastrous maritime event that left him stranded, without his wife and twin sons. Around the middle of his career (and late career with the comedies), at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*, Viola enters the world of Illyria after a terrible crash upon the Mediterranean shores of the noble kingdom. And finally, in 1611, Shakespeare's last solo play is produced: *The Tempest*. The play begins in the middle of a terrible storm conjured by the magician Prospero and later reveals to the audience the first marooning, or shipwreck, which stranded the deposed duke and his daughter on the mysterious island. By the end of his career, Shakespeare seemed to concentrate heavily on the subjects of disorientation in a newly discovered world. The boundaries of the Atlantic became visible together, while the Mediterranean still appeared as a playwright's Atlantis. Exotic locales shape and set the tragicomic plays, concluded by *The Tempest*. Shakespeare let his own writing get lost, with multiple, often overwhelmingly, complex plots being woven together. Just as in a comedy, the play's multiple reins are tightened and brought taut by sometimes magical forces. The play must be complex if magic is

required to untangle the confused mess. But this mess of plots, these tightly wound strings of action, constitute the exact point of these “late” plays; they resemble the terrible confusion that all human beings witness in the world, the feelings of being lost and perhaps not having spiritual sources to turn to for guidance. Here we can see multiple facets of comedy and tragedy blending to create bittersweet pieces of drama, the characters of which usually must go through hell in order to reach heavenly reunion.

Shakespeare's tragicomic characters boast similarly exotic and fantastical names, which, onomastically, drive Burke's theory of form and purpose mentioned before. Two of Shakespeare's romantic ingénues, Marina from *Pericles* and Miranda from *The Tempest*, have obvious connotations of the sea and being stranded or lost at sea contained within their names. Contextually, these characters exuded these connotations through their speech and status: Marina is discovered lost at sea, and Miranda, with her powerful father Prospero, is marooned on an island. The plays leap from exotic locale to exotic locale, places which are separated by sea and stars, those tools that explorers used to find their ways. Both Polixines and Leontes from *The Winter's Tale* have constellations in their names (Pollux and Leo). Polixines seems to be without his twin -- perhaps Leontes is a figurative Castor when the two friends, practically brothers, become separated over a jealous grudge involving Leontes' wife. Furthermore, most of the problems between the friends are due to miscommunication, another theme rampant in the romances and all of Shakespearean drama.

However, the problems involving language (and naming) in the romances are different than in the previously discussed genres; language and words do not just

represent renewed faith after the skepticism of the tragedies (Barton 28). Anne Barton claims, “Words define the gap between individuals; they do not bridge it” (29). This chapter will explore such exoticism, which is bolstered by themes of friendship, family, disorientation, and reunion: those purposes of Shakespeare's that defined his romantic purpose-driven onomastic form. In fact, we return to an onomastic form similar to the comedies; Shakespeare's romantic characters have names, the languages of which plot fairly clear paths for their characterizations.

### ***Pericles, Prince of Tyre: Heroic Abandonment***

The stories of Shakespeare's late plays, or romances, are epic in scale, and *Pericles* tops them all in this regard. The noble prince travels for thousands of nautical miles throughout the Mediterranean, northern Africa, and southern Europe. He is on an epic quest, categorically common of great mythological heroes. Shakespeare's *Pericles* is not unlike Spenser's *Redcrosse* or any other noble and chivalric knight set out with high and lofty goals. However, virtue has little room in the story of *Pericles*, as the man is tormented by the loss of his daughter and the separation anxiety created because of it. Shakespeare usually robs his romantic heroes of family members in the romances, a trend also exhibited both in the comedies and tragedies. Here, though, in Shakespeare's later dramatic experiments, his characters lose or are separated from their loved ones and commit to the play's action *for* or in honor of these loved ones. Prospero waves his magical staff and coerces the Neapolitan court to return his lost dukedom and receive in marriage his wonderful daughter Miranda; Leontes spends his days mourning the physical loss of his wife Hermione and the emotional *and* physical abandonment of his

daughter Perdita because of his jealousy and temper. Pericles wanders the seven seas, internally distraught over his missing Marina and his wife, both of whom he erroneously presumes dead. The first part of the play, however concerns Pericles' wild and lusty adventures throughout the world, building him to be a powerful and brave warrior, ripped from the pages of Greek mythology. Ultimately, this was Shakespeare's generic purpose in the romances: to re-present ancient tales as modern entertainment. But Pericles' adventurous story does not consistently show Pericles as a noble and valiant hero. He becomes devastated when he "loses" both his wife and his daughter. His exotic life is put on hold, and he descends into despair and madness because of it. Naturally, as with all of Shakespeare's late style, it takes an act of the heavens, a supernatural occurrence, to reunite and restore Pericles' family (Dunton-Downer 403). Shakespeare's *Pericles* adeptly combines multi-dramatic elements in an attempt to re-present a classical tale for an audience that expected the emotional depth of a tragedy and the fulfilled redemption of a comedy.

The play's central narrator is a characterization and re-presentation of the early English poet John Gower. Shakespeare appropriated the story of *Pericles* from the poet and honors him by having his figure tell the tale. Onomastically, the name "Gower" becomes enveloped in his own story, offering to the audience a cue that Shakespeare does appreciate the traditions of storytelling and the reapplication of these stories to a general audience. Shakespeare changes nothing about the name, adds no emendations to it, no titles of "narrator," "chorus," or "prologue." By his late career, Shakespeare picks ephemeral concepts or actual figures from history and literature to weave his tales and

provide exposition and transition for his audiences. The nomenclature, then, acts as it does in the histories, adding here another generic element to the already intermingled romances. Appropriately enough, Gower even refers to himself in his opening soliloquy:

GOWER

To sing a song that old was sung  
From ashes ancient **Gower** is come,  
Assuming man's infirmities  
To glad your ear and please your eyes.  
It hath been sung at festivals,  
On ember-eves and holy-ales,  
And lords and ladies in their lives  
Have read it for restoratives.

(Sc. 1, 1-8; bold mine)

Just as Shakespeare has Time refer to himself in the middle of *The Winter's Tale*, here too we read Gower's reciprocal relationship with himself. Shakespeare bifurcates his character into classic narrator, or Thespis, and actual historical figure, John Gower, English poet and storyteller. The third-person self-reference, then, makes sense and fits the already "blended genres" sentiment that runs through all of his romances.

Onomastically, Shakespeare is taking another chance to reinforce the notion that the romances are reiterated tales for popular entertainment, shown under the guise of tragic, comic, and even historical presentations. Gower weaves himself in and out of the story itself, at one point taking on the role of emcee, similar to Richard Gloucester's role mentioned earlier. Late in the play, Gower must address the audience and inform it of Pericles' now-turned fate; his travels and journeys are dominated by his obsessive thoughts concerning his supposedly dead daughter and wife:

## GOWER

Thus time we waste, and long leagues make we short,  
Sail seas in cockles, have and wish but for't,  
Making to take imagination  
From bourn to bourn, region to region.  
By you being pardoned, we commit no crime  
To use one language in each sev'ral clime  
Where our scene seems to live. I do beseech you  
To learn of me, who stand I'th' gaps to teach you  
The stages of our story: Pericles  
Is not again thwarting the wayward seas,  
Attended on by many a lord and knight,  
To see his daughter, all his life's delight.

(Sc. 18, 1-12)

Following this brief expository information, a dumb show commences. Gower, as poet, historian, and storyteller, *now* becomes director and emcee of a dramatic presentation in another. Gower is historical, yes, but Shakespeare changes the onomastics of his name, now making him a classical chorus figure. In this way, Gower's name functions similarly to Richard of Gloucester and Time. The name itself becomes the job or occupation, here the job being a dramatic convention used by Shakespeare plenty of times previous to his later work.

The women in Pericles' life both have names, the onomastics of which function in the fundamental way regarding Shakespeare's purpose-driven form mentioned in this dissertation. Primarily, we must consider Marina, Pericles' daughter. Shakespeare seems to create for Marina a twin across the boundaries of his romances. Miranda from *The Tempest* shares a similar onomastic purpose to Marina. Both of their names contain linguistic roots referring to expansiveness, distance, marooning, and the sea. It is fairly easy to spot the Latinate root for "the sea" in her name; in fact her name is only one letter

away from spelling “marine.” And, of course, *marina* is Italian for “sea.”

