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Shakespeare's Defence of Verse

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1 vol.

Doctor of Philosophy in English

September 2017

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

English

Doctor of Philosophy

SHAKESPEARE'S DEFENCE OF VERSE

by Robert Stagg

'I heard a fair lady sigh: "I wish someone would write a good treatise on prosody"' (Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (1934))[1]

  This thesis is about Shakespeare's prosody, and it tries to be good. The first section is composed of four chapters, each of which examines one of the four metrical traditions available to early modern writers (quantitative prosody in Chapter 1, rhyming verse in Chapter 2, syllabic prosody in Chapter 3 and accentual prosody in Chapter 4) and what Shakespeare may have brought or wrought from it. It evokes how many of the things we have valued in Shakespeare – the sophistication of onstage action (Chapter 1), the wild sequences of language (Chapter 2), the verisimilar worlds of the plays (Chapter 3), the unusually 'deep' characters (Chapter 4) – have origins in his handling of metre and rhythm. The second part of the thesis considers how Shakespeare uneasily binds these four prosodic inheritances, and what they gave him, into a new blank verse (Chapter 5) which frequently risks something like free verse (Chapter 6). In doing all of this, it hopes to uncover Shakespeare's 'defence of verse' – the treatise he never wrote.

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[1] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961 [1934]), p.197.

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Fig. 1: 'I Came For The Dick Jokes', from www.imgarcade.com.

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Note on Conventions:

Early modern texts have been modernised, except where otherwise stated. Effects of prosodic stress (or quantity) are communicated by use of bold font; other kinds of emphasis by use of italic font.

Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, Robert Stagg,

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

SHAKESPEARE'S DEFENCE OF VERSE

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as: SEE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Signed: ROBERT STAGG

Date: 19/09/2017

Acknowledgments:

Introduction

Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* (1595) is not a defence of verse. While he acknowledges that 'the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numbrous kind of writing which is called *verse*', Sidney regards it as an 'ornament and no cause to poetry, since there have been many excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets'.[2] Poetry is instead, for Sidney, an Aristotelian 'imitation' unbound by form or subject – so that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (c.370BC) can be 'an absolute heroical poem' even though Xenophon 'wrote in prose'.[3] Like Sidney, the 'freely-ranging poet' is a traveller, taking with him 'a great passport of poetry' – a passport that can admit him into the prose realms of the 'philosopher' and 'historiographer'.[4] The poet is 'lifted up with the vigour of his own invention', disdaining 'to be tied' to any 'subjection', whereas the 'versifier' – a word which assumes a pejorative colour in the early sixteenth century (*OED* 2) – risks being cramped or circumscribed by his metres.[5] For Sidney, this distinction between poetry and verse was something of a 'grammarians['] dispute'.[6] Maybe it still seems so today. Yet it has informed our more modern sense of there being a prose-poetry or a poetic prose, and has formed part of the rationale for nineteenth and twentieth century free verse.

The distinction between poetry and verse is older than Sidney, though not as old as he thought. It came to him from Italy. In the treatise *On True Poetry* (1555) Giovanni Pietro Capriano had divided *poeti perfetti* from *versificatori bassi* and *metrici semplicissimi*, and Lodovico Castelvetro's commentary upon Aristotle (1570) judged that 'the *Electra* of Sophocles, put into prose, would remain poetry, not change into history'.[7] Sixteenth-century Italian Platonists objected to this Aristotelian distinction, arguing that 'verse is so proper and essential to poetry that it is necessary for it, and that poetry can neither be made nor be without verse' – in short, that 'verse makes poetry'.[8]

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[2] Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy* in *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.218.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Sidney, *Defence*, pp.216, 214.
[5] Sidney, *Defence*, pp.216, 218.
[6] Sidney, *Defence*, p.218.
[7] Giovanni Pietro Capriano, *Della Vera Poetica* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1968), p.14; Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele Vulgarizzata E Sposta*, 2 vols., ed. Werther Romani (Rome: Laterza, 1978), vol. 1, p.254. Translations by Timothy Steele in *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1990), pp.139, 141.
[8] Francesco Patrizi da Cherso, *Della Poetica* (1586), ed. Danilo Aguzzi Barbagli (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Sul Rinascimento, 1969), p.113; Lorenzo Parigiuolo, *Inquiry into Poetry* (1586), qtd. in Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), vol. 1, p.620.

However, none of these writers (on either side) observed that Aristotle never made a strong distinction between poetry and verse and never claimed that verse was inessential to poetry.[9] As Timothy Steele has shown, Aristotle's remarks about imitation were 'combined and "harmonized"' with remarks by other ancient authorities (especially Quintilian, Plutarch and Lucan), resulting in 'a clear distinction between verse and poetry, a distinction which did not exist in any of the ancient texts, but which emerged as a result of their conflation'.[10] Given that the distinction became important to the *vers librists* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we could think of free verse not (or not only) as a liberation from versification, but as the culmination of several sixteenth-century misreadings and editorial mishaps.

One 'poem' that Sidney rather likes is Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561), the first English play to be written entirely in blank verse. For Sidney it is 'the very end of poesy', albeit 'faulty both in place and time'.[11] He was notoriously less enthusiastic about other drama of the period; if his defence of poetry was not a defence of verse, it was especially not a defence of dramatic verse (unlike another sixteenth-century defence, Thomas Lodge's *Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays* (1579)). Sidney concludes his discussion of English Renaissance drama with a weary venom: 'I have lavished out too many words of this play matter'.[12] '[T]his play matter' is populated by 'gross absurdities' with 'neither decency nor discretion', 'mingling kings and clowns' in new mongrel genres which 'causeth her mother Poesy's honesty to be called in question'.[13] Sidney exempts *Gorboduc* from such criticism partly on account of the play's 'stately speeches' and 'well sounding phrases'.[14] He may have heard in its blank verse the possibility of reuniting verse with poetry and thereby of rescuing verse drama: blanks are often (dubiously) said to be a 'natural' or 'conversational' form, neither too structured nor too loose, therefore free of 'gross absurdities' but answering to 'decency' and 'discretion'.[15] Perhaps if Sidney had lived longer, or written the *Defence* later, he would have had his mind changed by the efflorescence of blank verse drama in the 1580s and 1590s (although the *Defence* was printed in 1595, it was probably composed in the late 1570s). When Sidney was writing the *Defence*, Shakespeare was a teenager; and by the time of his death in 1586, he could not have seen any of Shakespeare's plays. Had he lived to sixty, rather than thirty-two, he could have seen them all.[16]

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[9] Steele, *Missing Measures*, pp.112-131.
[10] Steele, *Missing Measures*, p.111.
[11] Sidney, *Defence*, p.243.
[12] Sidney, *Defence*, p.246.
[13] Sidney, *Defence*, pp.244, 246.
[14] Sidney, *Defence*, p.243.
[15] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House, 1954), pp.8, 47, 180; Oliver Ford Davies, *Performing Shakespeare* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007), p.30, Kirstin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992), p.122.
[16] Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Sidney: The Major Works*, pp.xvii-xviii.

While scholars have imagined Sidney's *Defence* taking note of Shakespeare's drama, they have found it harder to imagine Shakespeare's drama taking note of Sidney's *Defence*. Scholars or otherwise, we have barely thought about Shakespeare's involvement in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century debates about 'verse' (as opposed to more philosophical debates about 'poetry', such as the arguments over art, artifice and nature that surface in 4.4 and 5.3 of *The Winter's Tale* (1611)). Of the many books about Shakespeare that feature the word 'poetics' in their title, not one accommodates a sustained discussion of versification (indeed, in *Shakespeare's Poetics* (1986) Ekbert Faas deplored Shakespeare's lack of a 'widespread and serious' interest in verse, claiming that he had no 'deeper understanding of the nature of metrical language').[17] This is 'poetics' as defined by *OED* 1b ('The creative principles informing any literary, social or cultural construction') rather than by *OED* 1a ('the branch of knowledge that deals with the techniques of poetry') or *OED* 2 ('Poetic composition'); it is a kind of writing about art that avoids or occludes the artisanal. The only book-length literary criticism of Shakespeare's prosody remains George T. Wright's *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* (1988), and that was structured as a catalogue or survey of prosodic resources, not as a sustained argument or series of arguments; as a result, it assumes a form kindred to other, more statistical books about prosody (like Marina Tarlinskaja's). If Shakespeare scholarship is truly an overcrowded field, then this paucity is itself remarkable and suggestive – if only of a reluctance to think thoroughly about Shakespeare's versification and what it might do for his writing, as well as what it might imply about his relationship to other writers and to the world around (or within) him.

Shakespeare lived through important arguments about versification – and, as we shall see, participated in them too. Leaving aside Sidney's *Defence*, in which prosody can seem relatively peripheral, we could think of George Gascoigne's *Certain Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Rhyme in English* (1575), William Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetry* (1586), George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie* (1589), William Scott's *Model of Poesy* (1599), Thomas Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602) and Samuel Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* (1603). We could also think of the literary criticism (often prosodic in nature) that surfaces in satire, prologues, paratexts, prefaces, epilogues, polemic, commonplace books, letters and epideictic. As we will see (or hear), these arguments often proposed irrevocable change to the English language and, with it, English literature. Shakespeare's life was punctuated and bookended by the rediscovery of old prosodies and by new ways of thinking and writing about verse. As a schoolboy, he was raised on an obtuse neoclassical prosody; his plays began to be performed as that prosody had its sudden, political downfall; and as he entered the seventeenth century, he

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[17] Ekbert Faas, *Shakespeare's Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.7-8.

also entered heated debates about whether poetry should be allowed to rhyme. He was in the vanguard of one radical verse form (blank verse), stretching it as he reached the end of his career, and he was in the rearguard of many, more unpopular verse forms too. Finally there is – an obvious point – the fact of his writing in verse at all. He must have been lethally incurious not to have recognised this, and must have, at least occasionally, wondered why he was doing so, and what he was doing, and how he was doing it; it most likely occurred to him that his thoughts 'would not be the same thoughts, if said in prose'.[18]

Where academic work on prosody has tended toward technicality (whether in its vocabulary or its statistical presentations), other approaches to the subject have preferred an undue simplicity. In Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) Mr M'Choakumchild drilled his pupils in 'the sciences of compound proportion, algebra, land-surveying and levelling' with the list continuing, as a mixture of tedium and threat, until it reached the *ne plus ultra* 'prosody' (Mr M'Choakumchild's topics are 'at the ends of his ten chilled fingers', one finger for each of the syllables in a blank verse line).[19] In some respects, not much has changed. For a long time, prosody has been taught in schools – if at all – as a straightforward matter of the iambic pentameter, rendered to the tune of *The Pink Panther*: de-dum-de-dum-de-dum. This de-dum-de-dumbing-down of verse requires the abolition (or at least the severe constriction) of ambiguity and variety. When students encounter a line like Lear's 'Never, never, never, never, never' (F 5.3.284), which sounds the opposite of iambic, they think their ears have stopped working.[20]

If schoolroom prosody is concerned with metrical requirements, a rehearsal room prosody occupies itself with metrical instructions. Actors and directors routinely (perhaps, now, institutionally) think of Shakespeare's metre as a dramaturgical Theory of Everything – offering 'stage direction in shorthand', 'hidden hints to the actors', 'advice to the players' not from Hamlet but from Hamlet's creator.[21] In Trevor Nunn's rhapsodic sentence, 'Every clue of where to breathe, what to stress, when to run on, what to throw away, was there in the text'.[22] Abigail Rokison's *Shakespearean Verse Speaking* (2010) has best exposed the problems with such claims; we might add that Hamlet's advice to the players – let alone Shakespeare's – is different in the three available texts of the play, and was routinely cut from seventeenth-century productions. Perhaps the most objectionable aspect of this quest for prosodical 'clues' is its sometime

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[18] T.S. Omond, *English Verse Structure* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1897), p.56.
[19] Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, ed. Paul Schlicke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.10.
[20] All references to Shakespeare's works correspond to *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor, and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005 [1986]) unless stated otherwise.
[21] John Barton, *Playing Shakespeare: An Actor's Guide* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984), pp.27, 13; Peter Hall, *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players* (London: Oberon Books, 2014 [2003]).
[22] Trevor Nunn, 'Foreword' to Barton, *Playing Shakespeare*, p.x.

insistence that we 'Obey the metre!', as though Shakespeare's prosody issues a command.[23] One pleasure of attending productions of Shakespeare is to hear old lines said in new ways, not to hear old lines said in one way (if that is even conceivable or possible).

This thesis tries something different. It eschews large quantities of esoteric vocabulary and statistical data, and bends away from the dogmatism that has starched both academic and non-academic prosody. Instead, it sympathises with Gerard Manley Hopkins in a letter to Alexander Baillie: 'The most inveterate fault of critics is the tendency to cramp and hedge in by rules the free movements of genius, so that I should say, according to the Demosthenic and Catonic expression, the first requisite for a critic is liberality, and the second liberality, and the third liberality'.[24] In more Shakespearean terms, we might say that in all metrical readings there should be much virtue in 'if'. Metrical reading can evade or resist the monologic, and avoid calcifying into certainty – taking as a kind of model Linda Gregerson's description of Thomas Wyatt's 'open voicing', where 'no one voice subsumes the others; brazenly, maddeningly, provocatively, all are kept in play'.[25] That is, we can think about metre not only as an instrument of containment or definition but as, like other literary language (from which it is often separated), labile, leaky, and excessive. In attending to the literariness of metre, this thesis thinks about the things that prosody tends to miss, or doesn't (want to) try out.

Metrical criticism has long aspired to the status of science and system. In the eighteenth century, for example, Edward Manwaring tried to coin the term 'stichology' for 'the science or theory of poetic metres', and Sidney Lanier titled his later treatise on prosody *The Science of English Verse* (1880).[26] These scientific or systematic attempts at the subject usually envisage metre as governed by 'rules', whether blatantly imposed or more speciously teased out from a range of texts (as in those more or less 'generative' prosodies which aim to offer 'a formalised statement of the ways in which we perceive a regular rhythm when we read, or hear, metrical verse').[27] This thesis attends instead to the 'situated' qualities of metre: its historical situation at any given time, the way it is situated within individual works (who speaks it, at what point, under what auspices, to what effect) and the way it becomes situated in performance or recital. It is unashamed about finding meaning in, through and with metre; it thinks of all verse lines as in some sense expressive. While 'it is scarcely to be doubted that on many occasions we make the music which

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[23] This is one of Judi Dench's 'rules' for speaking Shakespeare's verse – see *Gielgud, Ashcroft, Dench: Great Shakespeareans Volume XVI*, ed. Russell Jackson (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.160.

[24] Gerard Manley Hopkins, letter to Alexander Baillie, 6 September 1863, in *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, ed. C.C. Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p.57.

[25] Linda Gregerson, 'Open Voicing: Wyatt and Shakespeare', pp.151-167 in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare's Poetry*, ed. Jonathan Post (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[26] Jason David Hall, *Seamus Heaney's Rhythmical Contract* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.12.

[27] Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry* (London: Longman, 1982), p.151.

we imagine ourselves to hear, that we modulate the poem by our own disposition, and ascribe to the numbers the effects of the sense', this is only to say (Wordsworth-like) that metre is something we half-perceive and half-create.[28] Why should that be pejorative? Simon Jarvis is frankly, and justly, blithe about it: 'Virtuosity in writing prosodic tunes calls forth an answering virtuosity in hearing them' – this need not be 'a sign of error, but a structural feature of what it is like to respond to prosodic virtuosity'.[29]

Shakespeare's Defence of Verse is divided into two sections, but that division does unifying work: it brings together (what might be loosely referred to as) an aesthetic and an historical account of Shakespeare's prosody. It also brings together what are often regarded as discrete prosodic traditions. The first section is composed of four chapters, each of which examines one of the metrical traditions available to early modern writers (quantitative prosody in Chapter 1, rhyming verse in Chapter 2, syllabic prosody in Chapter 3 and accentual prosody in Chapter 4) and what Shakespeare may have brought or wrought from it. It evokes how many of the things we have valued in Shakespeare – the sophistication of onstage action (Chapter 1), the wild sequences of language (Chapter 2), the verisimilar worlds of the plays (Chapter 3), the unusually 'deep' characters (Chapter 4) – have origins in his handling of metre and rhythm. The second part of the thesis considers how Shakespeare uneasily binds these four prosodic inheritances, and what they gave him, into a new blank verse (Chapter 5) which frequently risks something like free verse (Chapter 6).

Sometimes this involves making an argument for Shakespeare's originality or distinctiveness; at other times it involves making an argument for his belatedness or sheer normality. Often this thesis will make prosody central or foundational to other Shakespearean accomplishments, though at times it will make prosody only an element (though an important one) of a more complicated picture. Perhaps most importantly, this thesis argues for a Shakespeare dealing *imaginatively* with particular prosodies. The next chapter, for example, addressing Shakespeare's relationship to and with quantitative prosody, does not argue that Shakespeare wrote quantitative prosody as such (at least, not in English). Rather, he noticed something in quantitative prosody, and the language of quantitative prosody – the 'long' or 'short' prosodic 'foot' – that spurred his development of a gestural metre onstage. In other cases, like Chapter 2, we find Shakespeare drawing more directly and straightforwardly on a prosodic tradition (rhymed verse) although always with the rhetoric of that tradition in mind. In Chapters

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[28] Samuel Johnson, 'The Rambler No 94' (Saturday 9 Feb 1751) in *The Rambler*, 3 vols., ed. Walter Jackson Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), vol. 2, p.136.