Representatively, Marina is the ocean for Pericles. He must venture across great expanses of water in order to finally be reunited with his cherished child. Shakespeare has her name actually dictate “the ocean” or “the sea” however, and ultimately we learn that Marina is Pericles’ greatest adventure. Shakespeare often bolstered the ideas of family and made important the ideas of family reunion and rediscovery after tragic events that cause rifts in familial dynamics. If indeed the ocean represents Pericles’ livelihood, where he spends his time, how he spends his life, as the consummate sailor and adventurer; then Marina, his daughter, whose name directly means “the ocean,” appropriately fits, as his family supersedes any and all adventure Pericles could ever hope to have.

Marina’s oceanic name does not simply stop at a direct reference, however. Of course, Shakespeare played with multiple connotations involving vehicle in this metaphor, just as he does with the common words of English. The frequently used phrase “the virgin seas,” or those parts of the world that are unspoiled and remain chaste and free and open, can be found linked to her name. Marina, just like Miranda, represents virginity and chastity, especially in stark contrast to the brothel that she is forced to join in the depths of the play. “This is utter degradation,” Sharon Hamilton begins, “particularly harsh for one so delicately raised, and Marina’s first reaction is to regret that neither Leonine nor the pirates murdered her” (158). Within the brothel, Marina acts as Penelope does for Odysseus, constantly steering off customers in a desperate attempt to maintain her virginity and chastity, elements which, without, would

rob her of the importance of her name's meaning. If she becomes at all tainted by these lascivious "suitsors," then her name loses its meaning and no longer exists as Pericles' destination and ultimate dramatic purpose. The exchange in Scene 18 illustrates this:

MARINA

Let not authority, which teaches you  
To govern others, be the means to make you  
Misgovern much yourself.  
If you were born to honor, show it now;  
If put upon you, make the judgment good  
That thought you worthy of it. What reason's in  
Your justice, who hath power over all,  
To undo any? If you take from me  
Mine honor, you're like him that makes a gap  
Into forbidden ground, whom after  
Too many enter, and of all their evils  
Yourself are guilty. My life is yet unspotted;  
My chastity unstained ev'n in thought.

BOULT How's this? We must take another course with you. If your peevish chastity, which is not worth a breakfast in the cheapest country under the cope, shall undo a whole household, let me be gelded like a spaniel. Come your ways....

BOULT I must have your maidenhead taken off, or the common executioner shall do it. We'll have no more gentlemen driven away. Come your ways, I say.

(Sc. 19, 98-110; 147-152; 154-5)

Her words are convincing and powerful, maintaining her purity at every turn. "Marina's eloquent powers of persuasion," Margaret Healy begins, "prove more than a match for Mytilene's lecherous gentlemen, whose wayward morals she reforms in the very brothel" (97). In essence, Marina must preserve her chastity not just for her character and person but, here, for her name as well. Shakespeare imbues his romantic characters with this concern, just as he does the characters of his comedies, tragedies, and histories. All of his characters, in fact, know the importance of a name and what is at stake: the loss of a

name, the stain on an identity, means the destruction of one's very self, his or her own forged existence. Everything is in a name.

Pericles' wife, Thaisa, sports an intriguingly beautiful name, with no direct Latinate meaning. However the prefix *tha-* does appear before many appropriate Latin words, which may relate to Thaisa's relationship to Pericles and the point and purpose of the story as a whole. The word *thalamus* refers to a bedchamber, specifically a woman's apartment, bridal bed, or marriage. If indeed Thaisa is Pericles' final destination, it is fitting that her name resembles that of rest, sleep, and ultimately conjugal consummation for the married couple. Furthermore, the Latin word *thalassicus* means "of the sea." And, in Greek, *Thalassé* also means "sea." Again, we find a possibility of connection to the ocean. This way, both members of Pericles' family have names, which contain meanings of the expansiveness and distance and "neverendingness" that the sea inspires. However, closest to Thaisa's name is *thiasus*, which refers to a Bacchic dance or troupe of dancers. Here, then, the name represents revelry and celebration, as anything tied to Bacchus' name derives. It is fitting and appropriate, though, as a reunion with his long-estranged wife would result in celebration and dance, the physical representation of said celebratory feelings. The reunion of one's loved and cherished family members in Shakespeare's romances always ends with celebration and happiness. Thaisa's name ultimately represents, then, the reformed conceptual convention from the comedies that reunion and felicitations will round out the story's twisted and tangled plots. One need look no further than the last page of the story to experience this conventional form:



*potency* with which they will attempt to stop Pericles. Their main objectives are to destroy Marina and Thaisa, destroy the very purposes of Pericles' existence and adventuring.

### ***Cymbeline: Death and Renewal***

Though the action of Pericles jumps and darts all over the Mediterranean and ancient world, no other late play by Shakespeare switches between both locale and time period as confusingly as *Cymbeline*. But this awkward scene placement in both physical and geographical location and time period is not just an excuse to violate Aristotle's proposed unities of time, place, and action for drama. Instead, the widely spotted map of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* offers audiences a look at the jumbled and often darkly confusing world, which will only eventually make sense only after reunion and celebration. *Cymbeline* is also one of Shakespeare's most heavily plot-driven pieces and requires much in the way of information and exposition to keep the audience on point with the play's action (Dunton-Downer 412). The play equally combines parts from all of Shakespeare's other genres: it is a historical representation, as there actually may have been a Roman Briton king named Cymbeline; the play includes several comic dialogues between Iachimo, the play's villain, and his fellow friends; the play includes several tragic elements including the "death" often felt from banishment (similar to Romeo's); finally, the play does end in reunion and celebration, as the seemingly "banished" Cymbeline himself (Shakespeare has him disappear for most of the play after the beginning) returns to oversee the revelry that concludes this tangled piece of drama. Ultimately, the play concerns "death" in its many figurative iterations and representations

in dramatic art. There are physical deaths in the play – Cymbeline’s queen does pass, as well as Cloten, the fool and queen’s son; however, most of the “death” is felt in the banishments and disappearing of certain characters throughout the play’s progression.

The names of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* revolve around this central presentation of death’s multivalent meanings, as well as adhering to the standard tenets and traits associated with Shakespeare’s late, romantic style. Primarily, Shakespeare has a lot of information that is necessary to convey to the audience. Instead of picking a central figure to act as a chorus or prologue, Shakespeare invests the act of information conveyance in the gentlemen of Roman Britain. We learn:

FIRST GENTLEMAN

You do not meet a man but frowns. Our bloods  
No more obey the heavens than our courtiers  
Still seem as does the King.

SECOND GENTLEMAN

But what’s the matter?

FIRST GENTLEMAN

His daughter, and the heir of’s kingdom, whom  
He purposed to his wife’s sole son – a widow  
That late he married – hath referred herself  
Unto a poor but worthy gentleman. She’s wedded,  
Her husband banished, she imprisoned. All  
Is outward sorrow, though I think the King  
Be touched at very heart.

(1.1.1-9)

We soon realize that the structure of Cymbeline’s family is as diverse, tangled, and varied as the multiple plots and actions that occur in the rest of the play. The only direct line of family truly belongs between himself and Imogen, who later must disguise herself and rob herself of her deserved name. For Cymbeline’s sons, however, Shakespeare gives names which bolster the ideas of baseness, stranger, odd, other, and, inevitably, “death.”

Cloten, his stepson, resembles the fool of the play and acts surly, unintelligent, and gruff, reminding audiences of a Caliban, Aaron, or Edmond from *Lear*. He is the outcast, the “other” of the play; Shakespeare’s fool, here, takes on a more insidious nature and, instead of offering words of wisdom, offers merely base talk, villainous plot, and lowly disposition. His name – “Cloten” – is a hybrid of sorts, resembling, with the first three letters, the “clown.” But the name is bastardized and not purely the fool, as someone like Lear’s “Fool” presents himself. He exchanges the following at the outset of Act 2:

CLOTEN Was there ever man had such luck? When I kissed the jack upon an upcast, to be hit away! I had a hundred pound on’t, and then a whoreson jackanapes must take me up for swearing, as if I borrowed mine oaths of him, and might not spend them at my pleasure.

FIRST LORD What got he by that? You have broke his pate with your bowl.

CLOTEN When a gentleman is disposed to swear it is not for any standers-by to curtail his oaths, ha?

SECOND LORD No, my lord (*aside*) – nor crop the ears of them.