[29] Simon Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases' (2011), pp.434-448 in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p.444.

3 and 4 we have Shakespeare idiosyncratically writing his way into metrical traditions that he may not have known much about, finding suggestion for his prosody in schoolboy phrases, commonplaces and somewhat stale figurative expressions. That is, he frequently thinks of metre in terms of its surrounding language – its puns, its metaphors, its figures, its clichés – as much as he does in terms of its technicalities and theoretical allegiances. Later in the thesis, we will see how much Shakespeare's metre is indebted to two powerful forces in the life of the early modern writer (perhaps of any writer), revenge and patronage. So Shakespeare's defence of verse need not take the form of Shakespeare's *Defence of Verse*; it can be enacted rather than codified, and can stem from myriad sources.

In a sense, then, this thesis is about the range of things metre can do or be – and how we can respond to that range. One way of responding to metre is to 'defend' it or 'apologise' for it. The title of Sidney's work has always shuffled between those two words (William Ponsonby's printing gives us Sidney's 'defense' while Henry Olney's printing gives us Sidney's 'apologie'). Indeed, the quarto editions of Sidney's sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* (printed from 1591) are subtitled 'Wherein the excellence of sweet Poesie is concluded' as though the best way to defend poetry (or verse) is to write it.[30] Or if not the best way, then at least the final way: 'concluded' rings with temporal as well as argumentative force. In an irony of his distinction between poetry and verse, maybe Sidney's conclusive defence of poetry was not *The Defense of Poesy* or *An Apologie for Poetrie*, but the verse that constitutes his poems.

We do not have Shakespeare's *Defence of Poetry*, let alone Shakespeare's *Defence of Verse*. Yet what if his verse musters its own kind of defence? Why would it need or want a defence, and what would it be defending, or defending itself from? Would a note of apology – in the modern sense – creep in, or perhaps a note of aggression (one etymology for 'defence' traces it to a Latin word for vengeance, *defensa* (*OED*))? Could his 'defence' be a verb as well as a noun, as the *OED* cautiously suggests ('defence' v.1)? Would Shakespeare's defence be defensive, or (as the gravediggers in *Hamlet* might put it) end up drowned in its own defence (5.1.6-7)? Two years ago I was talking to a friend about this thesis. He let slip the dread question: 'What if someone finds Shakespeare's *Defence of Verse* the week after you submit?' I thought this was very unlikely, and I still do. Many critics would think it more than unlikely; they would regard the existence of such a work as undesirable or uncharacteristic of Shakespeare or of dubious provenance (or all three). Even as this thesis works to recover Shakespeare's defence of verse, then, it works to repudiate the possibility of Shakespeare's *Defence of Verse* – and wonders why that repudiation should sometimes feel so necessary. As such, it risks being proved wrong (though not therefore proved

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[30] Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), p.231.

worthless) by a discovery in the archives. But if, as one literary historian famously put it, studying the past involves 'the desire to speak with the dead', it can also involve the desire to speak on the dead's behalf, or in the dead's defence, or to imagine (as livingly as possible) what that defence might be.[31]

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[31] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992 [1988]), p.1.

1: Action

As the 1570s shaded into the 1580s, two struggles for Queen Elizabeth's hand were underway. One struggle was for her hand in marriage. Early in the morning of 21 September 1578 Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, re-married. Elizabeth heard the news with unconcealed fury, and banished the Earl and his new wife (also her cousin) from court. Leicester had been a widower for eighteen years, and in that time had wooed and been wooed by Elizabeth – so much so that he kept his remarriage secret from the queen (the news only reached her through an indiscreet French ambassador). The hurt inflicted by Leicester's remarriage never fully faded; when the queen died one of his letters was found stowed among her closest possessions. Around the same time, through to 1581, negotiations were underway to marry the queen to Francis, duc d'Anjou and d'Alençon. The prospect of a French, Catholic king aroused coded mistrust: Susan Doran thinks 'the appearance of the cult of the Virgin Queen' was a 'direct result' of the Anjou marriage negotiations.[1] It also aroused open opposition. The pamphleteer John Stubbes had his right hand hacked off for penning *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf whereunto England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage* (1579).

Another struggle was simultaneously taking place – also for the hand of the queen, but for the hand that wrote poetry (both in Latin and English). On 30 June 1580, Henry Bynneman entered a volume in the Stationer's Register. It was a quarto in two parts titled first *Three Proper, and Witty, Familiar Letters* followed by *Two Other Very Commendable Letters, of the Same Mens' Writing*. These were extracts from the correspondence of Edmund Spenser (writing under the pen name Immeritô) and the Cambridge don Gabriel Harvey. The letters were printed in reverse order of date, starting on 19 June 1580 and stretching back to 5 October 1579. At first sight these letters have nothing to do with Elizabeth. Harvey encourages Spenser to publish *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), Spenser asks for Harvey's response to *The Faerie Queene* (1590/6), they banter about the decline of Cambridge University and the promise of continental travel.

The letters are mainly taken up with a dense discussion of quantitative prosody ('that incomprehensible subject', in John Thompson's words).[2] Quantitative prosody was a classical verse structure in which syllables were measured according to their 'quantity', as 'short' or 'long' not (or more than) stressed or unstressed. The length or duration of a syllable was partly determined by its 'position' (a vowel was usually regarded as long if it was followed by two

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[1] Susan Doran, 'Juno versus Diana: The Treatment of Elizabeth I's Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561-1581', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 38, no. 2 (June 1995), pp.257-274, 272.

[2] John Thompson, *The Founding of English Metre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p.134.

consonants, for example). Two 'short' syllables could usually be substituted for one 'long' syllable. It is difficult to be more definitive about quantitative prosody since no English Renaissance writers fully agreed upon what it was and how it worked. Instead they puzzled and fretted and argued. What did 'short' and 'long' syllables mean in practice? Should they be read as if they were English prose but have their length measured, separately, nonetheless, or should readers slow down on a long syllable and speed up on a short syllable? Was 'quantity' a replacement for stress or a supplement to it?[3]

Spenser sends Harvey a sample of his quantitative verse, the 'Iambicum Trimetrum', and Harvey replies that he 'like[s]' it 'better than perhaps you will easily believe'.[4] If Spenser was incredulous about Harvey's praise, it is little wonder given what follows. Harvey subjects the 'Iambicum' to a blushingly close criticism. He finds the third line 'hath a foot more than allowed' and the sixth 'is also in the same predicament'.[5] He rescans Spenser's phrase 'heavenly virginals' (and the last word of that phrase when it recurs in the ninth line) and asserts that Spenser should have 'made a curtail' of the poem's last line.[6] 'Then me thinketh', he continues and concludes, 'you have in my fancy somewhat too many spondees beside'.[7]

What does this have to do with Elizabeth? In 1548 the then Princess Elizabeth acquired a new tutor, a Cambridge M.A. and Fellow named Roger Ascham (who had taught Greek to Elizabeth's previous tutor, William Grindal). Ascham tutored Elizabeth in Greek and Latin for two years before returning to Cambridge. On his return he began to write *The Schoolmaster*, published posthumously in 1570-1. In that book he became the first Englishman to openly advocate the quantitative prosody that Spenser and Harvey would later argue about. Ascham treats quantitative prosody as an enclave for the intelligent and discerning: '[E]very ignorant person may easily' find 'just measure in every metre' but 'only the learned shall be able' to find 'true *quantity* in every foot and syllable'.[8] Why, he asks, should we replicate 'the Goths' rather than 'the Greeks in true versifying'? – that would be 'to eat acorns with swine when we may freely eat wheat bread among men'.[9] Only those who are 'goggle-eyed' can't, or won't, ascertain

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[3] The best short introduction to quantitative verse is Derek Attridge's article in *The Spenser Encyclopaedia*, ed. Albert Charles Hamilton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p.576; the best monograph on the subject is Attridge's *Well-weighed syllables: Elizabethan verse in classical metres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
[4] Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey, *Three Proper, and Witty, Familiar Letters* and *Two Other Very Commendable Letters, of the Same Mens' Writing* (both 1580) in *Ancient Critical Essays Upon English Poets and Poesy*, 2 vols., ed. Joseph Haslewood (London: T. Bensley, 1815), vol. 2, p.297.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Harvey, *Letters*, p.298.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Roger Ascham, *The Schole Master* (1570-1) in *The English Works of Roger Ascham*, ed. James Bennett (London: R&J Dodsley, 1761), p.329.
[9] Ascham, *The Schole Master*, p.327.

the quantity of a word or its syllables.[10] It follows, then, that Ascham may have taught the young Elizabeth how to apprehend English verse in this quantitative manner.

Spenser and Harvey refer to Ascham in their correspondence: Harvey writes of 'the dead advertisement and persuasion of Master Ascham'.[11] Ascham's living advocacy (his 'advertisement and persuasion') of quantitative prosody had, by the time of Harvey's letter, been dead for a decade, and Harvey's tone (with 'dead' flickering between adjective and adverb) suggests that it might be moribund in a more than medical sense. By contrast, he 'cannot choose but thank and honour the good Angel (whether it be Gabriel or some other) that put so good a motion into the heads of those two excellent Gentlemen Mr Sidney and Master Dyer'.[12] These young, lively men will bring forth a refreshed quantitative prosody.

Here we see the struggle for the queen's writing hand. Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Edward Dyer are, in Harvey's words, 'the two very diamonds of her Majesty's court for many special and rare qualities' who will 'help forward our new famous enterprise for the exchanging of barbarous and balductum rhymes with artificial verses, the one being in manner of pure and fine gold, the other but counterfeit and base ill-favoured copper'.[13] Harvey has 'no doubt' that their 'lively example and practice' will 'prevail a thousand times more in short space' of time than Ascham did.[14] The link between Ascham and Sidney/Dyer is not only their advocacy of quantitative prosody. It is their proximity to the queen. Sidney, especially, will be able to finish the task Ascham began: to educate Elizabeth in the ways of quantitative verse, to turn her heart away from the Petrarchan sonnets she wrote to Leicester and the Duc d'Anjou and toward the intellectual classical standards of Harvey and Spenser's quantitative revolution.

We see this attempt upon the queen in Spenser's locations when writing or sending the letters. While Harvey is amid the broils of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Spenser sends his letters from Westminster and Leicester House. Westminster was, of course, the centre of Elizabeth's court. Leicester House (situated on the Strand) was home to the Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's unrequited love. Andrew Hadfield suspects that Spenser had been working for the Earl in the mid-to-late 1570s and was probably living in Leicester House when writing to Harvey in late 1579.[15] The Earl also happened to be Philip Sidney's uncle (and Edward Dyer's first patron). Sidney was at this time finishing the *Old Arcadia* (perhaps begun as early as 1570). Scattered amid the *Old Arcadia* are verses sung or spoken by lyre-wielding shepherds. Above some of the verses

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[10] Ascham, *The Schole Master*, p.331.
[11] Harvey, *Letters*, p.264.
[12] Harvey, *Letters*, p.288.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.126, 141.

we find a strip of metrical notation, indicating how the verses can or ought to be taken according to quantitative standards.[16] The notation is more or less impossible to reconcile with the poems; we might speculate whether it is supposed to accompany the poems, being subservient to them, or to precede and therefore determine them. Are they designed for the poems or only the poems' opening line(s)? Do they indicate a rhythmic flavour rather than a pattern to be slavishly followed? Sidney sets out the 'rules' of his quantitative poetry – still without specifying where or how they should be applied – in a 'Nota' to the first of 'these English measured verses'.[17] By 1579/80, then, Spenser ought to have been ideally placed to communicate quantitative prosody to a poetic and aristocratic elite.

Things didn't work out as Spenser and Harvey wanted, or anticipated. As well as the *Old Arcadia*, Sidney was writing his *Defence of Poetry*. In the *Defence* he provides a remarkably balanced – certainly not propagandistic – account of quantitative prosody alongside other, more native prosodies: 'Whether of these [prosodies] be the more excellent, would bear many speeches: the ancient (no doubt) more fit for music, both words and time observing quantity, and more fit lively to express diverse passions, by the low or lofty sounds of the well-weighed syllable; the latter likewise, with his rhyme, striketh a certain music to the ear, and, in fine, since it doth delight, though by another way, it obtains the same purpose: there being in either sweetness, and wanting in neither majesty'.[18] Sidney concludes that the English language 'is fit for both sorts' of verse.[19] For Spenser and Harvey, Sidney had reached a disastrous conclusion. He bestowed only equanimity upon their quantitative prosody, and in doing so he compared it with the 'barbarous and balductum' rhyme (see Chapter 2).

Then, in seeking the Queen's advocacy for his classical prosody Spenser turns out to have been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Given his residence at Leicester House, it is possible he knew about the Earl of Leicester's secret marriage. A year later, the Earl was *persona non grata* at court and Spenser was in Ireland, far flung in the service of the new Lord Deputy Arthur Grey. As a relation of Leicester's, Sidney was put out of royal favour: his name plummets to the bottom of the New Year's gift list in 1579/80.[20] Meanwhile the Queen continued to write Petrarchan rhymes with English stress patterns. Spenser and Harvey's campaign to embed their quantitative poetry at court had failed. There would be no new institutional or patronised quantitative prosody in England.

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[16] Philip Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.61-65, 91, 93, 95-96, 126.
[17] Sidney, *Old Arcadia*, p.71.
[18] Sidney, *Defence*, p.248.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney*, p.169.

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Quantitative prosody can seem archaic, anachronistic, even snobbish. Yet it was not always so. In the sixteenth century, at least, this prosody advanced a new way of apprehending verse. Derek Attridge criticises John Thompson for his assumption 'that quantitative distinctions were somehow perceived directly as the poets read their lines, presumably from their sound' and shows that this is 'the wrong place to look for "quantity"; it is to be found in the minds of the Elizabethans'.[21] In all the English Renaissance school texts on quantitative prosody (some of which we will encounter shortly), there is no argument that the 'quantities' of the verse should be or are made audible.[22] Indeed, Spenser and Harvey's letters are unusual in their attempts (however brief) to hitch 'quantity' to stress, though those attempts would inevitably be scuppered by the legacy of variations in Latin pronunciation after the fifth century and (in England) after the Great Vowel Shift.[23] Renaissance writers more often avoided such attempts altogether, leading George Puttenham to conclude (with a touch of bemusement) that syllables in Greek and Latin must have been 'timed […] not by reason of any evident or apparent cause in writing or sound remaining upon one more than another'.[24] The length of a syllable seemed to 'belong generally to the sphere of the understanding and the mind, not that of brevity and speech' (though in making this cerebral case, Petrus Ramus notes that 'there was a time when the coarse and uneducated populace [of Ancient Rome] recognised and pronounced long and short syllables, which nowadays not even the most learned recognise or enunciate').[25] The way in which 'the notion of quantity was learned, and the fact that it bore little relation to spoken Latin, could have had no other effect than that of making it seem something abstract and intellectual'.[26] Through quantitative verse, poetry could somehow avoid the ear and travel directly to the mind.

When the papal architect Giacomo da Vignola planted the Farnese Gardens atop the Palatine Hill, looking down to the site of the Roman Forum, he aligned steps, hedges and grottoes with the Basilica of Constantine below – except that the basilica hadn't been excavated in the 1550s, and wouldn't be until the nineteenth century. Since it was based on informed guesswork about the basilica's location, Vignola's design appealed only to the 'mind's eye'

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[21] Attridge, *Well-weighed syllables*, p.160.
[22] Attridge gives a survey of this material in *Well-weighed syllables*, pp.32-7.
[23] Attridge, *Well-weighed syllables*, pp.21-24.
[24] George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.204.
[25] Petrus Ramus, *Scholae in Liberalis Artes* (Basel: Andreas Wechel, 1569), fol.53v.
[26] Attridge, *Well-weighed syllables*, p.66.

(*Hamlet* 1.2.184) – just as the equivalently classical notion of a *musica universalis* (a celestial music inaudible to human beings) appealed only to the mind's ear. Quantitative prosody was a similarly imaginative – a purely imaginative – act of juxtaposition and engagement with a distinguished past, transcending the ear almost entirely. O.B. Hardison has praised the verse for its 'exoteric' quality – that is, it looked outwards to an international and historical community of scholarship and writing organised by Latin (and behind it, by Ancient Greek).[27] Through it, Spenser and Erasmus could write poetry in the same metrical language; Sidney could commune with Virgil in the same prosody. For the quantitative poets, then, the rules of Latin poetry were a liberating constriction.