CLOTEN Whoreson dog! I give him satisfaction? Would he had been one of my rank.

SECOND LORD (*aside*) To have smelled like a fool.

CLOTEN I am not vexed more at anything in th’earth. A pox on’t, I had rather not be so noble as I am. They dare not fight with me because of the Queen, my mother. Every jack-slave hath his bellyful of fighting, and I must go up and down like a cock that nobody can match.

(2.1.1-22)

As noted, Cloten attempts to spout wise remarks and answer questions about man and humanity in a broader sense, but just ends up cursing, swearing and providing whiny discourse about his soiled lot in life. Though not technically a bastard son like Edmond, Cloten takes on this role, and the name becomes nearly a swear word itself. He himself is a “clot” in Cymbeline’s kingdom, reluctantly arriving from a previous marriage to a world in which he does not belong and, within, eventually dies.

Cymbeline's other "son," the adopted Posthumus Leonatus, has a different fate. He is brought into the kingdom out of charity; as an adopted child, his identity is already marred with uncertainty and vagueness. However, he has all the makings of a noble son, one who will perhaps end up being the right kind of prince for Cymbeline's kingdom. Instead, however, he is banished for marrying Innogen and eventually swayed by Giacomo into believing that she has been unfaithful. Like a tragic hero, all the potentially virtuous possibilities are dashed because of his "otherness" coupled with a quick-to-accuse demeanor that ends up alienating him even further. For these reasons and more, it is fitting that his name, in Latin, directly means "the dead lion" or "the death of power." Everything about his life misses the mark; his banishment, often aligned with "death" in Renaissance tragedy and romances, gives him his "posthumous" characterization. And by believing the swindling villain of the play, by considering that his chaste and honest wife would be anything but faithful, Posthumus Leonatus apparently kills the noble lion that could be a part of his future. First, he converses with the shifty and ambitious Giacomo:

POSTHUMUS

Spare your arithmetic, never count the turns.  
Once, and a million!

GIACOMO I'll be sworn.

POSTHUMUS No swearing.

If you will swear you have not done't, you lie,  
And I will kill thee if thou dost deny  
Thou'st made me cuckold.

GIACOMO I'll deny nothing.

POSTHUMUS

O that I had her here to tear her limb-meal!  
I will go there and do't I'th' court, before  
Her father. I'll do something. (2.4.143-9)

The brief stichomythia between himself and Giacomo pushes Posthumus quickly over the edge into disbelief; he ends up convinced of his wife's infidelity much like Othello allowed Iago to convince him of the same. It is fitting and shall be addressed presently that the Italianate names "Giacomo" and "Iago" not only carry the same linguistic derivation but are also aurally echoic of each other, perhaps reinforcing Shakespeare's onomastic tendencies with his villains in these kinds of situations. Furthermore, they are both variations of "Jacob" and "James"; the two names are connected linguistically.

Posthumus continues, also not unlike Edmond:

#### POSTHUMUS

Is there no way for men to be, but women  
Must be half-workers? We are bastards all,  
And that most venerable man which I  
Did call my father was I know not where  
When I was stamped. Some coiner with his tools  
Made me a counterfeit; yet my mother seemed  
The Dian of that time: so doth my wife  
The nonpareil of this...Could I find out  
The woman's part in me – for there's no motion  
That tends to vice in man but I affirm  
Is it the woman's part; be it lying, note it,  
The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;  
Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;  
Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,  
Nice longing, slanders, mutability,  
All faults that man can name, nay, that hell knows,  
Why, hers in part or all, but rather all –

(2.5.1-13, 19-29)

All apparent hope and possibility of becoming the noble lion dies here. His banishment only began his trip toward "death"; he completes it without much chance for redemption by foolishly cursing his wife for a dishonor she did not commit.

As well as jumping all around the map geographically (and temporally) in *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare mixes various nationalities and dispositions of character as well. The characters themselves further the notion that this play, among the other romances like it, presents a complicated view of life, a “problem” or two perhaps that need addressing. The “good” and noble characters of the play (though, again it should be noted that there is no direct or pure “good” character in the play, save Innogen) all are Romans and ancient Britons; Shakespeare reserves Italian, French, Dutch, and Spanish characterizations for the truly dubious and villainous characters of the play. Primarily, of course, Giacomo rounds out the cast of ne’er-do-wells as a manipulative fiend whose motives are not purposefully explicit. This immediately connects him to Shakespeare’s most famous methodical villain, Iago. Both Italian men have disastrous plans for their respected betters with motives that are based in simple chaos. Though Giacomo – often produced as “Iachimo,” another linguistic connection to *Othello*’s lead mastermind – does lust after Innogen, he also enjoys playing with characters’ emotions and sensibilities for sheer enjoyment. In a stichomythian dialogue with Innogen, he says:

INNOGEN

*(To Giacomo)* So far I read aloud,  
But even the very middle of my heart  
Is warmed by th’ rest, and takes it thankfully.  
You are as welcome, worthy sir, as I  
Have words to bid you, and shall find it so  
In all that I can do.

GIACOMO Thanks, fairest lady.  
What, are men mad? Hath nature given them eyes  
To see this vaulted arch and the rich crop  
Of sea and land, which can distinguish ‘twixt  
The fiery orbs above and the twinned stones  
Upon th’ unnumbered beach, and can we not



regains respect and admiration for his Italian name and fulfills the purpose-driven form Shakespeare set out for him.

Finally, Innogen (here, the Oxford version of the name) stands as the means of redemption and the locus of hope for the tangled and deceitful plot lines that course throughout the play. She is also the target of the most scorn, the most slander, and the most retribution in the course of the action. As the central figure of redemption and reunion in the play, Innogen bears a strikingly appropriate moniker. Though often written as “Imogen,” her name echoically resounds the word “innocent.” Shakespeare makes sure that the audience realizes the importance of her chastity, virtuousness, and clean, untainted, self. In a conversation with Pisanio, she utters:

INNOGEN

True honest men being heard like false Aeneas  
Were in his time thought false, and Sinon’s weeping  
Did scandal many a holy tear, took pity  
From most true wretchedness. So thou, Posthumus,  
Wilt lay the leaven on all proper men.  
Goodly and gallant shall be false and perjured  
From thy great fail. (*To Pisanio*) Come, fellow, be thou honest,  
Do thou thy master’s bidding. When thou seest him,  
A little witness my obedience. Look,  
I draw the sword myself. Take it, and hit  
The innocent mansion of my love, my heart.  
Fear no, ‘tis empty of all things but grief.  
Thy master is not there, who was indeed  
The riches of it. Do his bidding; strike.  
Thou mayst be valiant in a better cause,  
But now thou seem’st a coward.

(3.4.58-73)

She sounds like a verse directly drawn from the New Testament. She essentially says to Pisanio “let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” Her fierce boldness in this episode

directly resounds with her forged innocence. She knows that she is so innocent that she can take the “vile instrument” of her undoing and stare at her potential murderer. Her innocence exudes but not at all from a helpless foundation. Furthermore, if taken to spell her name as “Imogen,” one immediately thinks of an “image,” a vision, or a ghost. Shakespeare imbues his heroine’s name with more ideas surrounding death and what happens in the hereafter. Innogen does “die” by being falsely accused and slandered and becomes a ghost of her former self in this attack. Just as Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Innogen’s fate is believed to be sealed, with her mortal coil cast off according to some. She must disguise herself as a man, a young boy in fact named Fidele. Of course the name is appropriately fitting because it was *infidelity*, or at least the rumor of it, that “killed” her good name. In fact, Innogen is fairly willing to change identities. Joe Nutt states, “In *Cymbeline*, the heroine is forced to change her identity but in this case willingly complies, and disguise is a paramount consideration” (62). Shakespeare often experimented with changing identities, especially across gender lines. Here, with Innogen, we find a new onomastic purpose-driven form embedded in her original characterization from the outset of the play. Her innocence unjustly stained by treasonous slander, Innogen loses her name and must adopt a new one in order to survive. Onomastically, Shakespeare has Innogen transform, just as Rosalind does in *As You Like It*. Instead of being linguistically indicative of change and transformation, Innogen’s new name resembles her new appearance: that of a faithful individual who will wear his fidelity on his sleeve. During the encounter with Lucius, he asks her who she is and what she is (of course, thinking she’s a “he”). She responds:



shipwreck as the defining factor in a play's action. Shakespeare enjoyed the concept of a voyage deterred, something expected and planned becoming chaotic. The romances all carry this sentiment: someone or something at some point will be lost, abandoned, eschewed, banished, or sent away with the intent of wandering perhaps aimlessly through life's potentially disastrous course.

In his last ever solo play, Shakespeare includes two shipwrecks, one which is learned about through exposition and information from the characters' mouths, and another, which occurs at the very beginning of the play. We enter the world of *The Tempest* quite *in medias res*, as boatswains and subjects of the royal king of Naples are scrambling to bunker down during a violent sea storm. The play begins amidst chaos; from disorder, the world must correct and straighten itself out in order to have any hope or chance for renewal or redemption. The other romances begin *before* the storm, as it were – we see the figurative “calm” before the inclement events that rocket the play toward its often tumultuous middle passages. For his last play, the audience is met with the storm full on, from the outset. Its characters must find their way blindly through the mess, as there is an upset in the balance with the natural order of things. *The Tempest's* storm is indicative of the interrupted and waylaid path on which Prospero was travelling. His dukedom, his rightful title, is stripped from him in the most insulting and degrading way. He is sent away, with his daughter, to be “forgotten,” presumed to die and disappear in the world's often unfair and cruel intolerance. By doing this, Antonio and the other conspirators and villainous members of the King Alonso's court banish *prosperity* itself. Naples can hope to have no future with the natural order so untimely

ripped apart. Thus, first and foremost, Prospero's name indicates what is *absent* in the world away from which he was sent. "Prosperity," even the *ability* to "prosper," resides solely on the uncharted island in the middle of a fictional Mediterranean. Certainly, it is Prospero's magic that causes the royal barge to split, its crew and cargo scattered in the storm; however, on a much more figurative scale, it is Prospero's own involvement in the natural order. He manipulates the environment using the magical powers granted him by the mystical island mostly inhabited by spirits and ethereal sources. From this, readers can make another gloss to his name; his newly acquired magical powers yield him a limitless prosperity and prowess. However, his prosperity seems to only be contained within the vicinity of the island. Readers mark the potency of his name and subsequent power in the beginning of the second scene, hardly a full page into the text:

MIRANDA

The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,  
But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek,  
Dashes the fire out....  
Had I been any god of power, I would  
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere  
It should the good ship so have swallowed and  
The fraughting souls within her.

PROSPERO

Be collected.

No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart  
There's no harm done.

MIRANDA

O woe the day!

PROSPERO

No harm.

I have done nothing but in care of thee,  
Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who  
Art ignorant of what thou art, naught knowing  
Of whence I am, nor that I am more better  
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell  
And thy no greater father.

(1.2.3-5, 10-20)

Though not a lengthy passage, this contains all relevant information regarding the locus of redemption and hope in the play. Normally, as has been demonstrated, Shakespeare imbues the children with the nodes of hope and promise for the future. In their names, Shakespeare places onomastic indications that their presence and power will redeem the other characters. For instance, Perdita from *The Winter's Tale* has a name practically identical to the word “perdition,” or the idea of being lost in hell, ever wandering. She will be found, however, and serve as hope. Shakespeare fittingly places the “future” in his child characters. Often in his tragedies, Shakespeare has the next generation of characters usher in the new age – normally they are children. Edgar and Malcolm take the future on as their mantles, acquiring power at a young age and shaping the promise of an optimistic future.

In *The Tempest*, however, Shakespeare places linguistic meanings of hope and peace in the name of his lead adult. Yes, “prosperity” clearly is in Prospero’s name<sup>17</sup>, but more importantly is the direct Latinate words that comprise his title. Readers find *pro-*, the prefix referring to “for” or “in support of”; following this reads *spero*, or, directly, “hope” and “optimistic promise for the future.” By the end of his career, Shakespeare imbues his dramatic children, then, with something more important than hope for the future and promise. Ultimately, Shakespeare’s onomastic re-presentation of children and childhood returns to the most basic principle of infantile discovery: wonder and

---

<sup>17</sup> Prospero’s name also has a rich historical connection as a real Duke of Genoa, deposed by his enemies as well as a character named “Prospero” in Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humor*, a play in which Shakespeare himself acted. (Young 408-409). Alan Young discusses these possibilities as well as a few more in his “Prospero’s Table: The Name of Shakespeare’s Duke of Milan.”





Caliban after taking control of and domesticating the island. His first entrance is one framed by servitude, submission, and vile cursing uttered forth from his tongue:

PROSPERO

Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself  
Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!

*Enter Caliban*

CALIBAN

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed  
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen  
Drop on you both! A southwest blow on ye,  
And blister you all o'er!

PROSPERO

For this be sure tonight thou shalt have cramps,  
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up. Urchins  
Shall forth at vast of night, that they may work  
All exercise on thee. Thou shalt be pinched  
As quick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging  
Than bees that made 'em.

(1.2.321-32)

Caliban's name, then, purports meanings of both his demented savagery and his own unjustly deposing. First, his name is practically an anagram of "cannibal," a fitting connection for his venomous and monstrous disposition. Second, the emphatic stress of pronouncing his name is placed on the word "ban," emphasizing the fact of his banishment, his deposing, his being forced to slave around on land that is rightfully his. His banishment is worse than Romeo's or Posthumus', as his "death" is living through a hellish, former tranquil, version of his own home. Prospero's other indenture rounds out the presence of both the devil and an angel on Prospero's island. Ariel, his right-hand man, is enslaved by Prospero but more does his bidding without the grimace and surly demeanor that Caliban carries. Ariel's name is purely echoic: the word "airy" is heard

when pronouncing or reading his character name. Indeed appropriate, as Ariel is an “airy” and lightly ethereal spirit, a popular faerie construct made by Shakespeare to emphasize the ideas of spiritual and supernatural wonderment found in the later plays. Shakespeare’s motive in his romances was to re-imagine the world as fantasy that dealt with some of the most troubling circumstances one will witness in life. It is a complicated series of dramatic pieces, “complicated” not because of the intertwining plots but because of the notion that life travels at relative speeds through the tragic *and* comic, the severely grave and the light-heartedly fanciful. The names of Shakespeare’s romantic characters push the borders of risk, hazard, wonderment, amazement, and reconciliation. If one feels disoriented while reading these plays and listening to their characters’ names, then he or she is right on track to being *hopefully* lost.

## CHAPTER VI

### A DICTIONARY DILENEATED

BOTTOM First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the **names** of the actors; and so grow to a point.

QUINCE Marry, our play is *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*.

BOTTOM A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

QUINCE Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver?

BOTTOM Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUINCE You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

BOTTOM That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will move stones. I will condole, in some measure. To the rest. – Yet my chief humor is for a tyrant. I could play ‘erc’les rarely, or a part to ear a cat in, to make all split.

(*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 1.2.8-26; bold mine)

It feels appropriate to conclude this dissertation with this quotation; Bottom and Quince have a discussion over the vital importance of names, nomenclature, and naming in dramatic art. Bottom *must* understand what the name means: not the historical figure, not the mythological being, and not even the literary character. Instead he wonders what the name entails, the statistics and characterization implied by such a name as Pyramus. In a comical way, Shakespeare has Bottom understand the gravity with which one must play the part of one of poetry’s greatest lovers by *first* having Bottom inquire as to what is in his name. Quince is answering Juliet’s inquiry in the most fundamental way for Bottom. According to Shakespeare, the basic method of explaining a name is what it means in a production, or representation of any story. For Shakespeare, dramatic art *was*

the ontological way of defining humanity. And as identity serves as the foundation of *individual* humanity, it is fitting that Shakespeare placed so much importance on names, the verbal indicators of identity. Dramatic art, theatre, imparts the greatest examples of verisimilitude in artistic expression; these were (and still are 400 years later) *real* people in *real* clothing, speaking *real* words. Yes, they're all prescribed roles (including and especially the text itself) within a representation, a piece of art, but the application of the text to real-life scenarios carves another facet of human identity into the already dialogic and "everyday" art form. The name of the character, then, is an empty vessel to be filled by whatever the poet – or playwright or author – and then the audience desires.