That said, Spenser and Harvey's version of quantitative prosody was often bizarre. In one letter to Harvey, Spenser worries about how the word 'carpenter' must be quantitatively mangled into 'car-**pen**-ter' – so that it 'seemeth like a lame gosling, that draweth one leg after her'.[28] Yet he concludes, grimly, that 'rough [English] words must be subdued with use'.[29] It is an extraordinary statement which if adopted at court could have changed English pronunciation altogether. Harvey is taken aback. He assures Spenser that 'you shall never have my subscription or consent […] to make your car**pen**ter our **car**penter, an inch longer or bigger than God and his people have made him'.[30] He wants their letters 'not to go a little further, either for the prosody, or the orthography […] than we are licensed and authorised by the ordinary use' and 'as it were, majesty of our speech, which I account the only infallible, and sovereign rule of all rule'.[31] Maybe Spenser was joking, under the aegis of a ludicrously florid pen-name; it is otherwise odd to find the author of *The Shepheardes Calendar* proposing not to celebrate but to usurp the vernacular. He may have been teasing Harvey, who could be unhumorously inflexible at the best of times (Harvey has been treated by most literary historians as he was treated in his lifetime by Thomas Nashe – as 'His Gabrielship', pompous, pedantic, and generally insufferable).[32]

Other quantitative poets gave more license to their writing's licence. Richard Stanyhurst tells the reader of his *Aeneid* (1582) that he has made 'a *prosodia* to myself', a series of rules or principles for the development of a personal quantitative prosody: 'For my part I purpose not to beat on every childish tittle that concerneth *prosodia*, neither do I undertake to chalk out any lines

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[27] O.B. Hardison, *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p.93.
[28] Spenser, *Letters*, p.260.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Harvey, *Letters*, p.278.
[31] Harvey, *Letters*, p.281.
[32] Thomas Nashe, *Have With You To Saffron Walden* (1596) in *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J.B. Steane (London: Penguin, 1985), p.492.

or rules to others, but to lay down to the reader his view the course I took in this my travail'.[33] Even Sidney's 'Nota' in the *Old Arcadia* is a little ambivalent. It only appears in two *Arcadia* manuscripts, and the 'Nota' in the Ottley manuscript tilts against Spenser and Harvey's stricter quantitative prosody: 'Rules in measured verses in English *which I observe*' (my emphasis; the implication being that there were some rules that Sidney wouldn't observe).[34] Alongside 'short' and 'long' syllables, writers used so-called 'indifferent' syllables which could vary in length and duration depending on where they appeared in the verse (what 'position' they adopted, or were attributed, in the poetic line). In a preface to J.A. Comenius's *Janua lingarum reserata* (1640), John Robotham thought these 'double-toned' syllables were 'like a man double-tongued, a deceiver', 'some Jesuitical patron of equivocation'.[35] To us they likely seem one of the redeeming features of a prosody often characterised as rigid.

We might presume Shakespeare averse to such a prosody. Even the flexibilities of quantitative verse are marginal, whereas in Shakespeare's prosody flexibility seems central. However, many of Shakespeare's contemporaries locate him in a Latin tradition; they consider him a 'man of the European Renaissance', rebirthing classical pasts as part of 'the first English classicism'.[36] Richard Carew asks 'Will you read Virgil? Take the Earl of Surrey. Catullus? Shakespeare, and Marlowe's fragment'.[37] Francis Meres files Shakespeare as a 'lyric' poet like Horace and Ovid.[38] These classifications of Shakespeare are usually read as part of a Renaissance taxonomy, establishing continuities between the ancients and the (early) moderns, but the Renaissance understanding of classical writers was not confined to genre. Being a 'lyric' poet, as Meres classifies Shakespeare, involved a quantitative metrical definition as well as much looser notions of musicality, dance, love and levity. The exactitudes of the metrical definition need not be at the forefront of our minds, since they may not have been at the forefront of Meres's, but the implication of Meres's (and Carew's) classification might be that Shakespeare can be read quantitatively. We are so accustomed to thinking of Shakespeare as a poet of the iambic pentameter, or the accentual-syllabic, that such a classification seems strange. Yet some of Shakespeare's readers and audiences would have been taking in his verse quantitatively (especially

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[33] Richard Stanyhurst, *Translation of The First Four Books of the Aeneis of P. Virgilius Maro: With other poetical Devices thereto annexed*, ed. Edward Arber (London: The English Scholar's Library, 1880), pp.15, 13-14.

[34] St John's College, Cambridge, MS. I.7 (James 308); National Library of Wales, Ottley MS. B-B1.

[35] John Robotham, 'To the Reader' in Johann Amos Comenius, *Janua Lingarum Reserata*, 5th ed. trans. Thomas Horn, rev. John Robotham (London: Robert Young, 1640), p.70.

[36] Stanley Wells, 'Shakespeare: Man of the European Renaissance', pp.3-17 in *Renaissance Shakespeare: Shakespeare Renaissances – Proceedings of the Ninth World Shakespeare Congress*, ed. Martin Procházka, Michael Dobson, Andreas Hofele and Hanna Scolnicov (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2014); Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987 [1982]), p.32.

[37] Richard Carew, 'Epistle on the Excellency of the English Tongue' (1595/6) in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G.G. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), p.293.

[38] Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury* (London: P. Short, 1598), p.282.

when it was interspersed with lines of Latin, like *Titus Andronicus* at 4.1.80-1) – perhaps deviating from the high road of Latin verse, but always recognising the existence of that high road as it did so.

Shakespeare knew quantitative verse. He learnt it at school. Quantitative prosody made up a third of William Lily's *Grammar* textbook, which from 1540 was used in every grammar school in England. At Shakespeare's grammar school the first headmaster (William Smart, appointed in 1554) was issued a contract specifying that schoolboys must be 'ready to enter into the accidence [another name for Lily's book] and principles of grammar'.[39] There are similar clauses advocating or mandating 'versification' or 'versifying' in the statutes of East Retford (1552), Sandwich (1580), Durham (1593), Heath (1600) and Charterhouse (1627) schools.[40]

This was an introduction to quantitative verse in Latin that could not help suggesting the application of quantitative principles to English. The schoolmaster Charles Hoole aimed to 'imprint a lively pattern of [Latin] hexameters and pentameters' in the minds of his students, a pattern which could then be read into or onto English verse.[41] Roger Ascham proposed that pupils shuttle between Latin and English in a 'double translation' exercise – first taking lines from a Latin text, then rendering them into English before returning them to Latin. Ascham thought this exercise kept the mind 'busily occupied in turning and tossing itself many ways'; for the more curious pupil, it would also have suggested the possible overlaps between the two languages and their prosodic systems (as well as the insuperable obstacles between them).[42] Most English Renaissance literary criticism accordingly smudges the differences between Latin and English prosody. Throughout his *Certain Notes of Instruction*, George Gascoigne refers to stressed syllables as 'long' and unstressed syllables as 'short' (without making a distinction between stress and quantity).[43] Although William Webbe recognises that English 'words cannot well be forced to abide the touch of position and other rules of prosodia', they still have a 'natural force or quantity' that 'will not abide any place'.[44] Quantitative metre is everywhere behind the arras of Puttenham's writing. Near the start of Book 2 of his *Art*, for instance, he finds a 'certain musical numerosity' in classical feet but not in English feet; yet near the end of the book, he claims

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[39] Richard Pearson, *King Edward VI School Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare's School – History and Alumni* (Kings Lynn: Biddles Ltd, 2008), p.10.

[40] Foster Watson, *The English Grammar Schools to 1660: their Curriculum and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), pp.473-474.

[41] Charles Hoole, *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole* (1660), facsimile (Menston: Scolar Press, 1973), p.157.

[42] Ascham, *The Schole Master*, p.287.

[43] George Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes of Instruction Concernyng the makinge of Verse or Ryme in English* (1575) in *Ancient Critical Essays upon English Poets and Poesy*, 2 vols., ed. Joseph Haslewood (London: T. Bensley, 1815), vol. 2, p.5.

[44] William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586), ed. Edmund Arber (London: A. Constable & Co, 1870), p.57.

English verse feet can create a 'pleasant numerosity' in their 'measure and disposition'.[45] The vocabulary used for classical and vernacular verse feet – position, numerosity, length, measure – turns out to be more or less the same, often without any distinction being drawn.

Lily's *Grammar* devotes fifteen quarto pages to a discussion of prosody and rhythm, and the principles it adduces are broadly quantitative – yet they often emphasised that breadth, implying its proximity to vernacular metres. Lily applauds 'indifferent' syllables.[46] He recommends that Latin words, when spoken aloud, should be stressed according to their English pronunciation (and that their quantity should, again, be abstractly recorded).[47] He makes a distinction between the prose and verse rhythms of a word like *ritus* (Latin 'ceremony' or 'custom'; long in prose, short in verse), whereas most quantitative prosodists would have heard it in one (verse) way only.[48] As a result, '[d]rilled as they were at school in Lily's analysis of Latin poetry, sixteenth century poets were adept at holding two different rhythms – a formal, quantitative, metrical one and a natural, accented, verbal one – in their heads simultaneously'; a little like the polyphony of plainsong, in which different voices can be 'carrying perfect and imperfect rhythms simultaneously'.[49] Here begins, or so John Thompson believes, the distinction between metre (resolutely quantitative) and rhythm ('the actual structure of the language').[50] But here could also begin a collapsing of that distinction.

Schools taught the *Grammar* in ways that flexed Lily's text, imbuing it with even more rhythmic heterodoxy. When Henry VIII authorised the *Grammar*, he made clear that his *sententiae edicti* were 'not to be understood as prescribing that whatever you will find written [in the *Grammar*] is, in the same order it is written and without delay, to be forced upon the delicate and fastidious intellects and tastes of boys continuously and without any discretion'.[51] Schoolmasters could 'omit' parts of Lily's *Grammar* so long as they 'do not privately or in public follow or teach any grammar other than this one'.[52] The *Grammar* was 'in the hands of each one' of the schoolmasters 'according to the capacity of your listeners'.[53] As part of one well-attested prosody exercise not in Lily's *Grammar*, a schoolmaster would change some of the words in a poem to

[45] Puttenham, *Art*, pp.157, 209.
[46] Barnabas Hampton, trans., *Prosodia Construed* (London: S. Buckley and J. Osborn, 1733), p.9. I have checked Hampton's translation of Lily against the 1549 and 1653 texts of the *Grammar*.
[47] Hampton, trans., p.8; Ros King, 'Seeing the rhythm: an interpretation of sixteenth-century punctuation and metrical practice', pp.235-253 in *Ma(r)king the Text: The presentation of meaning on the literary page*, ed. Joe Bray, Miriam Handley and Anne C. Henry (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p.238.
[48] Hampton, trans., p.21.
[49] King, 'Seeing the rhythm', p.238.
[50] Thompson, *The Founding of English Metre*, p.137.
[51] Henry VIII, *sententiae edicti*, qtd. in *Lily's Grammar of Latin in English*, ed. Hedwig Gwosdek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.8.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

take it out of correct quantitative metre. The first schoolboy to 'return' the verse to its 'true' quantities would win the applause of the schoolroom.[54] In *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-1) a disguised Lucentio 'teaches' Bianca in a broken quantitative metre interspersed with hasty English prose. When Bianca replies to Lucentio she restores the quantitative metre so that ''tis now in tune' and 'construe[d]' in accordance with Lily (3.1.44, 40). Although this exercise was supposed to entrench quantitative prosody, it offered students a suite of workable alternatives. By experiencing the tensions within prosodic rules or between different kinds of prosody, Shakespeare may have hit upon something rhythmically rich, strange, and new – not the doctrinaire quantitative prosody offered by his schoolmasters (if what they offered was doctrinaire in the first place), but a viable jumble of different prosodies, riffing on the quantitative, that could be combined to literary and dramatic effect.

When Shakespeare refers to the *Grammar*, he represents his schoolboy textbook as full of rhythmic variety. In *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598-9) Claudio is thundering about Hero while Benedick tries to assuage his anger:

> CLAUDIO   O, what men dare do! What men may do! What men daily do, not knowing what they do!
>
> BENEDICK   How now! Interjections? Why, then, some be of laughing, as, oh, ha, he!
>
> (4.1.19-22)

Benedick's 'interjections' seem like 'glossolalia or pure sound […] speech that indicates only that someone is speaking' (if laughter is a form of speech, and if Benedick is indeed laughing).[55] Yet Lily's *Grammar* tells us 'An interjection is a part of speech which betokeneth a sudden passion of mind under an imperfect voice'.[56] In the acoustic light of Lily's definition we might hear Benedick's 'Interjections', as well as Claudio's, being both 'sudden' and 'passion[ate]'. Read through Lily, '[O]h, ha, he!' is a blend of three different interjections. Primarily Benedick suggests that Claudio should laugh – in the *Grammar*, 'Hah, ha, he'.[57] But there are also notes of 'Scorning' ('Hui') and 'Sorrow' ('Heu, hei') audible in Benedick's 'Interjections', notes that we can only hear in an actor's vocally rich performance or via allusion to Lily's *Grammar*.[58] The rhythm of Benedick's laughter is thickened by Lily's rhythmic catalogue of interjections. We hear Benedick

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[54] Hoole, *A New Discovery*, p.160.

[55] Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p.7.

[56] Hampton, trans., p.7.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

scorning Claudio and sorrowing with him, just as we hear Claudio hurt and hurtful (his 'passion' being both emotional animation and Christian, or Christ-like, suffering; as well as – Shakespeare's hint, via Lily – the 'passionating' of a bad actor). Shakespeare plumbs the rhythmic depth of Lily's *Grammar* to animate and inform the range of speech rhythms in his plays, even (or especially) when that speech assumes a non-locutionary quality.

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The adult Shakespeare plunders from quantitative prosody, 'magpie-like as always', treasuring bits of it, repudiating others (and thereby showing a contempt for the idea of metrical system).[59] He is particularly drawn to one of the prosody's foundational principles, the notion of the 'long' or 'short' verse foot (and indeed the verse foot more generally, which quantitative prosody had introduced into scansion). In quantitative prosody, as relayed by Abraham Fraunce, 'a foot is a dimension of certain syllables with a strict observation of distinct time or quantity'.[60] One of Charles Hoole's exercises for grammar school boys made them 'write a verse out, and divide it into its just feet, giving a dash or stroke betwixt every one; and let them tell you [the schoolmaster] what feet they are, and what syllables they consist; and why they stand in such or such a place'.[61] They should then 'set the mark of the Time or Quantity over every syllable in every foot, and give you the reason (according to the Rules) why it is there noted long, or short'; again, the 'reason' would have nothing to do with how the syllable might sound or be sounded.[62] For the seventeenth-century grammarian John Bird, 'A Foot is the setting together of two syllables or more, according to the observation of the quantity thereof', with scansion (or 'scanning', as he calls it) 'the lawful measuring of a Verse into his several feet'.[63] These nearly architectural plans of verse lines are not unlike Vignola's paths, hedges and grottoes in the Farnese Gardens. They supply a visual means of understanding something conceptual (prosodists continue to dispute whether there is such a thing as a poetic foot and, as we have seen, whether the length of syllables can ever be properly represented by the voice). Thus, Derek Attridge sees quantitative prosody as 'the application of a complex set of rules to the graphic embodiment of lines of verses', anchoring the abstract in the visual rather than the aural.[64]

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[59] Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare* (London: BBC Books, 2003), p.358.
[60] Abraham Fraunce, *The Arcadian Rhetorike: or The praecepts of rhetoricke made plaine by examples* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1588), 1.14.C.
[61] Hoole, *A New Discovery*, p.77.
[62] Ibid.
[63] John Bird, *Grounds of Grammar Penned and Published* (Oxford: Leon Lichfield, 1639), p.181.
[64] Attridge, *Well-weighed Syllables*, p.160.

If the 'quantity' of syllables and feet was not immediately visible to the eye and was unrepresentable by stress, we might wonder how else it could be communicated. Writing around 1599, William Scott suggests that we could have a 'slow staidness' in uttering a long syllable and a 'more voluble speed and currentness' in uttering a short syllable but his suggestion did not catch on among other prosodists of the period.[65] Perhaps these matters of prosodic timing could instead be figured in action of some kind. After all it seems propitious for this prosody to present length and brevity as qualities ascribed to 'feet', which can stride or canter or run or stroll in ways that might be described as 'long' or 'short' (indeed, the words 'long' and 'short' suggest distance as well as duration). Yet the language of quantitative prosody tends to privilege stricture over movement. Feet are figured as inert, structural properties of poetry, which 'stand' but don't move, which are 'placed' but don't walk (see the quotations above). In Lily's *Grammar*, a foot is governed 'according to a fixed rule of times' and a verse is 'held together by an appropriate and rule-governed number of feet'. The 'measuring' of a verse into individual feet must be 'according to rule'.[66] Shakespeare's response to all this stricture and structure is playful in the plumber's sense of that word – he finds the 'give' or play in quantitative prosody's notion of the foot (*OED* n.5c). He gives us feet which are not static but dynamic, and he does so by finding the punning 'give' or 'play' in the word 'foot'. The foot can be prosodical (especially on the page) and it can be anatomical (especially on the stage). The stage becomes the place for the quantitative notion of the long or short, fast or slow foot to play itself out, though not in a form that the Greeks and Latins would wholly recognise; it is the language or rhetoric of quantitative prosody, rather than quantitative prosody itself, that Shakespeare battens upon.