Shakespeare fills his characters' names with their very core identities, expressed through the dramatist's greatest skill: his creatively clever manipulation of the English language and all of its roots. Thus, a Shakespearean character's name and the subsequent onomastic study of it is no less important than his romping play with the word "will" in his sonnets, the malapropisms uttered by Dogberry, or the thematic multivalency of "nobility" and "honor" in his histories and tragedies. Dogberry's name, and the base pun within, is not present merely for an aural joke; it gives him the verbal flaws and comically stupid demeanor that audiences have come to cherish within the myriad productions of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Albert Howard Carter believes much to be learned from the few purposefully assembled letters of a name – a word -- that construct a character's initial identity. He states:

In my studies of the relation of imagery and characterization in Shakespeare, one of the first "images" I have had to deal with is the name of the character. And in

the interpretation of any image, questions soon arise concerning the meaning of its terms. The critic's duty is to assemble as many meanings as he can and to choose from them those which enrich the total meanings and the most appropriate to the other elements of the play. Names like Mistress Overdone, Slender, Shallow, Dull, Fang, Simple, and Sir Toby Belch are transparent and give the audience (or actor or director) immediate clues to the personality of the character. (33)

Carter's inclusion of the "director or actor" helps reinforce the notion that these plays, and their various names and meanings, exist equally in both the library, classroom, and on stage. In a succinct consideration of any scholar's work, Carter also reminds us the dual purpose for these plays: to be read and watched live. Furthermore, Carter's words are particularly appropriate for this dissertation (and closing chapter), as they highlight the duty of the onomastic critic. If there is so much embedded linguistically in Shakespeare's names – and I believe I have argued there is – then these names, these words, should be catalogued similarly to all of the other language that Shakespeare manipulates. An etymological dictionary which considers the roots within Shakespeare's names would help condense the discourse of Shakespearean linguistics as a whole. This conclusion bolsters ideas of such a dictionary belonging both in the library and the theater, just as the subject of this dissertation -- Shakespeare's onomastically fascinating characters -- functions in both arenas of learning. Scholar or researcher, director or actor can pick up the eventual product of this dissertation and use its purpose to develop their form (whether it be a scholarly endeavor or a fine-tuning of one's craft). Scholars would have vital information, I believe, in furthering studies of Shakespeare's dramatic purpose, and directors and actors would have a potential roadmap for a character's progression throughout the play.

Furthermore, this conclusion proposes several oddities in Shakespeare's naming practices. For example the name Autolycus translates to the unique characterization of "self-wolf"; what this could mean and possibly entails for the clown is indeed puzzling. Is he a lone wolf as the clown? Shakespeare often isolated his clowns as vital characters boasting some of the most beautiful and memorable passages in the canon. He is a charming rascal, though, who sells what he steals from other characters (Dunton-Downer 420). He works his way into situations through falsehood, through sheep's clothing perhaps. Late in the play, Autolycus engages in a discussion with the character actually named "Clown"; here we witness two wits battle with words in a comic scene to bridge major portions of the play's action, along with Time's expository soliloquy. It proceeds:

CLOWN How do you now?

AUTOLYCUS Sweet sir, much better than I was. I can stand, and walk. I will even take

my leave of you, and pace softly towards my kinsman's.

CLOWN Shall I bring thee on the way?

AUTOLYCUS No, good-faced sir, no, sweet sir.

CLOWN Then fare thee well. I must go buy spices for our sheep-shearing.

AUTOLYCUS Your purse is not hot enough to purchase your spice. I'll be with you at your sheep-shearing, too. If I make not this cheat bring out another, and the shearers prove sheep, let me be unrolled and my name put in the book of virtue.

(4.3.109-22)

He uses his own roguish behavior to "out" those of a similar disposition. Perhaps the "self" simply refers to his identity, his being, and the "wolf" is the vehicle, which rounds out the metaphor.

Also, Shakespeare bends gender by having both a male and female Baptista in his plays. The father of Kate and Bianca is quite different from *Hamlet's* Player Queen.

Why such a difference with the same name? What makes this clear Biblical allusion androgynous? Baptista and the character which the Player Queen enacts lose or have lost their spouses. Large portions of their identities, then, are ripped away. The name indicates this rending of an individual's greatest physical (the head and face) and verbal (the name) features. These unique situations, I believe, round out a clear discussion and presentation of Shakespearean onomastic tendency by just adhering to the fact that no concept or experimentation with form in Shakespeare's works is ever concrete. Instead, it is a constantly evolving series of discoveries that the crafty playwright left much open to interpretation by providing so much – as in the case of his names – at such a basic level.

Finally, this dissertation serves as a stepping stone for the more exhaustive project following it: the dictionary itself. This dissertation exists to set the theoretical framework of the larger project as well as provide demonstration of the individual entries. The appendix will provide this demonstration.

### **The Page and Stage: The Dictionary's Dual Purpose**

Frederick Kiefer, in *Shakespeare's Visual Theatre*, states, "If there was any place in Renaissance England that managed to combine, on the one hand, the word (spoken and written) so prized by Queen Elizabeth, and, on the other, the visual display enjoyed by so many, it was the theatre" (8). This claim is perfectly viable for the English Renaissance, and theatre, for modern audiences, exists for the dual purpose of both listening and watching, reading and performing, in order to gain a better understanding of the world or simply to be entertained. Theaters, the physical buildings in which dramatic art is

reproduced, have often been linked with encyclopedic pedagogy. In Elizabeth's Renaissance, a theatergoer could truly witness Aristotle's dual purpose of poetics: to entertain *and* to edify. A regular theatre patron could visit the theatre and gain a history lesson, for example, though perhaps altered by dramatic convention. Nonetheless, the playhouses did present forms of knowledge for the viewing audience. I return, naturally, to my discussion of *Romeo and Juliet*. This play has endured one of the most exciting and yet overdone performance histories in all of drama. It is the constant for high school drama clubs and classes, an indicator of the profuse love for "the Bard." In the Riverside edition of Shakespeare's works, the introduction to *Romeo and Juliet* highlights its critical tradition as one of less consideration than his other tragedies. *Romeo and Juliet* was unique in that it left much of the fate of the characters up to chance and is thus unlike the other tragic plays of his "great period." However, Shakespeare's concerns in the play transcend those of the text and its contents. In Tudor-Stuart England, the reading of plays simply for the purpose of reading them was a status reserved mainly for closet dramas of the period. And *Romeo and Juliet* is far from the ensconced consideration of plays such as Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam: Queen of Jewry* or Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. Shakespeare understood the audience's participation in shaping and molding a piece of drama for its sustainability as well as being fully confident in his ability as a protopsychological writer. Shakespeare bore the audience in mind just as much as considering archetypal and invented characterizations of some of drama's most celebrated figures.

Furthermore, Shakespeare became increasingly familiar with classical modes of thought and belief through his primary education as a mayor's son and his involvement with the encyclopedic nature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres – theirs was an arena of knowledge just as it was that of entertainment. Though Plato denounces poets for this very reason – that the conveyance of knowledge from a poet or dramatist is tertiary at best – one could visit the theatre and learn a kind of history or receive a kind of knowledge, from which one could perchance deduce “fact.” But even this was hardly Shakespeare's concern in his tragedies, for example. Shakespeare wrote tragedy – of *Romeo and Juliet* – as an indicator of the human condition and the human ability to search introspectively and philosophize outwardly. Shakespeare espouses some of the greatest thoughts on human Nature in his tragedies, and, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare discusses that of feuding and the problems and dangers it creates or resembles. Modes of thought expressed in Shakespeare's tragedies, namely *Romeo and Juliet*, can be found all throughout rhetorical tradition, from those who preceded him to those who, later, could consider him in light of other previous and current inquiries into the human narrative.

I use *Romeo and Juliet* here as merely an example that Shakespeare was participating in more than just the reproduction of conventional forms. Any “rules” or standards that existed regarding these forms were there to be bent and laterally explored. The names, then, the very moments of identity for his characters that bend and explore these standards, must be considered the same way. And they can't just be considered thus in the library or classroom. Just as every element of Shakespearean drama, these

names must be heard, they must be performed at some point. We remember Hamlet's discovery:

HAMLET

For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players  
Play something like the murder of my father  
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;  
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,  
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil: and the devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds  
More relative than this: the play's the thing  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.  
(2.2.595-607)

What theatrical organization at some point *hasn't* used the above phrase to define the importance of theatrics in inspiring or moving audience members emotionally? Perhaps it is taken out of context, but it nonetheless indicates Shakespeare's belief in avid production and performance of dramatic art. The less production, the less representation, there is, the *less* it exists as a whole art form. To this end, the dictionary proposed herein would certainly have a place in the hands of directors and actors as well as scholars and linguistic inquirers. Much of what Shakespeare "intended" for his characters resides in his names and can help shape dramatic interpretations of some of literature's most beloved figures.