Shakespeare exploits this pun on 'foot' or 'feet' throughout his plays although the pun, of course, predates him; it is historically and linguistically longstanding. In Latin the word *pes / pedis* can be applied to both metrical and material feet. A Roman stone tablet (now in the Capitoline Museums) tells its reader a verse narrative of a gouty patient who eventually recovers and dances, where the patient speaks in an erratic mixture of metres while gouty and in neat dactylic hexameters when cured.[67] Classical literature further evinced the connections between these two senses of the word 'foot'. In Ancient Greek tragedy the chorus probably moved from foot to foot when speaking certain sections of verse: a step to the right on the strophe, a step to the left on the antistrophe, and a stationary stance for the concluding epode. Donatus defined every metrical foot as having 'arsis and thesis' as well as 'a set number of syllables, time, resolution,

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[65] Scott, *The Model of Poesy* (1599), ed. Gavin Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.59.

[66] Hampton, trans., p.10.

[67] William Ross Hardie, *Res Metrica: An Introduction to the Study of Roman and Greek Versification* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p.58.

figure, and metre', in which arsis and thesis 'are related by etymology to the uplifting and placement of feet during a dance' and also during a tragic chorus.[68] Compiling etymologies in the early 600s, Isidore of Seville adduced the connection between the two senses of 'feet': clusters of syllables 'are called "feet" because in using them the metres walk'.[69] Bede proposed another less popular etymology. The metrical foot is 'so called, because we use it like a footrule to measure the verse'.[70] Samuel Daniel unfurled the etymology into something like metaphor: 'the best measure of man is to be taken by his own foot, bearing ever the nearest proportion to himself'.[71]

The pun on 'foot' or 'feet' is alive and kicking in Renaissance England. In his letter about Spenser's 'Iambicum Trimetrum' Harvey calls the poem's metrical feet 'deformed' and, like a prosodic Charles Bovary, recommends that 'one of the feet be sawed off with a pair of syncopes'.[72] Ascham criticises the Earl of Surrey's 'benumbed feet […] unfit for a verse […] deformed, unnatural, or lame'.[73] He sees trochees 'standing upon two syllables, the one long, the other short'.[74] By contrast, English dactyls 'rather stumble than stand upon monosyllables'.[75] George Puttenham writes of the 'feet whereupon [classical] measures stand'.[76] There is everywhere a 'similarity – sometimes seeming to border on a distinct identity – of animal-feet (what we walk on) with verse-feet (what we speak on)'.[77]

Renaissance dances took up metrical names and terms, and implicitly suggested the physical properties of 'long' and 'short' syllables or feet. John Davies, author of the 'dancing poem' *Orchestra* (S.R. 1594), writes of dance measures with 'only spondees, solemn, grave and slow' (66.7), corantos that 'run' on 'a triple dactyl foot' (69.2) and lavoltas in which 'An anapest is all their music's song' (70.6). The music master Thomas Morley tells his young charges of a galliard that 'goes by a measure which the learned call *trochaieam rationem*, consisting of a long and short stroke successively: for as the foot *trochaeus* consists of one syllable of two times and another of one time, so is the first of these two strokes double to the latter'.[78] Fabritio Caroso's

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[68] Donatus, qtd. in Hardison, *Prosody and Purpose*, pp.32, 34.

[69] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, ed. and trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.47.

[70] Bede, *The Art of Poetry and Rhetoric* (early 700s), trans. and ed. Calvin B. Kendall (Saarbruchen: AQ-Verlag, 1991), p.93.

[71] Samuel Daniel, *A Defence of Rhyme* (1603) in *Samuel Daniel: Selected Poetry and A Defense of Rhyme*, ed. Geoffrey G. Hillier and Peter L. Groves (Asheville: Pegasus Press, 1998), p.212.

[72] Harvey, *Letters*, p.297.

[73] Ascham, *The Schole Master*, p.331.

[74] Ascham, *The Schole Master*, p.328.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Puttenham, *Art*, p.95.

[77] Marc Shell, *Talking the Walk and Walking the Talk: A Rhetoric of Rhythm* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p.20.

[78] Thomas Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (1597), ed. Ben Byram-Wigfield (Great Malvern: Cappella Archive, 2002), p.184.

Nobilità di Dame (1600) lists metrical dance steps like the 'Dactylic step' and the 'Spondaic step', both of which can be 'done to the verses of Virgil or Ovid'.[79] There was an entire dance called the pyrrhic, performed at the wedding of Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara (1502) as well as at Henri II's entry into Lyon in 1548 (although unlike Caroso's steps its etymology is not drawn explicitly from classical prosody).[80] There were even Renaissance dances that wrote, in which the protagonists spelled names with their feet. The final dance of *Cupid's Banishment* (1617) tapped out the names of 'Anna Regina' and 'Jacobus Rex' to the seated monarchs, a practice that was established on the continent as early as the 1580s and which may have been inspired by the dancing of the names 'Elisabeth' and 'Friderich' in a Wurrtemberg court ballet of 1616.[81]

Even when not dancing, Shakespeare's feet are fleshed out by speed, distance and movement – unlike the stolid units of quantitative prosody. In Shakespeare 'foot' can be a verb (appropriately for audiences wedged against the Globe stage, for example, since actors' feet would have been at eye- and ear-level). Cloten says he'll 'foot' Innogen 'home again' (*Cymbeline* 3.5.143) and Ariel's song instructs its listener to 'Foot it featly here and there' (*Tempest* 1.2.381). Feet make something happen. In a *3 Henry 6* stage direction, Warwick 'stamps with his foot and the soldiers show themselves' (1.1.171; in a play where other stage directions are usually thought authorial, especially at 3.1.12 and 4.3.27). Feet can 'speak' (*Troilus and Cressida* 4.6.57).

We might wonder whether Shakespeare's metrical feet simply mimic material feet or, more interestingly, whether his verse lines take anatomical feet for a walk. With the vision of a dagger fresh from his eyes, Macbeth walks to Duncan's chamber – and his paces eke out an answer to that vexed question:

> and withered murder
> Alarmed by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
> Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
> The very stones prate of my whereabout,
> And take the present horror from the time,
> Which now suits with it.

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[79] Fabritio Caroso, *Courtly Dance of the Renaissance: A New Translation and Edition of the Nobilità di Dame*, ed. and trans. Julia Sutton (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), pp.93, 130.

[80] Margaret M. McGowan, *Dance in the Renaissance: European Fashion, French Obsession* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp.122-126.

[81] McGowan, *Dance in the Renaissance*, p.118.

Macbeth's steps seem to move of their own accord; 'they' walk him as much as he walks them. He appears, or wants it to appear that he is, led by something outside his volition, whether that be 'withered murder', 'the wolf', 'Tarquin' or Tarquin's 'ghost'. That is, he wishes to subdue his steps in historical and natural precedent (partly by obscuring his syntax in subclause). Yet his own feet are not printless (like a ghost's) or stealthy (like a wolf's), but all too loud. Macbeth's feet do not require an adjective or adverb since we hear them make their way across the verse: 'Hear not my steps, which way they walk' has the audible tread of iambic pentameter. It is not that Shakespeare is writing quantitative prosody at this moment; rather, that his schoolboy (and perhaps adult) acquaintance with the 'long' and 'short' feet of quantitative verse has suggested this dramaturgical relationship between the physical and the prosodic foot. We can imagine an actor combining Macbeth's tentative footsteps with the line's insistent stresses to suggest that he is pulled along by the verse in a prosody of tragic teleology; or that he speaks a spurious rhythm – a metrical alibi – for his already plotted movements.

For Shakespeare involves feet in acting as well as action. Hamlet tells the players to 'Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you – trippingly on the tongue' (3.2.1-2; F and Q1 trippingly contract 'pronounc'd'). 'Tripping' is typically dancing (as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 5.2.26) but it is also footing featly, working daintily across the feet in a verse line. When Nestor tells Agamemnon about the crude pageants Achilles and Patroclus have been staging, he goads him with the details of how they parade 'like a strutting player' with 'stretched footing' (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.153, 156). The 'strutting', 'stretched footing' is the wide bombastic movement and posture made by a ham actor (from 1600, many plays for boy actors mocked the 'apish' activity of the older 'stalking-stamping player, that will raise a tempest with his tongue, and thunder with his heels' (*Antonio's Revenge* 1.5.77-80)). But Nestor's anecdote additionally speaks to the way the verse lines might be delivered – with every metrical foot afforded a dull protracted aplomb, made all too 'long', perhaps accompanied by a 'strutting' stamp of the physical foot. Hamlet recommends a lighter, nimbler, shorter performance of the verse.

In *Coriolanus* (1608) Shakespeare stages and stretches the 'foot' pun to the extent of metaphor, though it is difficult to say whether the prosodical foot is a metaphor for the anatomical foot or vice versa. The pun assumes the duration and scope of the conceit (where the

'ingenuity' of the comparison is 'more striking than its justness'); it becomes a kind of punceit.[82] In physical and metrical form, feet race through the play and make up its strange penultimate stage direction (almost a tableau): 'The Conspirators draw, and kill Martius, who falls; *Aufidius stands on him*' (5.6.131-2, my emphasis). Feet, among other things, fall apart in *Coriolanus*, semantically and metrically, according to the play's sense of fallen dignity or lost standing. This is a play in which 'Action is eloquence' (3.2.76) and eloquence action. It shows Shakespeare thinking about the foot, dramatizing it in simultaneously sustained and concentrated ways, considering how its length or brevity of action, its movement or stasis, might help to shape the play's language and characters.

Coriolanus begins and ends with a body. In Menenius's fable of the belly, which opens the play, he calls Rome's citizens 'the great toe of this assembly' (1.1.153). In one of his earliest lines, Coriolanus filches feet from Menenius's fable: the plebeians 'feebling such as stand not in their liking / Below their cobbled shoes' (193-4). Editors usually gloss 'cobbled' as 'fractured' or 'broken': to Coriolanus's mind, at least, the citizens have split feet or can be divided into their constituent toes. His error, locally here and more generally elsewhere, is to see the citizens as people rather than as crowds, as orts not wholes, as toes not feet. That is to say, his Achilles' heel – a pun Shakespeare is too merciful to invoke – is his inability to think synecdochally. Unlike the frail part-feet of the citizens 'he moves like an engine and the ground shrinks before his treading' (5.4.18-21).

The play's battles are fought in terms of feet. When Coriolanus's forces retreat, one of the senators calls them a 'cloven army' (1.4.21). But when the battle changes course, the citizens are 'Following the fliers at the very heels' (1.5.20). Toward the end of Act 1, Aufidius tells Coriolanus to 'Fix thy foot' in single combat (1.9.5). Coriolanus won't budge in his first victory speech either: 'I […] stand upon my common part with those / That have beheld the doing' (1.10.38-40). Menenius proposes to 'gratify his noble service that / Hath thus stood for his country' (2.2.40-1). Standing up and standing still are versions of withstanding, as in Ephesians 6:13 'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand'.[83] So Cominius and Lartius cunningly stand too and try to make Coriolanus sit. This otherwise odd episode makes sense if we place it within the play's language of standing, and winning and losing footing. Like Milton's Samson, Coriolanus will not

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[82] Helen Gardner, ed., *The Metaphysical Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.xxiii. The term 'punceit' is, alas, my own.

[83] All biblical references correspond to The King James Bible (Authorised Version, 1611). References have been checked against the 1570 text of the Geneva Bible to rule out substantial discrepancy in phrasing or wording.

'idly sit' (76). Only standing, or standing up, will prove that Coriolanus's feet are resilient, sturdy, entire and defiant.

Coriolanus is praised for his 'loving motion to the common body' (53). He stands still, alone, but moves others, like a military version of the *primum movens* – without himself moving, he shifts his own troops forward and sends his enemies fleeing by their heels. He may not be one of the common body, but he has a useful and benevolent relationship 'to' it. Yet within one hundred lines Cominius has begun to slide the praise into criticism: 'Our spoils he [Coriolanus] *kick'd* at, / And look'd upon things precious as they were / The common muck of the world' (124-6, my emphasis). Coriolanus mistakenly assumes the tribunes' foot-language, talking about how he wants to 'o'erleap' the popular celebratory customs (138). Feet are now an instrument for stepping over and kicking at the populace, rather than standing with or alongside them.

This is the vocabulary of social standing, an implication alive in the early seventeenth century (*OED* 2a). Feet can indeed be grubby when covered in 'The common muck of the world', whether that be the mud of the city or the soil of the tilling field. The grubbiness of the foot is exacerbated when it is trod over the 'unworthy scaffold' of the public playhouse (*Henry V* 0.10) – as the anti-theatricalist John Northbrooke railed, 'they that go with clean unpolluted foot into the church of God must utterly altogether abstain from ungodly and profane places, as these [theatres] are'.[84] In Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599) the young apprentice Simon Eyre never refers to himself as a cobbler, preferring the more distinguished 'cordwainer' (4.110), while the shoemakers' union in Scene 18 desperately makes the trade out to be a 'Gentle [i.e. noble] Craft' (169). The Lord Mayor of Dekker's play is furious at his daughter running off with Eyre: 'A Fleming butter-box, a shoemaker! / Will she forget her birth' (16.43-4).

In Act 3 the play's language of feet reaches its metrical stomping ground. The tribunes lambast Coriolanus:

> SICINIUS He's a disease that must be cut away.
> MENENIUS Oh, he's a limb that has but a disease:
> > Mortal, to cut it off; to cure it, easy.
> > > […]
> SICINIUS The service of the foot,
> > Being once gangren'd, is not then respected
> > For what before it was.

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[84] John Northbrooke, *A Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes, with Other Idle Pastimes* (1577) in *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook*, ed. Tanya Pollard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.6.

BRUTUS   We'll have no more:
          Pursue him to his house, and pluck him thence,
          Lest his infection, being of catching nature,
          Spread further.
MENENIUS   One word more, one word.
            This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find
            The harm of unscann'd swiftness will, too late,
            Tie leaden pounds to's heels.

                                                    (3.1.296-8, 308-315)

Sicinius attempts to describe Coriolanus as a disease before Menenius, permanently aware of the body's political uses, pares the image back to 'a limb that has but a disease'. Yet Sicinius ruthlessly cuts away from Menenius's metaphor; it is as though, earlier in the play, the plebeians had not accepted the fable of the belly. Sicinius's new diagnosis of 'gangrene' dismantles the fable of the belly by upholding it: if gangrene affects one part of the body it is likely to be 'of catching nature' and spread. In this perversion – or perverse consummation – of Menenius's fable, all parts of the body are at risk.

Menenius does not yield. He warns the tribunes about their own feet: their 'tiger-footed rage' will 'Tie leaden pounds to's [Coriolanus's] heels'. The ominous 'heels' reappear – previously the heels of Aufidius's unexpectedly vanquished army – as if to imply that the tribunes' assault is already, latently a defeat. For the 'unscann'd swiftness' of the tribunes is metrically as well as materially dangerous. '[U]nscann'd' hints at 'scan' in *OED* 1a's sense 'To analyse (verse) by determining the nature and number of the component feet' (first recorded usage 1398). Earlier in the scene Brutus warns Coriolanus of his rhetorical 'over-measure' (144), likewise glimpsing at the prosodic meaning of 'measure' (*OED* 14 'Metrical or rhythmical sound or movement'). In the next scene, Volumnia joins these prosodist politicians and rebukes her son with the language of metre:

          Because that now it lies you on to speak
          To th'people; not by your own instruction,
          Nor by th'matter which your heart prompts you,
          But with such words that are but roted in
          Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables
          Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.

As feet are increasingly shattered or diseased, so syllables are 'Of no allowance to your bosom's truth' – through hendiadys, they can be disowned and dismissed as 'bastards'. Yet there is no smaller metrical unit to rely on (see Chapter 3). Feet fall into syllables; syllables tip into void. The prosodic world of *Coriolanus* collapses in on itself. Above we have a tidied modern text (Arden 3, edited by Philip Brockbank). In Folio, we find a speech more generatively degenerated (partly because it is at a juncture between two pages and the work of two compositors):

> Because, that
> Now it lyes you on to speake to th'people:
> Not by your owne instruction, nor by'th'matter
> Which your heart prompts you, but with such words
> That are but roated in your Tongue;
> Though but Bastards, and Syllables
> Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.

Brockbank has turned the passage into a smooth blank verse which it does not need, albeit doing so with an understandable desire to restore 'the copy' from which the Folio text was set.[85] He loses the lovely (and peculiarly touching) way Volumnia kicks into verse, or at least something like pentameter, only in the second line of her speech, switching to oratory at the moment she advocates her son's oration. The syntactical emphasis on 'Syllables' is also stronger in the Folio thanks to its punctuated division from 'Bastards'. And the Arden text misses Volumnia's overspilling then compression in the middle of her speech, as she squeezes her words into tetrameter – a terse verse – before easing into pentameter at last (the Arden text can't always sustain pentameters either, but tries to keep up appearances). Volumnia, like her son, feels the art of smooth speaking difficult – found in Folio, lost in Arden. That said, the play's metrical texture does not much change as its two types of feet coalesce. The metre does not disintegrate, unravel or straighten out. The play's prosody remains neutral, without committing to any particular character or argument; perhaps this is one reason why it can seem so coolly unsympathetic.

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[85] Philip Brockbank, ed., *Coriolanus* (London: Arden, 2007), p.15.