Juliet makes her inquiry to the night sky, as she is ignorant of the fact that Romeo is within earshot. So much of Shakespeare's greatest "love" tragedy is steeped in

ignorance; it is the “not-knowing” that ultimately dooms the two families to losing their most prized possessions: any chance for a future. Once again, *Romeo and Juliet* separates itself from the other tragedies, from the other plays as a whole, by having the promise of an optimistic future slain before their very eyes. Verona has no Malcolm. It has no Edgar. It has no Henry VII. It has no Touchstone, no Jaques, no Benedick and Beatrice, no Claudio and Hero to speak of, to remind us as audience members what is true that can be found in comedy. Juliet, Romeo, Paris, Mercutio, Tybalt – all young – will not be returning like Marina. In fact the only things left in Verona for its future are two names, which have been stripped of their prominence and nobility through selfishness, unwarranted aggression, and plain ignorance. At the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, the names of Montague and Capulet are left empty, devoid of any meaning except a tainted shadow of a memory of, at one time, two households both alike in dignity. Juliet does get her wish. Juliet’s and her Romeo’s tale perhaps stings the most because of their innocence and youth, but they are the only characters whom Shakespeare allows to separate from their names’ original purpose-driven form. He let them go, and let audiences for generations to come partially answer Juliet’s question -- “What’s in a name?” -- with “humanity.”

## WORKS CITED

- Bakhtin, M. M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*.  
Ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Trans. By Vadim Liapunov.  
Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- . *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*. Ed. by Michael Holquist and Garyl  
Emerson. Trans. by Vern M. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- . *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov.  
Trans. By Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.
- Barnhart, Clarence L. "The Selection of Proper Names in English Dictionaries." *Names  
and their Varieties: a collection of essays in onomastics*. Comp. by Kelsie B.  
Harder. New York: University Press of America, 1986.
- Barton, Anne. "Shakespeare and the Limits of Language." *Shakespeare Survey* 24  
(1971), 19-30.
- Bell, Millicent. *Shakespeare's Tragic Skepticism*. New Haven: Yale University Press,  
2002.
- Brooks, Douglas A. "Sir John Oldcastle and the Construction of Shakespeare's  
Authorship." *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 38 (Spring 1998): 333-361.
- Brown, John Russell. *A.C. Bradley on Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Concise Edition and  
Reassessment*. London: Palgrave, 2007.
- Brown, John Russell. *Shakespeare and his Comedies*. London: Routledge, 1962.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Counter-statement*. Los Altos: Hermes, 1931.

- Carter, Albert Howard. "On The Meaning Of Characters' Names In Shakespeare."  
 Mississippi Quarterly, 14:1 (1960/1961: Winter) p. 33.
- Colie, Rosalie. *Shakespeare's Living Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.
- . *Some Facets of King Lear: Essays in Prismatic Criticism*. Toronto: University  
 of Toronto Press, 1974.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Literature*. Ed. by Derek Attridge. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Dunton-Downer, Leslie and Riding, Alan eds. *Essential Shakespeare Handbook*.  
 London, Dorling Kindersley, 2004.
- Empson, William. *Structures of Complex Words*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1989.
- Garber, Marjorie. "Descanting on Deformity: *Richard III* and the Shape of History."  
*Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. by R.J.C. Watt. London: Longman, 2002.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New  
 York and London: W.W. Norton, 2004.
- Grimaud, Michel. "Hermeneutics, Onomastics, and Poetics in English and French  
 Literature." *Modern Language Notes* 92, No. 5 (1977), pp. 888–921.
- Hamilton, Sharon. *Shakespeare's Daughters*. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland &  
 Company, 2003.
- Hazlitt, William. *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*. London: Macmillan, 1925.
- Healy, Margaret. "Pericles and the Fox." *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*. Ed.  
 by Jennifer Richards and James Knowles. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University  
 Press, 1999.

- Honigmann, E.A.J. *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies Revisited*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Hudson, Henry Norman. *Shakespeare: His Life, art, and Characters: With an Historical Sketch of the Origin and Growth of the Drama in England*. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1902.
- Jackson, Howard. *Lexicography: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare's Language*. London: Penguin, 2001.
- Kiefer, Frederick. *Shakespeare's Visual Theatre: Staging the Personified Characters*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Leech, Clifford. "The Two Noble Kinsmen." *The Arden Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. London: Arden, 2006.
- Malkiel, Yakov. *Etymological Dictionaries: A Tentative Typology*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Newman, Karen. *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character: Dramatic convention in Classical and Renaissance comedy*. New York and London: Methuen, 1985.
- Nutt, Joe. *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Late Plays*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Patterson, Annabel. *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Reid, Robert Lanier. *Shakespeare's Tragic Form*. London: AUP, 2000.
- Rosenblatt, Louise. *Literature as Exploration*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1995.

- Rosenblatt, Louise. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.
- Sadowski, Piotr. *Dynamism of Character in Shakespeare's Mature Tragedies*. London: AUP, 2003.
- Smart, John S. "Shakespeare's Italian Names." *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Jul., 1916), p. 339.
- Sokol, B.J. and Mary. *Shakespeare's Legal Language: A Dictionary*. London: Athlone, 2000.
- Stokes, Francis Griffin. *A Dictionary of the Characters & Proper Names in the Works of Shakespeare*. London: George G. Harrap & Company, 1924.
- Thomson, W.H. *Shakespeare's characters: A historical dictionary*. Norwood: Norwood, 1978.
- Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997.
- Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare: The Poet and his Plays*. London: Methuen, 1994.
- Wells, Stanley et al., eds. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2005.
- Young, Alan R. "Prospero's Table: The Name of Shakespeare's Duke of Milan." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer, 1979), pp. 408-410.

### **Dictionaries Used**

- Handford, S.A. and Herberg, Mary. *Langenscheidt Latin – English and English - Latin Dictionary*. Berlin: Langenscheidt KG, 2003.
- Harper Collins Dictionaries. *Collins Latin Dictionary*. Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1996.

Langenscheidt Editorial Staff. *Langenscheidt Universal French Dictionary*. New York:

Langenscheidt, 2008.

Langenscheidt Editorial Staff. *Langenscheidt Universal Italian Dictionary*. New York:

Langenscheidt, 2008.

Oxford Dictionaries. *Oxford Italian Minidictionary*. Oxford: OUP, 2005.

## APPENDIX: AN INDEX OF SEVERAL OF THE “B” NAMES

What follows is a list of sample entries as they would appear in the eventual dictionary proposed in this dissertation. I have selected several onomastic and linguistic qualities of the names to illuminate their overall purposes in the texts. This list is, by no means, exhaustive; it merely serves as a fundamental example of how the dictionary may appear. The entries are listed alphabetically, including: the name of the character, the gender of the character, the play in which he or she appears, information regarding the etymological root of the name (if there is one), and then various notes and questions regarding other linguistic presentations of the name such as historical or cultural contexts. Ultimately, what appears below is the theory put into practice and an indication of the forthcoming lexicon. Some definitions are direct excerpts from the dissertation above put into entry form; others are new discoveries developed during the writing of this appendix. The following play abbreviations are ordered alphabetically by genre, just as in the dissertation itself.

### **The Comedies**

***AWtEW:** All's Well that Ends Well*

***CoE:** Comedy of Errors*

***LLL:** Love's Labor's Lost*

***MfM:** Measure for Measure*

***MoV:** The Merchant of Venice*

***MWW:** The Merry Wives of Windsor*

*MSND: A Midsummer Night's Dream*

*MAAN: Much Ado About Nothing*

*TotS: The Taming of the Shrew*

*TN: Twelfth Night*

**The Tragedies**

*Ham: Hamlet*

*Mac: Macbeth*

*Oth: Othello*

*R&J: Romeo and Juliet*

**The Histories and Roman Plays**

*Corio: Coriolanus*

*1 HenIV: Henry IV Part 1*

*2 HenIV: Henry IV Part 2*

*2 HenVI: Henry VI part 2*

*HenV: Henry V*

*HenVIII: Henry VIII*

*JC: Julius Caesar*

*KJ: King John*

*RichII: Richard II*

*RichIII: Richard III*

*TA: Titus Andronicus*

## **The Late Plays and Romances**

*Cym: Cymbeline*

*Per: Pericles*

*Temp: The Tempest*

### **B**

**BALTHASAR (male, *CoE, MoV, MAAN, R&J*):** The name “Balthasar” is Phoenecian in origin and would have been in Shakespeare’s onomastic repertoire probably because of Biblical, historical, or other theatrical sources. Biblically, it is the traditional name of one of the three magi (along with Melchior and Caspar). The name literally means “God, or lord protector.” Conversely, however, Shakespeare’s Balthasars all appear as either merchants or, for the most part, servants to the main characters in the play. Romeo, Don Pedro, and Portia all have “Balthasars,” and Antipholus of Ephesus has a brief exchange with a Balthasar who advises him not to pound on the door of the inn after being locked out. Shakespeare’s “Balthasars” serve as assistants while also performing advisor duties. In a way, they do act as protectors, in that the advice they give or devices they perform greatly aid the progression of Shakespeare’s plays and character development.