The play ends with a '"reverse" discourse' of its feet.[86] Coriolanus knows that acceding to his mother's requests constitutes a failure to withstand. He realises that 'my body's actions [will] teach my mind / A most inherent baseness' (3.2.122-3). He therefore goes through the motions about standing in Aufidius's house (4.5.25) and fixing his foot there, but other characters have by now appropriated the play's feet. Brutus praises the tribunes for having 'stood to't in good time' (4.6.10), and Aufidius tricks Coriolanus to avoid '[laming] the foot / Of our design' (4.7.8-9).

Finally we reach the play's perplexing stage direction: Aufidius 'stands on' the knifed Coriolanus. In Thomas North's Plutarch (1579), 'they all fell upon [Coriolanus], and killed him in the market place, none of the people once offering to rescue him' – Coriolanus is never stood upon.[87] Productions flinch from the stage direction. David Thacker's 1994 RSC production had the onstage characters 'form a "cage" over Coriolanus and the others lean in to try and get him'.[88] David Farr's 2002-3 Old Vic production saw Aufidius yank out Coriolanus's heart. Lawrence Olivier famously leapt from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's balcony before being stabbed, and Ralph Fiennes's film Coriolanus was enveloped by a cloud of assassins. Of all recent productions, only Greg Doran's (2007) directed Aufidius to 'stand on COR back' and then, half-jealously, 'push boys off him'.[89]

The original stage direction seems absurd, the kind of clunky motion that risks sniggers in an audience. It also seems an inappropriate reversal of the characters we have seen thus far, as though Hamlet had conquered Fortinbras. Yet there is manifold rationale for the stage direction. J.L Styan points out Volumnia's ironical words about Coriolanus at 1.3.47-8 – 'He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee, / And tread upon his neck' – and remarks upon how Shakespeare 'has translated simple stage business into a repercussive symbol'.[90] Yet the stage business is nowhere near as simple and far more repercussive than Styan reckons. 'Aufidius stands on him' takes up and takes on the Second Lord's appeal to 'Stand, Aufidius, / And trouble not the peace' (5.6.126-7). The Second Lord is speaking in defence of Coriolanus so that Aufidius's posture, standing atop Coriolanus, is one of defiance to 'the lords of the city' (61) as well as a sarcastic fulfilment of the lord's appeal (since the peace will, Aufidius implies, not be troubled now that he is standing on the dead troublemaker Coriolanus: like Christ trampling the serpent's head, evil has been pacified (Luke 10:19)). Aufidius, remember, has not killed Coriolanus. It was the

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[86] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998 [1976]), p.101.

[87] Plutarch, 'The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus', excerpted from *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*, pp.313-368 in Brockbank, ed., *Coriolanus*, p.367.

[88] David Thacker, prompt book for 1994 RSC *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, RSC/SM/1/1994/COR2.

[89] Gregory Doran, prompt book for 2007 RSC *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, RSC/SM/1/2007/COR1.

[90] J.L. Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.62.

'conspirators' who did that. By standing on Coriolanus's body, Aufidius takes an undeserved responsibility for his death (in all three Folios the stage direction starts to grammatically winnow the conspirators from several to one, as though yielding to Aufidius's claims: 'Draw both the Conspirators, and *kil[l]s* Martius' (my emphasis)).

The stage direction turns out to be one of the play's greatest moments. It is not a rudimentary observance of Hamlet's advice about suiting the word to the action and the action to the word. It is a visual subsumption of *Coriolanus*'s foot language, as well as the transvalued culmination of the play's 'punceit'. By construing the pun in 'an imaginatively wide sense' (sometimes a sense itself widened by pun), Shakespeare understood that his poetic drama need not proceed 'on the same assumption as prose drama, except that it happens to be in verse'.[91] He thought, through his pun – with his pun a species of thought, rather than a belle-lettristic dalliance from thought – about how the metrical structures of a quantitative verse could be played upon in dramatic activity.

Doctor Johnson disliked Shakespeare's punning tendencies: he thought puns had a 'malignant power over his mind' which led him to find the 'fascinations' of wordplay 'irresistible'.[92] In a famous passage from the *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765), Johnson appoints himself Shakespeare's ex*pun*ger-in-chief:

> A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.[93]

Modern critics (if not all modern readers) have been kinder to Shakespeare than to Johnson. Marjorie Garber, for instance, has noticed the pun within Johnson's lament: the 'luminous

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[91] Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.321; John Wain, *The Living World of Shakespeare: A Playgoers' Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p.4.
[92] Samuel Johnson, 'Preface to the Plays of William Shakespeare', in *Samuel Johnson: The Major Works*, ed. Donald Greene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1984]), p.429.
[93] Ibid.

vapour' leading Shakespeare astray is a will o'th'wisp or, with a slight typographical sleight, the *W*ill of the Wisp, Will Shakespeare (whose name was already a pun, since for Elizabethans 'to shake a spear' was to masturbate; many of Shakespeare's sonnets turn upon the bawdy resonance of his name).[94]

Some of Johnson's writing is a brilliant fusion of Shakespearean and Johnsonian styles: his clauses zip from thought to thought ('Whatever be […] whether he be […] whether he be […] or') in a Shakespearean manner but within the ambit of a Johnsonian sentence. But elsewhere Johnson's criticism is provoked by the unadulterated 'malignant power' he is otherwise trying to ward off. A quibble is first a golden apple, then something 'poor and barren', then something to 'purchase', and finally 'the fatal Cleopatra'. The chain of thought is discernible (a golden apple turns into its opposite, something cheap and unfruitful, before being purchased back at such a high price that it turns into a famously golden monarch) but it also follows the torsions of the pun. Then there is the waywardness of Johnson's tenses, awkwardly moving from present to pluperfect to past, as if he has been captured by the play he alludes to – *Antony and Cleopatra*, with its dilated or aeonic quality (as if he, like the play's Octavia, is 'troubled with the time, which drives / O'er your *content* these strong necessities' (3.6.82-3), the same kind of passive acceptance that makes Shakespeare '*content* to lose' the world for a pun (my emphases)). If the will o'th'wisp is Will Shakespeare, he has led Johnson into an admirable mire.

By making so much (out) of the pun's perils, Johnson ends up taking Shakespeare's wordplay seriously. Molly Mahood has described how Shakespeare's puns can shape, or throw the shape of, his plays. When Macbeth hopes that murdering the king might 'be the be-all and the end-all', that 'here, upon this bank and shoal of time, / We'd jump the life to come' (1.7.6-7), editors usually gloss 'shoal' as a shoal of fish. This accords with the 'bank of time' (a riverbank) and spots how a shoal of fish seem to dart forwards, as though jumping 'the life to come'. Other editors read a 'bank and *school* of time' (my emphasis) since a 'bank' was also a school-bench (*OED* 'bank' n.2). This reading makes sense, too, in terms of the wider speech's horror at being '*taught* […] bloody *instructions*' (1.7.8-9, my emphases). Mahood treats the two readings as a pun-portmanteau; she sees school/shoal as a melding of the two words, and a thinking in two minds. The effect of the pun-portmanteau is that we 'experience one of those phantasmagoric impressions of enlarging and shrinking which are so much part of the total nightmare effect of *Macbeth*'.[95] As with Johnson, we can see how much Mahood's style owes to Shakespeare's enlarging and shrinking puns (or pun-portmanteau): she enlarges the scope of the pun to the

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[94] Marjorie Garber, *Profiling Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2008), p.268; Pauline Kiernan, *Filthy Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Most Outrageous Sexual Puns* (London: Quercus, 2006), p.9.
[95] Molly Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (London: Methuen & Co, 1957), p.24.

entire play ('the total nightmare effect') while thinking with the details of the pun, since the 'phantasmagoric impressions of enlarging and shrinking' in the play are also what we see when a shoal of fish is on the move: a silvery stretch and crush.

So puns can do serious business. They can be 'an illogical reinforcement of the logical scheme of thought', or 'act as solvents of mixed metaphors', or 'make the listener aware of a complex of ideas which enrich the total statement, even though they do not come into full consciousness'.[96] Beatrice and Benedick's puns are 'a way of avoiding candour'; Hamlet's puns 'concentrate his tragedy'; Macbeth's are those 'of a split consciousness, and a split conscience'.[97] Contradicting Doctor Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge had 'no hesitation in saying that a pun, if it be congruous with the feeling of the scene, is not only allowable in the dramatic dialogue, but oftentimes one of the most effectual intensives of passion'.[98] The double quality of Coleridge's final phrase again relies on a punning tendency, even though it isn't a pun: the pun can be one of passion's intensives or it can be a mode or means of intensifying passion. Coleridge's emphasis on congruity, on the pun in some way matching the 'feeling' of the scene, retains a Johnsonian neoclassicism while being more capacious (and capricious). When Desdemona asks the question that begins *Hamlet*, but this time of her lover – 'Who's there? Othello?' – and he replies 'Ay, Desdemona' (5.2.23-4) there is a gently, ominously comic pun between ay/I that is 'congruous with the feeling of the scene' without being wholly representative of it.

It was the quantitative prosodist Thomas Campion who complained of actors 'in comedies, when if they did pronounce *Memini*, they would point to the hinder part of their heads; if *Vides*, put their finger in their eye'.[99] For Campion this was a 'ridiculous' and 'childish observing of words'.[100] In the 'gestic poetry' of *Coriolanus* we find a more sophisticated alignment of stage action with verse activity, mediated through the pun and its movements of speech and body (whether of an actor or an imagined character).[101] David Bevington is not quite right to call Shakespeare's gestures 'the unspoken language of the theatre' since these gestures are spoken in the corresponding and correspondsive feet of his verse lines, a kind of performative or illocutionary utterance not normally detailed by speech-act theorists (although J.L. Austin thinks performative language 'hollow or void' when spoken by an actor, we might wonder what

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[96] Kenneth Muir, 'The Uncomic Pun', *Cambridge Journal*, 3 (1950), pp.472-485, 483.
[97] Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 2011), pp.102, 122, 127.
[98] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1813 lecture on *Richard II*, in *Coleridge on Shakespeare*, ed. Terence Hawkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.250.
[99] Thomas Campion, *Book of Airs* (1601) in *Songs and Masques; with Observations in the Art of English Poesy*, ed. A.H. Bullen (London: A.H. Bullen, 1903), p.5.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft*, p.56.

happens if a performer or character notices the physical implications of metrical feet yet can choose to ignore or reject them).[102]

If Shakespeare sought to give audiences and readers something richer than the obvious gestural acting Campion describes, he did not do so through a doctrinaire quantitative prosody in which the gestural potential of metrical feet was at once exalted into abstraction and regimented into stolidity. The foot punceit of *Coriolanus* makes sense on its own terms, but it also demonstrates how puns and metre together exercise (and thereby work out) language. Pun and metre are semantic colleagues. Puns 'depend on the existence of two orders or levels, of an apparent or assumed meaning, with a play-space in between' (although the pun can, more rarely, be used 'to back away from the echoes and implications of words', to condense a word into two meanings only).[103] As a pun shivers between two orders or levels, so the semantic meanings of a line can be bucked by its non-verbal metrical meanings. Even as the language of a line seems to be saying one thing (insisting on speed, for example), the metre can contradict it or cancel it or say another thing (insisting on sloth, for example). Indeed the relationship between pun and metre is not unlike the relationship between Aufidius and Coriolanus in Shakespeare's play: they stand for, against and alongside each other in a relationship of permanent, fruitful and meaningful preposition. When one of the two generals dies and the other triumphs, when one is able to stand *on* the other, leaving the other's feet redundant and downtrodden, the play must end – for there is nothing left to say.

It is therefore no coincidence that much metrical terminology is also pun. There is a long and contested etymology linking the iamb directly with a footstep (iamb might mean 'one-step' (*OED*)). The dactyl takes its Greek name *daktylos* from the word for 'finger' because its one long and two short syllables look like the bones of a finger (*OED*) but also because metre invites pun in the same way that prosopopoeia invites metaphor: likenesses attract. However, pun is immanent in a word in a way that metre is not. The likenesses between pun and metre instead stem from the way they work – they slant or inflect words; and they fracture words too, appreciating them for their components as well as in their totality. That is to say, metre reads language punningly. It can split a word into its constituent syllables, and the distribution of stress upon those syllables sometimes ekes out a pun. Both metre and pun share a reflexive function. They turn words in on themselves (though they also turn them loose, or outwards to other words).

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[102] David Bevington, *Action Is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gestures* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), p.viii; J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (1955), ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.22.

[103] Walter Redfern, *Puns: More Senses Than One* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.112; William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1930]), p.135.

One of the reasons critics write punningly about pun is this sense of inescapable reflexivity: 'almost thence my nature is subdued / To what it works in, like the dyer's hand' (111.6-7) – a phrase 'almost' subdued to pun too, since 'dued' within 'subdued' is only a pen's flick away from 'dyed' (as 'pen' is only a pen's flick away from 'pun'). Critics can write about metre without recourse to metre, but they struggle to write about puns without recourse to pun. Indeed pun is often taken to be a platonic explanation for literature, or the essential literary form which all others shadow – 'the figure of figures, a figure for figurality'.[104] Attridge has argued that rhyme works like the pun by 'bringing together two fields of discourse, and hence two different areas of experience, which the language normally holds separate'.[105] R.P. Blackmur thought of rhyme as 'the terminal form of punning' and alliteration 'the initial form of punning'.[106] Finding that all 'poetical' writing shares its essentially 'binary form', Geoffrey Hartman is moved to wonder if 'poetical or figurative speech' is 'all a modified punning'.[107] Perhaps Jean Cocteau was right to consider poetry 'a vast pun'.[108]

In *Language and Gesture: Essays on Poetry* (1954), Blackmur reads gesture with imaginative width: 'I think it may be said in conclusion that we feel almost everything that deeply stirs us as if it were a gesture, the gesture of our uncreated selves'.[109] This sense in which feelings come upon us almost as movement (as when we speak of being doubly 'touched' (*In Memoriam* 91.34)) is something Shakespeare invokes and provokes when writing *Coriolanus*. The feet of that play take metrical and physical forms, pacing out rhythms even in moments of reported or narrated gesture. Shakespeare was not, then, a quantitative prosodist *avant la lettre*, or according to the standards set out *dans les lettres* of Spenser and Harvey. However, he glimpsed in that prosody something of value: that metre can be experienced physically and non-physically in the same moment (we can try to sound out 'quantity' if we like, but most quantitative prosodists agreed that it was best apprehended in the mind alone). In quantitative prosody feet are at once perceivable (we can divide verse into them) and ephemeral (because so often free of the eye and ear). Likewise in Shakespeare's prosody, feet are manifest on stage but they also race through his verse – a combination wrought by pun; itself, germanely, at once abstract and concrete.

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[104] Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, literature, deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 2002 [1981]), p.210. Culler is here referring to metaphor.
[105] Derek Attridge, *Moving Words: Forms of English Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.61.
[106] R.P. Blackmur, *Language as Gesture: Essays in Poetry* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1954), p.17.
[107] Geoffrey Hartman, *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p.346.
[108] Jean Cocteau, qtd. in Georges Elgozy, *De l'humour* (Paris: Denoël, 1979), p.111 [Fr. *un gros calembour*].
[109] Blackmur, *Language as Gesture*, p.24.

Shakespeare's puns are not only (and not always) witty in themselves. They are also the cause of wit in others. A Google Images search for 'Shakespeare puns' yields pages of results, many of them worthwhile. Perhaps this is the best:

Fig. 1: 'I Came For The Dick Jokes', from www.imgarcade.com

The cartoon turns out to be amusingly untrue, even as it seeks to amusingly tell a truth. Shakespeare's puns (even his 'dick jokes') are not divorced from, or uncomfortably astride, Shakespeare's 'great literature'. They can be, and often are, the conduit by which metre becomes movement, by which the tremble or bellow of a character's voice can find its gestural complement or renunciation. By reading the 'long' and 'short' feet of quantitative prosody through the pun, or punningly, Shakespeare ushered a new kind of gestural language onstage. It made his own verse move.

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In doing this, Shakespeare was making a pun out of a sort of quantitative paradox (or making a sort of paradox out of a quantitative pun): that unlike real feet, from which they take their name, verse feet should not move. This is closer to paradox than to oxymoron or contradiction since we can move beyond it or coax things out of it. This quantitative sort of paradox can, in the philosopher W.V. Quine's terms, be 'veridical' or 'falsidical' (in the first case, it 'packs a surprise, but the surprise quickly dissipates itself as we ponder the proof'; in the second it also 'packs a surprise, but it is seen as a false alarm when we solve the underlying

fallacy').[110] Or, as in this instance, it can be a little of both. Shakespeare reveals the paradoxical qualities of quantitative verse by toying with its language of 'feet' in the already paradoxical environment of the theatre – where the truest poetry is the most feigning, where the 'paradox of acting' means that 'playing a role might mean losing a self', and (at least in the early modern theatre) where 'boy heroines' extolled a 'male effeminacy'.[111]

That said, metre has long been thought a function of movement (in and out of the theatre). At least since Ralph Waldo Emerson, critics have suggested that metre adopts the rhythm of a heart.[112] The relationship between heartbeat and metrical beat is rarely conceived the other way around – though if both heart and metre survive on pulse, why shouldn't metre affect the heart as well as, or rather than, the other way around? (In *The Return from Parnassus* (c.1601) Judicio refers to Shakespeare's 'heart-throbbing lines' (1.2.302; in MS.; 'heart-robbing' in the 1606 printed text) as though the lines provoke the heart's throbs rather than the heart the lines'.) These physiological accounts of metre are usually little more than 'convention in its innovative guise'.[113] In the Renaissance, anyway, Emerson's analogy between the heartbeat and the metrical beat could not have been so easily sustained. Renaissance physicians disputed whether the heartbeat and the pulse were synchronous or alternating which, if transferred to metrical analysis, promises something more various than Emerson's two-tone prosody.[114] Galen, the *fons et origo* of much Renaissance biology, reckoned that the pulse was uneven – sometimes beating rapidly, sometimes slowly, sometimes in an unpredictable mixture of the two.[115] On that basis the de-dum of iambic pentameter would be penetrated by other, more frenetic or languid rhythms.