**BANQUO (male, *Mac*):** The name, of course, is Scottish but also carries a French root, namely in the word it mirrors. Macbeth’s right-hand man, Banquo, bears a name rife with information regarding his conventional purpose. Primarily, his name includes the first five letters of the word “banquet”; audience members practically hear the word every time his name is uttered by the treacherous and murderous king. Of course, Banquo has

heard the prophecy and doubts his king; his death comes unsurprisingly quickly and immediately catapults the Scottish world into more turmoil. Death stacks upon death, murder upon murder, and all that is left is the tormented memory of Banquo. The names of Shakespeare's Scottish setting reflect the circumstance and place, reminding the audience of the locations and actions that are pivotal to an understanding of this play. Shakespeare's onomastic purpose here appears more conventional than aesthetic. He entreats the audience to be aware of the situation, as perhaps it does not have that much time to let the events settle.

**BAPTISTA Minola (male, *TotS*; female, *Ham.*):** The name "Baptista" carries obvious allusions to the New Testament. Shakespeare bends gender by having both a male and a female Baptista in his plays. The father of Kate and Bianca is quite different from *Hamlet's* Player Queen. Why such a difference with the same name? What makes this clear Biblical allusion androgynous? Both lose their heads respectively: Baptista and the character which the Player Queen enacts loss or have lost their spouses. It is perhaps a stretch to say the Baptistas' loved ones are their "heads"; however, large portions of their identities are ripped away. The name indicates this rending of an individual's greatest physical (the head and face) and verbal (the name) features. These unique situations, I believe, round out a clear discussion and presentation of Shakespearean onomastic tendency by just adhering to the fact that no concept or experimentation with form in Shakespeare's works is ever concrete. The surname Minola exhibits multivalent possibilities as well. First, the Latin *minaret* means "to subvert." This is an underhanded

form of forced change, which multiple characters enact through disguise, chicanery, deceit, and “taming.” It is furthermore appropriate that the Minolas are the central family in the play, as the suitors all are after several “mines,” including the treasure of both women’s love and companionship. *Hamlet’s* Baptista’s husband is poisoned through the ear, into the head, making another connection to that part of the body.

**BARDOLPH (male, 1 & 2 *HenIV*, *MWW*, *Henry V*):** Bardolph is one of the hapless followers of Falstaff who, along with Pistol and Nym, round out some of Shakespeare’s graver historical settings with moments of levity and comic relief. His name is probably a bastardized and Anglicanized version of Bartleby, or Bartholemew, another Biblical allusion. His more simple and rustic name indicates his status in the multiple plays. First, he is subservient to Falstaff and later becomes a tapster at the Garter Inn in Shakespeare’s recreation of Falstaff’s character in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The Garter Inn is run by Doll Tearsheet, of course, and one can hear and see her name within his even. Bardolph’s name in many ways indicates his serving-class status throughout the canon.

**BARNARDINE (male, *MfM*):** The name “Barnardine” is most likely a bastardized version of “Bernard,” a popular English name containing the German for “bear.” It means “hardy and strong.” Shakespeare’s unruly and uncouth prisoner from *Measure for Measure* has a name which reflects his unkempt personality. We are only privy to the name in passing and mentioning throughout the majority of the play, as characters discuss

him as a prisoner who is sentenced to execution. Barnardine's personality is certainly strong, as he strings together swears and curses, which he hurls at unwitting characters in Shakespeare's dark comedy. However, his name is feminized with the *-dine* ending and further stripped of the name's dignity through a seemingly purposeful misspelling of the French *Bernardine*.

**BARNARDO (male, *Ham*):** Barnardo has another name in the Shakespearean canon (this time, tragedy) that reflects the English name "Bernard." Again, the name contains the German word for "bear" – *bern* – and elicits meanings of strength, fortitude, and hardiness. Barnardo is famous for having the first lines of *Hamlet*: "Who's there?" These words indicate the desolate landscape that is now Denmark, the disorientation that now pervades Hamlet's father's kingdom. Indeed it is so stark and foreboding that even the strongest guards, like Barnardo and Marcellus, are made afraid.

**BASSANIO (male, *MoV*):** Bassanio's name is Latinate, with connections to the *basio*, meaning to "to kiss." Kissing being a sign of revelry, celebration, and love, here, Shakespeare also imbues one of his male characters with "music" in his very name. The word "bass" begins the character's name and ends with a aural flourish that echoes a playing style in a symphony. Indeed, Bassanio speaks only of mirth and love throughout the play; he is hopelessly in love with Portia and is unconditionally devoted to his friend Antonio. Furthermore, the first words out of his mouth – "Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? say, when?/You grow exceeding strange: must it be so?" – indicate his

pleasing disposition and lighthearted and carefree attitude toward life. Bassanio only speaks love and mirth and does so as though he himself is an instrument which is masterfully played.

**BASSIANUS (male, TA):** Bassianus' name is **Latinate**, which is an obvious choice for *Titus Andronicus*. However, his name in Latin, especially with the root *basio-*, refers to the act of kissing and "to kiss." Naturally it fits as he is Lavinia's suitor and love; this connection also relates to the entry regarding Bassanio. It is interesting to note that Lavinia is in love with someone whose name refers to the mouth and tongue, after which she is robbed of her own speech through violent means. Furthermore, the name also contains the Latinate *basis*, which refers to "foundation" and "basic" structure. Bassianus is part of the fundamental and governmental structure as prince and brother to Saturninus. Also partially present is the beginning of the Latin *basilicus*, an adjective which means "royal" or "princely."

**BEATRICE (female, MAAN):** The obvious root here is **Latinate**, especially with the prefix *beat-*, referring to "blessing." Her name, like her male counterpart, Benedick, also refers to "good speech," an ironic twist on the blatantly fire-tongued shrew who spurns all who come near her with insults, barbs, or generally sarcastic eloquence. Ultimately, one thinks of the Beatitudes in the New Testament. These serve as the pinnacle of "blessed speech" in most of Western literature, as Christ displayed to his disciples those on Earth who would ultimately be "blessed." It is literally a speech about blessing.

Beatrice's personality and behavior throughout the majority of the play acts in contrast to the peaceful and blessed words that Christ utters during the Sermon on the Mount. The last half of her name, the *-trice*, may contain an Italianate and Latinate root meaning "sadness." It seems possible that Shakespeare imbued his saucy heroine with dolor, a longing for Benedick's love (just as he had for her), all guised by her sharp wit and "infinite jests." Ultimately, Beatrice too succumbs to orthography, and her speech is turned blessed by the end of the play, speaking words of love and affection for her new ally in the language of relationships and marriage.

**BELARIUS (male, *Cym*):** Again, the **Latinate** root here is an obvious choice, as the play is set in Roman Britain. His name contains the roots *bello-* or *belli-*, both of which refer to "war" and adjectival words and phrases such as "warlike." Though, the name in this case is supposed to be British or Celtic; it is an appropriated name and subsequent meaning. It can easily refer to a temperamental disposition, which Belarius certainly has just cause to exhibit. He is unjustly banished from Cymbeline's court and later retaliates by abducting two of the king's heirs when they were babies. He even speaks of aggression and war to Cymbeline's children:

How you speak!  
Did you but know the city's usuries  
And felt them knowingly; the art o' the court  
As hard to leave as keep; whose top to climb  
Is certain falling, or so slippery that  
The fear's as bad as falling; the toil o' the **war**,  
A pain that only seems to seek out danger...  
(3.3, bold mine)

Interestingly enough, his name nearly perfectly echoes the Latin *bellaria*, which means “fruit” or “dessert.” Perhaps there is some connection to Cymbeline getting his “just desserts” by unjustly banishing Belarius in the first place.