Another popular physiological account of metre figures it as corresponsive with breath or breathing. There is often said to be a natural relationship between iambic pentameter and breath; specifically, that we can speak an iambic pentameter line with one breath. If true, given the alexandrine (twelve-syllable line) is the French equivalent of the iambic pentameter, and is similarly lauded in France as a natural, breathable form, 'we would have to develop a poetics of

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[110] W.V. Quine, 'The Ways of Paradox', pp.3-20 in *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1966), p.11.

[111] Denis Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957 [1773]) [Fr. *paradoxe sur le comédien*]; Peter G. Platt, *Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p.150; Phyllis Rackin, 'Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage', *PMLA*, 102.1 (1987), pp.29-41; Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983), p.31.

[112] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Poetry and Imagination', pp.9-75 in *Letters and Social Aims* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co, 1886), p.49.

[113] Donald Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme: Device and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p.2.

[114] Nancy G. Siraisi, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities After 1500* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp.334-337.

[115] Galen, 'The pulse for beginners', pp.325-345 in *Galen: Selected Works*, trans. and ed. Peter Singer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.327.

respiration that has the French breathing less often than the English'.[116] At least the connection between metre and breath has Renaissance precedent. Literary critics often describe how Renaissance punctuation (both in verse and prose) was 'a guide to breathing and pausing rather than […] to the syntactical relationship between grammatical clauses', sometimes expressed with the (misleading) term 'rhetorical punctuation'.[117] So for Mindele Treip, Milton's epic similes in *Paradise Lost* (1667) should be read 'as a single, extended verse period, punctuated not grammatically but rhetorically' – that is, read by the lungs as much as by the brain.[118] Grammarians from Francis Clement to Elisha Coles consistently identified the syllable with breath (see Chapter 3).[119] Thomas Campion accordingly took in English monosyllables with 'many breathings'.[120] Most notably, the caesura was described again and again in this period as a 'breathing place'.[121]

Like the metrical foot, the caesura began life as a structural feature of quantitative verse. Classical prosody insists upon where the caesura should fall – for example, in the dactylic hexameter and iambic trimeter it should appear in or immediately after the third foot of the line (rather as feet were fixed, or their 'quantity' determined by where and how they were fixed). These quantitative regulations inspired Renaissance prosodists to compile their own suggestions: George Gascoigne recommends 'in a verse of eight syllables, the pause will stand best in the middle; in a verse of ten it will best be placed at the end of the first four syllables; in a verse of twelve, in the middle; in verses of twelve in the first and fourteen in the second, we place the pause commonly in the midst of the first, and at the end of the first eight syllables in the second'.[122] Again like the foot, quantitative prosody made the caesura static and fixed – so much so that in quantitative prosody a caesura can occur within a word without any sense of abruption. When reading quantitatively, we should know from the length and metre of the verse line where the caesura can be found without the visual and acoustic intrusion of commas, colons and stops (exactly as the 'quantity' of a foot should be, or can be, determined without much need of the senses). The caesura becomes an invisible form of punctuation. Verse lines in Greek and Latin are largely or entirely unpunctuated to the eye but, for the knowledgeable quantitative

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[116] Paul Menzer, 'Lines', pp.113-151 in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.128.

[117] Abigail Rokison, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking: Text and Theatre Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.51.

[118] Mindele Treip, *Milton's Punctuation and Changing English Usage 1582-1676* (London: Methuen & Co, 1970), p.91.

[119] Francis Clement, *The Petty School* (1587) in *Four Tudor Books on Education*, ed. Robert Pepper (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1966), p.11; Elisha Coles, *The Compleat English Schoolmaster* (1674), ed. R.C. Alston (Menston: Scolar Press, 1969), p.108.

[120] Thomas Campion, *Observations in the Art of English Poesy* (1602) in *Songs and Masques; with Observations*, ed. Bullen, p.242.

[121] Sidney, *Defence*, p.248; Puttenham, *Art*, pp.163-165.

[122] Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes*, p.38. See also Puttenham, *Art*, p.164.

reader, they are replete with the inaudible pauses of invisible caesura. This, we recall, is verse to be senselessly apprehended more than it is to be seen or heard.

However, the standard Renaissance description of the caesura as a 'breathing place' challenges the senselessness of quantitative prosody. It associates the caesura with the noise of breathing. It also imaginatively opens up the caesura and asks what kind of 'breathing' is going on in this 'place'. Although today we think the caesura an invocation to inhalation, it can just as well be an opportunity to exhale or hold the breath. Richard Mulcaster, the sixteenth-century headmaster of Merchant Taylors' and St Paul's schools, taught his pupils how to breathe their way through verse: 'Now in the breathing there are three things to be considered, the taking in, the letting out, and the holding in of the breath'.[123] After Mulcaster's vocal coaching, the English Renaissance caesura begins to sound more capacious, more various and more noisy than its quantitative prosodists would like or admit.

Renaissance anatomists understood that the breath emerged from a series of convulsions and contractions in the throat and lungs. Galen notes that respiration is 'the forced exhalation produced by certain specific muscles'.[124] From Vesalius to Albinus to Pietro da Cortona to Leonardo da Vinci, anatomical drawings show the throat writhing with musculature.[125] Tendons strain against each other. Heads are thrown back in tortured anatomical revelation. Leonardo tears the mouth into a scream, centuries before Francis Bacon did, and shows us a peristaltic throat bulging behind it. The caesura, then, is the space in which all this torsion and tension of breathing takes place. Far from being static, it is a twisting morass of movement.

Even if we think of the caesura as a pause, we need not therefore mean that all movement stops; the pause could be more analogous to a musical rest, where the momentum of the phrase is unabated. Pause 'does not necessarily imply a cessation of the voice': the prolongation of a word can constitute a pause though, in one sense, the word keeps moving (or the reader/speaker keeps moving through or along the word).[126] Indeed Shakespeare often treats subclause as a form of pause, where his language seems to pause (or brace) against itself. In the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* (c.1596) he writes the words 'Alas, alas!' in the middle of a verse line, separating an exasperated ejaculation ('And lead the majesty of law in lyam / To slip him like a hound' (6.136-7)) from a new, calmer phrase ('Say now the King' (137)). 'Alas, alas!' appears interlined above a cancelled syllabic equivalent ('saying', spelled 'sayeng' in MS.). In

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[123] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions concerning the training up of children* (1581), ed. Robert Herbert Quick (London: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1888), p.77.

[124] Galen, qtd. in Armella Debru, 'Physiology', pp.263-283 in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. R.J. Hankinson (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.276.

[125] *Classical Anatomical Illustrations: Vesalius, Albinus, Leonardo and Others* (Mineola: Dover Publications Inc, 2008).

[126] T.S. Omond, *English Verse Structure* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1897), p.40.

revising the play for publication, Hand C deleted 'alas, alas' – suspicious of the long line it created but also, perhaps, of the weird wordy pause it effected.

This kind of writing and thinking makes the caesura a supple thing. Many Renaissance dramatists went further. They subvert the caesura by reversing it: what if, they venture, the caesura is not a 'breathing place' but a place where breathing ends? All the characters in 5.1 of *Dido Queen of Carthage* (printed 1594) can be heard to die upon their caesuras. Dido pivots on a caesura to make an antithesis between 'false Aeneas', who will live, and herself, who will die, so that the caesura becomes her last breath (at least in English): 'Live, false Aeneas! Truest Dido dies' (5.1.312). Iarbas follows Dido onto the pyre through her caesura ('Dido, I come to thee: ay me, Aeneas!' (319)). Then Anna follows Iarbus: 'Now, sweet Iarbas, stay! I come to thee!' (328). These caesuras are the moment at which characters decide upon death or, alternatively, they are the characters' last breaths having made their resolution to die. Faustus's dying caesura is both a last gasp and a last gasp attempt at salvation: it comes between his final clutchings at the material world ('I'll burn my books', he says, having promised to 'breathe a while' (14.120, 118)) and the ultimate realisation of his demise ('Ah, Mephistopheles!' (120)). The caesura allows room for a range of tones to mingle – the 'Ah' that breathes out of it, at the last, is an undecidable combination of regret, consummation, release and surrender.

By the seventeenth century, characters dying onstage don't so much breathe the caesura as gulp at it. Knowing that she has been poisoned, John Ford's Hippolita inhales as much breath as she can over twelve lines, each of which heave with caesura: 'Kept promise – O, my torment! – thou this hour / Hadst died, Soranzo. – Heat above hell-fire! – / Yet ere I pass away – cruel, cruel flames!' (4.1.89-91). These caesuras pant with desperate, expiring life; we can almost hear Hippolita's breath escaping through the gaps in her verse lines. Even Annabella's stately death, later in the same play, characterises breath as much as it characterises her: 'Thanks to the Heavens, who have prolonged my breath / To this good use. Now I can welcome death' (5.1.58-9). Annabella prolongs her breath and, with it, her sentence until she allows a sigh of relief ('Now I can welcome death') to emit from her final caesura.

It is true that, unmodernised, these speeches are more 'lightly pointed'.[127] Yet one of the legacies of quantitative prosody – a legacy that was being summoned by Spenser, Harvey et al – was its insistence that caesura could be deduced from a verse line without the need for visual or aural punctuation. When Edward Alleyn marked up his 'lightly pointed' part in Robert Greene's *Orlando Furioso* (c.1591) he didn't add any punctuation at all, as though aware, instinctively and

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[127] Anthony Hammond, 'The Noisy Comma: Searching for the Signal in Renaissance Dramatic Texts', pp.203-251 in *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance*, ed. Randall McLeod (New York: Ams Press, Inc, 1994), p.212.

invisibly, of where he might pause or progress through the verse.[128] The light pointing of manuscripts and printed texts may be part of a reborn classical tradition.

Technically as well as temporally, Shakespeare is between Marlowe (/Nashe) and Ford. They stand on either side of his writing: one's lines mighty, the other's mightily degenerate. Yet Shakespeare does not usually allow his characters a series of dramatic final breaths, sprung upon a caesura. The closest he comes to that is perhaps Mercutio's final speech, delivered half in life, half in death (3.1.105-8); or perhaps the caesuras during Hamlet's most famous speech (3.1.58-92), caesuras that therefore become the centre not only of his verse lines but of his existential arbitrage. Shakespeare finds his own – especially dramatic – role for caesura in what George T. Wright calls the 'epic caesura': a caesura which is preceded by an unstressed syllable.[129] The epic caesura yields an unusual space within the verse line. As a double unstress, it is more a silence than a pause. It can undermine the caesura: what ought to be structural becomes strained, or even emptied. However, in another sense it exalts the caesura's etymological root in the Latin *caedere* 'to cut', where the caesura is an 'incision' ('cut' *OED* 7), a division (*OED* 12a), a reduction (*OED* 20) and an extraction ('to cut out' *OED* 1, like a theatrical or compositional cut (*OED* 21a)). Witnessed through its etymology, the caesura is a mark of absence or lack (like the seemingly castrated 'cut' of the female genitalia, alluded to in *Twelfth Night* 2.5.88), of something missing from the verse line – and the epic caesura epically so.

Shakespeare's epic caesura encourages actors to fill in its blank with onstage action or gesture. In the first scene of *King Lear*, Kent reminds his sovereign 'Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound / Reverbs no hollowness' (Q 1.1.145, F 153-4). Those last three words form part of a verse line that Lear intervenes upon: 'Kent, on thy life, no more' (Q 146, F 155). The word 'hollowness' initiates (and describes) an epic caesura until Lear's monosyllabic stresses rescue the line from lapse. In performance actors frequently accompany Lear's words with action, first acknowledging the space in the verse line, then filling (or promptly succeeding) it with activity. John Gielgud, otherwise a statuesque Lear, suddenly twisted his head in Kent's direction. Laurence Olivier raised an arm in warning. Trevor Nunn's 2007 production of the play cut Kent's name from the line, leaving an even larger space for Ian McKellen to move in(to), and McKellen duly sprang from his throne. Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of the play even interpolated a stage direction to accompany Lear's words, in which he brandishes a sword at Kent.

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[128] Hammond, 'The Noisy Comma', p.215.
[129] George T. Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp.165-167.

If we study the foot 'punceit' across *Coriolanus*, and the action it shadows or bodies, we find it is often accompanied by epic caesura (1.1.192-3, 1.4.21, 1.9.5, 3.1.309, 3.1.313, though not its later reverse discourses at 4.6.10 and 4.7.8-9). For actors unsure whether to give these verbal locutions of feet a physical instantiation, the epic caesura nudges them to do so. It works as a cue or prompt (appropriately, since the Renaissance prompter was probably called to supply a line when an actor stamped his foot).[130] For more reflective and alert actors, it must also be a challenge to their volition: are these actions chosen by the actor or is the actor being acted upon by the author's prosody? In the case of *Coriolanus* the epic caesura cues the actor to perform a particular kind of action with a particular part of his or her body; but in the case of *Lear* the epic caesura constitutes a 'pre-articulate command to act – *now* – in some definitively undefined new way'.[131] As Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern note in their study of part-texts, the 'vulnerability' of the latter scenario leaches from the actor to the character: Lear is whipped into action like a slave not a king (just as, later in the play, he is more rained upon than reigning).[132]

The epic caesura appears in every Shakespeare play but not once in his poems. For Shakespeare, it is a particularly dramatic resource which is thoroughly implicated in the movement of actors onstage – it would be better renamed the 'dramatic caesura'. Shakespeare's dramatic caesura is quite unlike the static, unsensed caesuras of quantitative prosody. It precipitates movement. It makes itself seen and heard – heard by dint of its expansive silence, seen thanks to the onstage action it induces or suggests. Through caesura, as through the verse foot, Shakespeare rethinks quantitative prosody's foundational figures, language and rhetoric (broadly construed). Why, Shakespeare asks, should a foot stay still? What happens if a foot's 'quantity' – its length or shortness – is rendered not so much prosodically as physically? Isn't a gap visible and a pause audible? Shakespeare's more equivocal revival of quantitative prosody, very different from Spenser and Harvey's, keeps dramaturgy always in mind. He inaugurates a new language of gesture onstage, and enforces a novel relationship between prosody and the actor who speaks it and moves it (or doesn't speak or move it). Quantitative prosody was sometimes invoked by those with conservative instincts – keen to fix language, to mark it, to keep it steady or still. Conversely, Shakespeare's debt to quantitative prosody is his discovery of the motion immanent in language when supervened by metre. As a result his prosody is neither high-flown, divorced from the senses, nor rule-bound, stationary, stilted; it is, rather, his 'Movement's Song', forever singing as it goes, and going because it sings.[133]

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[130] Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.94-98.
[131] Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.134.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Audre Lorde, 'Movement's Song' in *Undersong: Chosen Poems Old and New* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1992).

2: Sequence

In 1602 the songwriter and poet Thomas Campion followed in Spenser and Harvey's footsteps. He sought royal approval for quantitative verse and royal disapproval for rhyme. In his *Observations in the Art of English Poesy* he claimed that 'it is demonstrably proved, and by example confirmed, that the English tongue will receive eight several kinds of numbers' – all of them governed by classical principles of duration and quantity more than by stress and rhyme.[1] Like Ascham, Campion promised the patrician 'guidance of art' and set out quantitative principles with a vigour that had otherwise faded in the twenty-two years since Spenser and Harvey wrote to each other.[2]

Campion dedicated the *Observations* to Baron Buckhurst, Elizabeth's Lord High Treasurer, inveighing to him about 'the vulgar and inartificial custom of rhyming'.[3] Baron Buckhurst (born Thomas Sackville) is today best known for his part in the authorship of *Gorboduc*, a play pioneeringly without rhyme (see Introduction). Although initially performed at the Inns of Court, *Gorboduc* was also staged before the Queen at Whitehall on 18 January 1562 by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple. As early as 1557, Elizabeth had translated passages from Seneca into blank verse – so *Gorboduc* may have taken its lead from the Queen as much as from Sackville's own reading in Latin prosody or poetry. In any case, Campion seems to have been making a belated appeal to Sackville both in his capacity as Lord High Treasurer and as an innovator in learned, stately, rhymeless writing. Perhaps he would advocate Campion's appositely learned, stately, rhymeless prosody to the Queen.

Campion's appeal for sophisticated ears fell only on deaf ones. One year after the publication of the *Observations*, Elizabeth was dead. The new monarch James I had written a treatise in favour of Scots dialect poetry and, with it, rhyme. In the same year, the poet-historian Samuel Daniel published a *Defence of Rhyme* in direct riposte to Campion. Daniel and Campion had form, as well as writing about it. They had both contributed poems to Thomas Newman's unauthorised edition of *Astrophil and Stella* (1591). Most of Campion's poems there were rhymeless and quantitative; most of Daniel's were Petrarchan and rhymed. Daniel's task in the *Defence* was to ensure that Campion, whom he now called his 'adversary', had advanced little more than the prosodic road not taken. For Daniel, rhyme was a 'harmonical cadence' which

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[1] Campion, *Observations*, frontispiece.
[2] Campion, *Observations*, p.241.
[3] Campion, *Observations*, p.231.

gives poets 'wings to mount […] to a far happier flight' than quantitative verse.[4] Conversely, Campion was advancing 'unlawful laws' and laying a Procrustean bed for English poetry.[5] Why, Daniel asked, should our native verse be 'measured by the squares of France and Italy'?[6]

If Campion's appeal was directed to Thomas Sackville and, through him, to Elizabeth, then Daniel's was directed squarely at the new king. The 1603 edition of the *Defence* is bound with, and preceded by, Daniel's *Panegyric Congratulatory Delivered to the King's Most Excellent Majesty*. Edward Blount's frontispiece suggests that Daniel had 'heretofore written' the *Defence* but had waited until now to publish it, as part of a concerted appeal to James's poetical sensibilities (as well as to his ego). In the long title of the 1603 *Defence*, Daniel indicated that he had read James's treatise on poetics by describing the king's 'inclination' in favour of native rhyming verse.[7] Where Campion, Harvey and Spenser had attempted to prepare – and sometimes to pave – the way for their neoclassical version of English verse, Daniel instead seized an opportune moment. While it was the quantitative prosodists who hymned the timeliness of their verse, particularly in the duration of its syllables, Daniel was more instinctively and ruthlessly kairotic.

He was also consistent. When he wrote in verse he rhymed, whereas Campion continued to rhyme seemingly in spite of his *Observations* (so much in spite of them that he published rhyming song lyrics with all the editions of his treatise). There are many explanations for why this should be the case. Edward Doughtie urges us to 'at least pose the question of whether Campion restrained his music to fit his theory; or whether he cut his theory to fit his musical ability'.[8] In making that argument, or posing that question, Doughtie hits on another reason for Campion's alleged contradictions: Campion rhymes his song lyrics much more than he does his poems. When he translates his Latin poetry into English, for instance, he especially tends not to rhyme. Perhaps Campion's *Observations* are concerned only, or moreso, with English poetry not song (in which rhymes are more acceptable).

Derek Attridge and Catherine Ing hear in Campion's rhymes his talent for compromise. Ing: 'In fact, it would seem that classical prosody has undoubtedly given Campion ideas, but that his success in putting them into practice comes almost entirely from his remarkably delicate and acute perception of the facts of English speech' (as when he notices how a Latin hexameter takes about the same time to speak as an English iambic pentameter).[9] Attridge: 'he could have written

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[4] Daniel, *Defence*, pp.202, 207.
[5] Daniel, *Defence*, p.217.
[6] Daniel, *Defence*, p.208.
[7] Daniel, *Defence*, pp.198-199.
[8] Edward Doughtie, *English Renaissance Song* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), p.157.
[9] Catherine Ing, *Elizabethan Lyrics: A study in the development of English metres and their relation to poetic effect* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), p.106.

quantitative verse very like Sidney's or Fraunce's, but when he turned to the real business of poetry his ear for English rhythms and his skill in the native tradition […] made him very selective in applying the rules, and he produced something quite different from his predecessors'.[10] Campion achieved originality at the cost of obsolescence. By the end of 1603, his *Observations* had been surpassed. The king was unfavourable, Sackville was unresponsive, and Daniel went unanswered.

Yet Campion, Spenser and Harvey's quantitative criticism of rhyme was coherent on its own terms. For them rhyme was 'ear-pleasing', 'that easy flatterer'.[11] By appealing so grossly to two senses – the eye as well as the ear – rhyme affronted their ambition for a less sensory, more recondite poetry. We might almost think of quantitative versification as akin to Renaissance scepticism about the value and accuracy of the senses; Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* (1580) and Francisco Sanchez's *That Nothing Is Known* (1581) were published around the same time as Spenser and Harvey's letters (and it is probably not an accident that Spenser, Harvey, Ascham and Sidney were all avowed Protestants: 'it became a stock claim of the Counter-Reformers to assert that the Reformers were just sceptics in disguise').[12] Even today rhymes can seem embarrassingly trite, like the comic obverse to blank verse. Delbert Spain recounts how one actor was so opposed to Richard II dying on a rhyme that he decided to read the rhyme-word 'die' as a stage direction instead (actors 'don't always find rhyme easy to deal with').[13]

Today not many read Campion, or Harvey and Spenser's letters. But their hostility to rhyme percolated into the writing of better-known authors. In the 1674 edition of *Paradise Lost*, Milton claims he has recovered heroic poetry from 'the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming'; his poem will instead be bound tight against rhyme.[14] Yet even in this note on 'The Verse', we can already hear the 'jingling sound' of assonance in Milton's prose – tr**ou**blesome, m**o**dern, b**o**ndage – working like a premonition of full rhyme.[15] Sure enough, John Diekhoff counts one hundred and twenty four examples of clear end-rhyme (rhyme separated by no more than two lines) and seventeen couplets in Milton's poem.[16] Like Adam and Eve, rhyme is banished – but it is also verse's typology for their return from banishment (a version of the Archangel Michael's promise to Adam in Book 12). So in hearing the rhymes of *Paradise Lost*, are

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[10] Attridge, *Well-weighed syllables*, p.224.
[11] Campion, *Observations*, pp.4, 243.
[12] Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Boyle*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.10.
[13] Delbert Spain, *Shakespeare Sounded Soundly: The Verse Structure and the Language* (Los Angeles: Garland Projects, 1988), p.117; Giles Block, *Speaking the Speech: An Actor's Guide to Shakespeare* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2013), p.176.
[14] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. John Leonard (London: Penguin, 2000), 'The Verse', p.1.
[15] Ibid.
[16] John Diekhoff, 'Rhyme in *Paradise Lost*', *PMLA*, vol. 29, no. 2 (June 1934), pp.539-543.

we hearing the contradiction of Milton's note to 'The Verse'? Or are we not to hear Milton's rhymes because Milton has told us not to hear his rhymes, or to think of them as something other than rhymes? In our desire to be the 'judicious ears' Milton is writing for, should we decide to unhear or not hear that which we might otherwise acknowledge? Is this a sort of interpretive constraint which would displace or transfer the kinds of bondage typically associated with rhyme? That is, how much should Milton's 'modern bondage of rhyming' also be 'troublesome' (his adjective or adverb)? Christopher Marlowe's prologue to the first part of *Tamburlaine* (c.1587) pledges the play away 'From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits' (1) yet Tamburlaine dies on a rhyme (company/die (*2 Tam* 5.3.247-8) and the second part of *Tamburlaine* ends on a rhyme (deplore/no more (252-3)). Perhaps, like Milton, Marlowe has been 'put […] into rhyme' (*Cymbeline* 5.5.63).

As part of their campaign to establish classical prosody in England, the quantitative writers perpetrated and perpetuated two falsehoods about rhyme. One: that it was a barbarian accretion, only to be found in Latin (if at all) because of vandal invasions at the fall of the Roman Empire (an event or process much in public consciousness after the 1527 Sack of Rome). Two: that rhyme and rhythm were linked, etymologically but also substantively, by a spirit of prosodic disobedience. Taken together, the quantitative prosodists' objections presented rhyme as the antithesis of poetry – to the extent that they wanted it written out of literature altogether. As we have seen, they nearly succeeded.

In quantitative prosody, the noun 'rhyme' is often accompanied by the adjectives 'barbarous' and 'vulgar'. Both the adjectives do historical work – they assert how 'in barbarized Italy, began that vulgar and easy kind of poetry which is now in use throughout most parts of Christendom, which we abusively call rhyme'.[17] (Even non- or semi-quantitative prosodists accepted this account of verse's history.)[18] We might expect rhyme's defenders to respond by instancing the many rhymes in Greek and Latin poetry. They don't. They attempt something much more audacious. Rhyme's defenders figure themselves *as* the Romans, fending off vandal onslaught. Daniel's *Defence* is subtitled 'upon the great discovery of these new measures threatening to overthrow the whole state of rhyme in this kingdom'.[19] He was ringing as many alarum bells as possible: the Latins had invaded England before, and the Spanish and French (speaking Latinate languages) threatened to do so again. In a recently discovered seventeenth-century autograph album, we find Daniel signing his name with a patriotic flourish as 'The

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[17] Campion, *Observations*, p.236.
[18] Puttenham, *Art*, pp.100-101; Webbe, *Discourse*, p.57.
[19] Daniel, *Defence*, p.199.

Englishman Samuel Daniel'.[20] His defence of rhyme was also the defence of a longstanding English civilisation.

Daniel's was an ingenious defence of the indigenous, but like Campion he risked self-contradiction: wasn't rhyme originally foreign, even if it had settled in England for centuries? The word 'rhyme' derives not from Old English but from the Latin *rhythmus* or *rythmus*; it carries itself etymologically close to notions of rhythm. *Rhythmus* and *rythmus* were the preserve of classical quantitative poetry until at least the eighth century, after which they gradually came to mean 'accentual verse with rhyme', then, eventually, 'rhymed verse, rhyme' (*OED*). For the quantitative prosodists of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, rhyme and rhythm were unholy twins. In their writing, 'rhythm' slides into 'rhythme' – orthographically both rhythm and rhyme (George Stanyhurst refers to rhymed verse as 'rhythme *peale meale*', where rhyme has found its way into rhythm at last: peale/meale).[21] Both rhyme and rhythm became tropes of rebellion – rhyme against quantitative prosody, rhythm against metre.

In one letter to Spenser, Harvey fumes at 'ill-favoured orthography, or rather pseudography'.[22] While the Latin etymology makes rhyme out to be complex and alien, Daniel found succour in alternative spellings: 'ryme' or 'rime' (he uses 'ryme' throughout the 1603 and 1607 texts of the *Defence*).[23] These two words derive from Anglo-Norman: they are adrift in the Channel, neither fully English nor French, like the Law French that still lingered in the courts of Renaissance England or the hybrid language at the close of *Henry V* (which prompts us to wonder who has conquered whom). Nevertheless Daniel's etymology brings rhyme closer to home. As a defender of rhyme, one of Daniel's unsung achievements is to boost the word 'rhyme' and not to yield to the quantitative prosodists' elisions of rhyme with rhythm ('rhythme'). Daniel's defence of rhyme is also *A Defence of Ryme* (even the frontispiece carries that particular spelling), of rhyme as native, and as distinct from rhythm.

Shakespeare read, and often ransacked, Daniel. He drew on everything from his *Delia* sonnets (first printed 1592) to his tragedy of Cleopatra (1594) to his history of the Wars of the Roses (1595). The antiquary Thomas Fuller reports that Shakespeare was a guest at Daniel's house in Old Street, and Daniel was Licenser of the Children of the Queen's Revels (and thereby a substantial part of the early modern theatre scene) from 1604.[24] Edward Blount, who first

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[20] Samuel Daniel, entry in the autograph album of Erhard Grunthaler, Austrian National Library, Vienna, Cod.Ser.N.13.244, fo.125v.
[21] Stanyhurst, *Aeneid*, p.xx.
[22] Harvey, *Letters*, p.281.
[23] The texts have different printers (Edward Blount and John Windet / Samuel Waterson, respectively), so the spelling is most likely to be Daniel's.
[24] Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (1662), 3 vols., ed. P. Austin Nuttall (London: Thomas Tegg, 1840), vol. 3, pp.104-105.

printed Daniel's *Defence*, had an extended association with Shakespeare. He published *Love's Martyr* in 1601, entered *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* in the Stationer's Register in 1608, and collaborated with the Jaggards on the printing of the First Folio (1623). Shakespeare's Stratford neighbour Richard Field had printed the precipitate text for Daniel's *Defence* – Campion's *Observations* – as well as George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* and Shakespeare's narrative poems (1594/5). Field's printing house, near the Blackfriars, was a kind of library in which books could be consulted or read straight through.[25] Given all of this, it is likely that Shakespeare knew or knew of Daniel's *Defence*.

Shakespeare also seems to have been aware of rhyme's lexical field, whether in respect of its spelling or its myriad terminology, and in being so perhaps had Daniel in mind ('rime' is Shakespeare's preferred spelling, as far as we can tell, throughout his career). While the quantitative prosody debates buzzed around Elizabeth's court, writers were thinking about rhyme both by spelling it and naming it. Ariosto's translator John Harington was the first Englishman to publically write of 'feminine rhyme' – that is to say, rhymes that are unstressed on their final, rhyming syllable. These feminine rhymes caused Harington disquiet – the French may 'call them […] the sweeter' but Harington will 'answer this': 'I would have the ear fed but not cloyed with these pleasing and sweet falling metres'.[26] Harington is not only gendering, or acquiescing in the gendering of, the rhyme by name; feminine rhyme is 'pleasing' and 'sweet' like a temptress. Its sweetness is indeed a cloying of two senses: it can be smelled by the nose and tasted by the tongue (as was the case with much Renaissance writing, since ink was often mixed with sugar). In the *Defence of Rhyme*, Daniel picks up where Harington leaves off: he avers that feminine rhymes are 'fittest for ditties'.[27] He tells us of a conversation with Hugh Sanford, secretary to Mary Sidney and tutor to the Earl of Pembroke, in which Sanford warned Daniel 'of that deformity' when writers 'mix uncertainly feminine rhymes with masculine'.[28] He revised his writing accordingly: in reprints of the sonnet sequence *Delia*, Daniel deleted twelve feminine rhymes for the 1594 edition and another twenty-five for the 1601 edition.

For Daniel and Harington, feminine rhymes should not be allowed congress with their masculine counterparts. Like rhyme more generally, they risk making unsavoury or unsafe connections. Put bluntly, rhyming is a little too much like sex. Certainly, the word 'rhyme' is more hermaphroditic than it ought to be: the *OED*'s complex of etymologies imply it should be gendered masculine rather than feminine (the 'discrepancy still lacks a satisfactory explanation'

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[25] Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, eds., *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.146-147.

[26] John Harington, trans. *Orlando Furioso* (London: 1591, Richard Field), 'An Apologie of Poetry', n.p.

[27] Daniel, *Defence*, p.224.

[28] Ibid.

(*OED*)). This is apt since rhyme, feminine or otherwise, plays fickly across gender. Although *Love's Labour's Lost* (1595) is a play awash with rhyme and with the word 'rhyme', its characters keep making imaginative recourse to it as a tricky Cupid – the 'extemporal god of rhyme' (1.2.174) or the 'Regent of love-rhymes' (3.1.176). Rhymes are 'guards on wanton Cupid's hose' (4.3.55). Cupid was, of course, one of Hermaphroditus's siblings; Caravaggio paints the genitalia of his *Sleeping Cupid* (c.1608) with a non-committal chiaroscuro. Elsewhere in Shakespeare rhyme, like Cupid, is a thing of 'dangerous' seduction (*LLL* 1.2.102). Egeus complains that Lysander 'hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child; / That thou, Lysander, hast given her rhymes' (*Dream* 1.1.28). Henry V condemns 'those fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours' (5.2.156-7).

Thinking about the double gender of rhyme, Maureen Quilligan has written of how 'Spenser consciously chose feminine rhymes for specific feminine contexts', concluding that Mary Wroth 'appears to have noticed the gender dichotomy in rhyme' too, so that rhyme 'may well have been part of the discursive control exercised over women; but also it therefore may have provided a tool by which women could open up a discourse of their own'.[29] These critical observations are tentative. Yet some of Shakespeare's feminine rhymes brazenly figure forth female or feminine subjects. Sonnet 20 is not only about the hermaphroditic quality of the poem's 'master-mistress' (2); it is also about the hermaphroditic quality of the poem. Every rhyme in the sonnet is feminine (like Sonnet 17 in Daniel's *Delia*). These feminine rhymes set the poem's masculine bawdy to a more plangent, sophisticated versification – which turns what might be a crude *double entendre* into a plaint for frustrated love ('By adding one thing to my purpose nothing' (12), with the stress slipping sadly from the end of the line). Rufus Wainwright's setting of the sonnet works so well because his voice is characteristically able to catch the cadential nature of a feminine rhyme or ending, and because his homosexuality (which might match the poem's speaker's) better allows him to arbitrate between the sonnet's alternately masculine and feminine comportments. Sonnet 20's couplet ends the poem by reversing it. Now 'women's pleasure' (13) takes the ascendancy and the final unstressed syllable sounds provocatively like a feminine fillip, as the agglomerated 'women' (4) of the poem seize the master-mistress's love for their own. The couplet's feminine endings are not, therefore, those of a feminine voice; indeed, they have been turned to misogynist ends.