**BELCH, Sir Toby (male, TN):** The surname here is an obvious remark at Sir Toby’s rude and uncouth disposition. This is one of Shakespeare’s more conventional onomastic tendencies: to name a character after his or her behavior and attitude, so the audience will be clued in from the outset as to what kind of character it was witnessing. Sir Toby Belch loves drinking and merriment, and his surname is usually a literal and physical result of both. He is rude and plays tricks and pranks on Sir Andrew as well as annoying Malvolio. He fully intends to do “some notable shame” to Malvolio. Indeed, like a potent burp, Sir Toby too is difficult to contain; he even references this early on in the play:

Confine! I'll confine myself no finer than I am:  
these clothes are good enough to drink in; and so be  
these boots too: an they be not, let them hang  
themselves in their own straps.

(1.3)

He cannot and will not be confined and will cause chaotic revelry throughout the play.

**BENEDICK (male, MAAN):** The obvious root here is **Latinate**, especially with the prefix *bene-*, meaning “good” or “well.” The suffix “dick-” (or, in Latin, *-dic*) refers to speech or speaking, and indicates a plethora of meanings (“dictions,” “dictate,”

“dictator,” “dictation,” etc.). Thus, after Shakespeare has fused the Latinate words, the result is “good speech” or “blessing.” One also might think of a “benediction,” or the blessed closing words that a pastor imparts to his or her congregation after a religious service. One might even consider the Benedictine order or monks who, of course, followed the Rule of St. Benedict, especially Chapter 6 which dictates complete and humble moderation of speech. Altogether, these are completely contradictory assignments to the character in Shakespeare’s play. **Benedick** emits anything *but* “good speech,” especially to his verbal sparring partner **Beatrice**. However, by the end of the play, **Benedick** has transformed into a speaker of good intent: “Come, come, we are friends, let’s have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives’ heels” (5.4.116-118). Also, he finally expresses his true feelings to his newly beloved **Beatrice**. **Benedick** is also referred to as “**Signor Mountanto**” by **Beatrice**, a bawdy pun indicating his carnal appetite. See **MOUNTANTO** for further inferences of the nick-name.

**BENVOLIO (male, R&J):** First, we find the Latinate root *bene-*, which, as indicated before, refers to “good” or “well.” Second, the *vol-* part of the last two-thirds of his name refers to “willingness,” as we find in words like “volunteer.” Benvolio acts as an envoy of peace between the two families in *Romeo and Juliet*, oftentimes using diplomacy to deter the families’ violent behaviors. Though he does participate in the frays, Benvolio always tries to resist such action at first. We find Benvolio relating the issues to his own family members; he serves as an expository element of the play, one

who is willing to present information. He does end up fighting with Tybalt, which is shortly interrupted by the city guard. But, primarily, he attempts to stop the fighting and promote, as he says, “peace.” His name reflects this nature with a two-fold Latinate meaning. Benvolio is always willing to avoid confrontation if necessary and attempts to deliver the news in “good” speech. He always delivers the exposition in verse, adding poetic qualities to the most grave and severe of news. Furthermore, he generally is affable and congenial as Romeo’s best friend and confidante. Shakespeare makes this first known to the audience right at Benvolio’s first entrance in the play. Just after Samson replies to Gregory with, “Yes, better, sir,” the onomastic embodiment of “better” or “goodness” enters.

**BERTRAM (male, *AWtEW*):** The name Bertram comes from old German meaning “bright raven.” The German roots of *beraht* (bright) and *hrahm* (raven) are clearly present in the name. As a ward of the King of France, Bertram is bid to marry Helena but instead flees to Florence. As a “bright raven,” Bertram is both young and promising but quickly becomes an outcast because of his refusal to marry Helena. His name is an oxymoron just as his character exhibits both positive and negative qualities as a young subject under the King of France. He also serves as the Count of Rossillion, under his mother the Countess.

**BIANCA (female, *TotS*; *female, Oth.*):** Bianca’s name exhibits the direct Italian for “white” or “pure.” Bianca is constantly referred to with a loving and endearing adjective

appearing before her name. Under the **BAPTISTA** entry, it is discussed how the surname “Minola” exhibits how both daughters’ purity and love are treasures for the suitors. Similarly, both daughters have names which indicate purity. Rarely do the suitors discuss Baptista’s younger daughter without first saying “sweet” or “fair.” Indeed, she is the ultimate prize of purity in the world of *Taming of the Shrew*. The name appears once more in Shakespeare’s canon, this time in one of his greatest tragedies. Here, Shakespeare uses the name oxymoronically, as Bianca in *Othello* is a courtesan who adores Cassio beyond their usual meetings. She, in turn, loves him much more in an unrequited relationship. But perhaps Bianca is purer than most characters in Shakespeare’s bleak Venetian tragedy. She lost her chastity and virginity years ago, but her love for Cassio is real and demands consideration for being pure.

**BIONDELLO (male, TotS):** Biondello’s name contains the Italian *biondo*, which means “blonde.” There is not much indicating why this reference indicates some characteristic. However the Latinate *bi-* at the beginning of his name does refer to “two”; he is the second servant to Lucentio, behind Tranio, and ends up “acting” as Tranio’s servant when Lucentio poses as Bianca’s Latin tutor.

**BLANCHE (female, KJ):** Like Bianca, Shakespeare has another one of his pure and innocent young women characters bear a name meaning “clean” and “white.” In fact, Blanche is a modified version of the Latinate *Bianca*, translated into French. In *King John*, Blanche is the niece of the King and ends up marrying the Dauphin, connecting the

two realms with her chastity and purity.

**BORACHIO (male, MAAN):** Both Italian and Spanish offer directly appropriate vocabulary: a *borracia* in Italian is a flask; in Spanish, *borrachero* means “drunk.” As discussed, the names in *Much Ado* reflect speech, talk, business, and, in general, communication. Consequentially, all of these purpose-driven forms center on the subject of fraternal, platonic, and romantic love. They range from basic references to more complex plays with vocabulary. The drunken villain Borachio exudes an inebriated speech; the drink even causes him to confess. *In vino veritas*, indeed, Shakespeare seems to suggest.

**BOTTOM, Nick (male, MSND):** Here, Shakespeare chuckles in appropriating for Nick the weaver the surname “Bottom.” The clear meanings are all present; his character is of lower class and rude disposition. He is literally at the bottom of the social order because of his demeanor and status. Furthermore, he is given a donkey’s head by the mischievous Titania as part of a hex. Thus, the name “Bottom” also connects to the “ass” that Nick eventually (and literally) becomes. Furthermore, his arrogance and annoying boastfulness also make him an “ass” of sorts:

**BOTTOM**

Let me play the lion too. I will roar that I will do any man’s heart good to hear me. I will roar that I will make the Duke say ‘Let him roar again; let him roar again.’ (1.2.66-9)

**BOULT (male, *Per*):** Though a small part, Boulton ends up providing a good deal of help for Pericles' lost daughter Marina. While trapped in the brothel, Marina seeks out Boulton's aid in verifying her innocence and purity. He uses witty rhetoric to trick some of the "suitors" of whom Marina's sick. His name directly points to the speed with which he says his witty lines, his character's niche. Plus, a "bolt" is an arrow used for a cross-bow as well as a slang term for "to speedily go." Both of these help represent the speed with which he helps Marina.

**BRUTUS (male, *JC*):** Little needs to be said about one of Rome's greatest and most infamous conspirators. His name conjures meanings of strength and power. However, it is interesting to note that the Latin *brutus* literally means "heavy, inert, or stupid." Shakespeare of course plays adversely with these meanings, as Brutus speaks one of the most famous and politically inspiring soliloquies in the canon. He is intelligent and poised, and his rhetoric is classically beautiful, though hiding a traitor.

**BULLEN, Anne (female, *Henry VIII*):** Here, Shakespeare elects to Anglicanize the spelling of Anne Boleyn's surname. She is a lady-in-waiting that later becomes the second famous queen of Henry VIII. By making her name sound and appear more English, Shakespeare reinforces the English-ness of his late history play. After all, he was writing about Elizabeth's father and still wished to convey the greatness of the Tudor house.