When Tarquin approaches Lucrece's chamber, Shakespeare administers a subtler version of feminine rhyme. We hear that everything around Tarquin doth 'stay him' (323) and 'delay him'

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[29] Maureen Quilligan, 'Feminine Endings: The Sexual Politics of Sidney's and Spenser's Rhyming', pp.311-327 in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp.318, 324.

(325). It is as though a female voice, perhaps Lucrece's, is imploring Tarquin backward. And not only through feminine rhyme: there is a faint apotropaic quality in the word 'delay' too since, fragmented into its constituent syllables, it proposes to de-lay Tarquin, to stop him lying down with, or upon, Lucrece. It is typically shrewd of Shakespeare to make 'him' the syllable upon which a feminine rhyme occurs.

There are good reasons to no longer write of 'masculine' and 'feminine' rhyme, because we can dislike the implications of both terms, but there are better reasons to preserve the terms since poets like Shakespeare have fruitfully pursued those implications. Shakespeare does so at greatest length in *The Taming of the Shrew*, a play that 'seems to prefigure the most oppressive modern assumptions about women and to validate those assumptions as timeless truths'.[30] It is pervaded by 'offensive male smugness', 'altogether disgusting to modern sensibility'.[31] The play has few rhymes; nor can it have, justly, since it is not interested in the acoustic model of harmony most rhymes advance (rhyme almost disappears between Petruchio's initial courtship and Katherine's speech of submission). *The Taming of the Shrew* is a discordant drama. It is full of beatings, smackings, degradations and tortures. It is Shakespeare's first attempt to yoke Marlovian violence with the comic domestic, an effect that he would later achieve, with more success but scarcely less queasiness, in *Othello* (1603).

The play's first rhyme is hesitant, dubious, and it sounds on the fringes of the play, too, during Sly's first scene: 'spleen' / 'extremes' (Induction 1.135-6). Both sonically and semantically, it announces the nature of the play to follow – this will be sickly stuff, forced to acoustic, moral and humoral excess (there are, by contrast, no rhymes in the opening scene of that mysterious theatrical counterpart *The Taming of a Shrew*). Many of the play's male characters speak in feminine rhyme when they fear emasculation, with the rhymes again sounding out possibilities for humoral imbalance. When Tranio and Lucentio change places, and with it status, they speak feminine rhymes across each others' names (1.1.220-241). When Hortensio speaks in Italian he also speaks in feminine rhyme (1.2.25-6), as though suckered into womanliness by that conventionally feminine language (or so it seemed to many Renaissance readers). Petruchio unmans his first, smartly masculine rhyme between 'gate' and 'pate' (1.2.11-12) by later rhyming the former with 'do it' (38). Gremio's blockish, blokeish banter about how Petruchio will 'win her [Katherine]' (1.2.216) is undone by Grumio's bathetic feminine rhyme upon 'dinner' (217). The play's female characters would have been played by boys, perhaps on the cusp of puberty or

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[30] Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.54.
[31] Philippa Kelly, 'What Women Want: The Shrew's Story', pp.181-191 in *Storytelling: Critical and Creative Approaches*, ed. Jan Shaw, Philippa Kelly and L.E. Semler (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), p.182; George Bernard Shaw, qtd. in Dana Aspinall, 'The Play and the Critics', pp.3-41 in *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*, ed. Dana Aspinall (New York: Routledge, 2001), p.30.

adolescence, and so would have spoken with 'squeaking', 'unstable', 'cracked' voices (like 'the mannish crack' in *Cymbeline* 4.2.237) – all of which would have evinced 'a body in transition' and revealed 'the precarious, shifting nature of male identity' as much as they ventured or achieved a travesty of the feminine and female.[32] This is a play about the indenturing or impressment of a boy actor, as well as a play about a marriage; it thinks of the two as almost metaphorically related to each other, in a mode of satire which faces both ways.

However, many of the play's scenes end on a feminine couplet and thereby insist upon a female voice being heard (although we should remember that it is always, because spoken by boys, a male voice too). So the play initially allows a female voice to prosodically challenge the male. Or it allows something like a female voice – the literary or dramatic figure of a female voice, perhaps – to test certain possibilities which are never anchored to one female character. Gradually the play's feminine rhymes are worn down. Katherine's first rhyme is masculine – but it is also internal, as though testing the conventions of a how a good woman ought to rhyme (1.1.79). Petruchio matches Katherine's internal rhyme with his own; but his is between 'wive' and 'thrive' (1.2.55), exactly what he proposes to spend the play doing. The play's menfolk constantly put masculine rhyme upon Katherine's name: 'Katherine the curst – / A title for a maid of all titles the worst' (127-8). At the same time, Katherine is afforded fewer and fewer lines. By the end of the drama she has spoken only 8% of the play's lines compared to Petruchio's 22%, despite their occupying eight scenes each.[33] Petruchio, chief among the men of the play (with the possible exception of Baptista), has made Katherine 'Sound to his will' (*The Tamer Tamed* 1.2.170) – which is to say, as the play goes on she barely has the will to sound.

Despite this, before the final scene there is a poise between feminine and masculine rhyme; sometimes the play tips in favour of one, but soon balance will be restored via the other. There is a prosodic sense that, even in its bleaker episodes, the play could yet emerge into something more humane, more merry, more like *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598). Katherine's closing speech comes as a shock; it is the comedies' version of Cordelia's death at the end of *King Lear*. All of her rhymes are now masculine (sway/obey, hearts/parts) and crescendo into an abjectly masculine double couplet: 'Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot / And place your hands below your husband's foot. / In token of which duty, if he please, / My hand is ready, may it do him ease' (5.2.181-4). It seems, in the actress Catherine Mears's phrase, as if the play's initially 'enormous freedoms' have been bound into 'a highly formalized resolution' (even if it is

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[32] Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp.22, 39.

[33] Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, eds., 'Introduction' to *The Taming of the Shrew* in *The RSC Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007), p.217.

not as painful a resolution as that in *The Taming of a Shrew*, where Katherine is instructed by stage direction to '[lay] her hand under her husband's feet').[34]

What comes next casts happy doubt upon Katherine's speech. Lucentio and Vicentio rhyme a couplet with a feminine unstress at the end of the second line (toward/forward (5.2.187-8)), so that we hear the play's female 'undervoice' once more.[35] Yet Petruchio re-establishes masculine rhyme (bed/sped, white/night (189-192)) and, with that, 'Exeunt' the freshly married couple. In *The Taming of a Shrew*, other characters speak one more masculine rhyme and Sly wakes to no rhyme at all. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Christopher Sly does not reappear but the acoustic texture of the first scene does. Hortensio and Lucentio offer a rhyme even more awkward than that at the start of the play: 'Now go thy ways, thou hast tamed a curst shrew' / ''Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so' (193-4). Does the thwart rhyme suggest a lack of conviction, either on the characters' or on Shakespeare's part? Could it mean that we should consider whether ('wonder' *OED* v.2), rather than marvel at how ('wonder' *OED* v.1a), Katherine has been transformed into a tamed animal (or into an advocate for, or bystander at, the taming of others)? Or if she has, whether it is a spectacle ('wonder' *OED* n.1) to be celebrated? Shakespeare sounds a rhymed note of distrust to end his most distasteful play. Whether that distrust was designed to motivate his audience, or directed privately, even unconsciously, at his own creation, we cannot know.

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What we can know: Shakespeare was implicated in the sixteenth and seventeenth century debates about rhyme. He knew some of its protagonists and riffed on some of its vocabulary (of femininity or hermaphroditism, for example). More than this, he was an inveterate rhymer. In some plays he rhymes over half his lines (although he usually rhymes between five and twenty per cent of them).[36] By rhyming frequently and variously, Shakespeare was able to offer his own defence of rhyme – a demonstration, as well as an assertion, of rhyme's efficacy. Like John Berryman's 'Olympus', he understood that an external critical argument in favour of rhyme was only ever alongside (and importantly outside) the other kinds of argument a poem could advance by dint, so often, of its rhymes: 'To be a *critic*, ah, / how deeper & more scientific' (23-4).

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[34] Catherine Mears, qtd. in Carol Rutter, 'Kate, Bianca, Ruth, and Sarah: Playing the Woman's Part in *The Taming of the Shrew*', pp.176-215 in *Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies*, ed. Michael J. Collins (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), p.209.

[35] Ted Hughes, *Winter Pollen: Occasional Prose*, ed. William Scammell (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p.361.

[36] Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, et al, *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), Table 8.

If Shakespeare defends rhyme by writing it, why should he want to defend it in the first place? Rhyme is not always a writer's friend. It can sound like an imposition of the structural upon the organic, or even, as Hegel argues, 'a symbol without value or import'.[37] Rhymes are often too 'carefully considered', too much under the purview of their author.[38] Rhyme can be difficult to get hold of. It can be 'shifting' and 'superfluous'.[39] Today we think of the rigour implied by a 'rhyme scheme' but the concept did not emerge into the language until the late nineteenth century (*OED*). In its stead we are confronted by questions. When two words are rhymed, where is the rhyme? Is it on the second rhymed word (as we tend to experience it) or on the first (the rhyme's point of conception) or somewhere amid the two, 'between the anteriority of the first word (*rime d'attente*) and the posteriority of the second word (*rime-echo*)'?[40] Does rhyme, in fact, get cast across verse rather than being in the thick of it? Does rhyme go backwards or forwards? – it sends us scuttling up and down the page, to and fro in verse lines. It delves us in to words, among them, so that we are aware both of individual rhyming syllables or phonemes and the whole contribution of a word to a rhyme – but then where in (or on) a word does the rhyme happen? Should these questions already make rhyme seem wayward, exactly as the quantitative prosodists alleged, we must also consider who is managing or governing it. Who's doing the rhyming: the character or narrator, the author, the actor, the reader or listener? What about the rhymes that occur (especially in drama) between speech prefixes or names, often at the start of lines: Viola, Olivia, Illyria, Maria / Cesario, Antonio, Malvolio, Orsino?

Writing of the English Renaissance, George Saintsbury supposed that rhyme was 'something to "hold on by"', for the author 'to hand himself on with from step to step in his progress of prosodic wobbling and staggering' (in Ben Jonson's 'Fit of Rhyme Against Rhyme', rhyme is forever "propping verse, for fear of falling / To the ground" (8-9)).[41] In Saintsbury's account, rhyme gave shape to the long verse lines of Renaissance epic and balladry (see Chapter 6) and its 'Sure returns' were a ringing pleasure for theatre audiences.[42] Richard III likewise finds that rhyme gives him a shapeliness, but often only the shape of his deformity. His opening soliloquy is rammed with internal rhymes or assonance (near-rhyme): '*I*, that *am* rudely st*am*ped, and want love's majes*ty*' (1.1.16), '*Cheated* of *feature* by dissembling *nature*' (19). The rhymes are Richard's (over-) compensation for his body. When Ian McKellen's Richard found or made

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[37] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (1820s), trans. Bernard Bosanquet, ed. Michael Inwood (London: Penguin, 1993), p.96.

[38] Gian Gorgio Trissino, *Sophonisba* (1524), trans. and qtd. O.B. Hardison, *Prosody and Purpose*, p.86.

[39] Campion, *Observations*, pp.243, 261.

[40] Clive Scott, *The Riches of Rhyme: Studies in French Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.112.

[41] George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co, 1906), vol.1, p.343.

[42] Ibid.

rhyme, he cracked a smile half out of ingenuity but half out of relief for the shape it lent him. Yet Richard's rhymes look a little incomplete, stranded in the midst of his verse lines. They do not quite escape their speaker's 'unfinished' frame (20). Indeed if we draw connecting lines between the rhymes, as Renaissance writers like Puttenham were wont to do, we can see the shape of Richard's hump bobbing along the verse (see Fig 2).

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lengthes with relation one to another, which maner of *Situation*, euen without respect of the time, doth alter the nature of the Poesie, and make it either lighter or grauer, or more merry, or mournfull, and many wayes passionate to the eare and hart of the hearer, seeming for this point that our maker by his measures and concordes of sundry proportions doth counterfait the harmonicall tunes of the vocall and instrumentall Musickes. As the *Dorien* because his falls, sallyes and compasse be diuers from those of the *Phrigien*, the *Phrigien* likewise from the *Lydien*, and all three from the *Eolien*, *Mixolidien* and *Ionien*, mounting and falling from note to note such as be to them peculiar, and with more or lesse leasure or precipation. Euen so by diuersitie of placing and scituation of your measures and concords, a short with a long, and by narrow or wide distances, or thicker or thinner bestowing of them your proportions differ, and breedeth a variable and strange harmonie not onely in the eare, but also in the conceit of them that heare it: whereof this may be an ocular example.

Scituation in [diagram] Concord Measure [diagram]
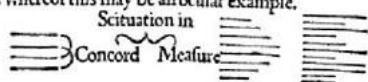
Where ye see the concord or rime in the third distance, and the measure in the fourth, sixth or second distaunces, whereof ye may deuise as many other as ye list, so the staffe be able to beare it. And I set you downe an ocular example: because ye may the better conceiue it. Likewise it so falleth out most times your occular proportion doeth declare the nature of the audible: for if it please the eare well, the same represented by delineation to the view pleaseth the eye well and *e conuerso*: and thus is by a naturall *sympathie*, betweene the eare and the eye, and betweene tunes & colours, euen as there is the like betweene the other senses and their obiects, of which it apperteineth not here to speake. Now for the distances vsually obserued in our vulgar Poesie, they be in the first second third and fourth verse, or if the verse be very short in the fift and sixt and in some maner of Musickes farre aboue.
And the first distance for the most part goeth all by *disstick* or couples of verses agreeing in one cadence, and do passe so speedily away

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away and so often returne agayne, as their tunes are neuer lost, nor out of the eare, one couple supplying another so nye and so suddenly, and this is the most vulgar proportion of distance or situation, such as vsed *Chaucer* in his Canterbury tales, and [diagram] *Gower* in all his workes. [diagram]
Second distance is, when ye passe ouer one verse, and ioyne the first and the third, and so continue on till an other like distance fall in, and this is also vsuall and common, as [diagram]
Third distaunce is, when your rime falleth vpon the first and fourth verse ouerleaping two, this maner is not so common but pleasant and allowable inough. [diagram]
In which case the two verses ye leaue out are ready to receiue their concordes by the same distaunce or any other ye like better. The fourth distaunce is by ouerskipping three verses and lighting vpon the fift, this maner is rare and more artificiall then popular, vnlesse it be in some speciall case, as when the meetres be so little and short as they make no shew of any great delay before they returne, [diagram] ye shall haue example of both.
And these ten litle meeters make but one *Examiter* at length.
There be larger distances also, as when the first concord falleth vp5 the sixt verse, & is very pleasant if they be ioyned with other distances not so large, as [diagram]
There be also, of the seuenth, eight, tenth, and twelfth distance, but then they may not go thicke, but two or three such distances serue to proportió a whole song, and all betweene must be of other lesse distances, and these wide distaunces serue for coupling of staues, or for to declare high and passionate or graue matter, and also for art: *Petrarch* hath giuen vs examples hereof in his *Canzoni*, and we by lines of sundry lengths & and distances as followeth, [diagrams]
And all that can be obiected against this wide distance is to say that the eare by loosing his concord is not satisfied. So is in deede the rude and popular eare but not the learned, and therefore the
M ij

Fig. 2: From George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, S.R. 1588)

Rhyme cannot give shape to Richard. It does, however, give a strange sort of sequence. George Gascoigne: 'I would exhort you also to beware of rhyme without reason: my meaning is hereby that your rhyme lead you not from your first invention, for many writers when they have laid the platform of their invention, are yet drawn sometimes (by rhyme) to forget it, or at least to alter it, as when they cannot readily find out a word which may rhyme to the first (and yet continue their determinate invention) then do they either botch it up with a word that will rhyme (how small reason soever it carry with it) or else they alter their first word and so percase decline

or trouble their former invention'.[43] Gascoigne's sentence is huge, lumbering, winding, as it tracks in subclause the contours wrought by rhyme (though William Webbe, echoing Gascoigne, is more optimistic that it is 'twenty to one' that the rhyme 'shall jump with your former word and matter in good sense').[44] For Gascoigne, rhyme is the first thing in a writer's mind although the last thing in his lines. He represents by imitation the sort of sequence enabled by rhyme – not a straightforward movement from A to B, but a recognition that the movement from A to B may be a crooked one, may end instead at C or D, may indeed alter (or transform our apprehension of) A.

Gascoigne is wary of rhyme's simultaneous determinism and opportunism. It can draw a writer inevitably from rhyme A1 to rhyme A2 but in a way that will 'decline or trouble their former invention'. Although defending poetry more than rhyme, Sidney worked Gascoigne's apprehension into a kind of praise. He characterised rhyme as 'begetting' – it bred words in an act of fecund versification, or, read differently, it fetched one word from another (be-getting).[45] By contrast, blank verse could be 'blank' in *OED* 4b's sense of the word as an adjective or adverb: 'Void of result, unsuccessful, *fruitless*, nugatory; amounting to or *producing nothing*' (my emphases, first recorded usage 1556).

In practical ways, dramatic rhyme often sounds out sequence: we have, in Frederic Ness's terminology, 'exit rhymes' and 'cue rhymes' as well as 'speech-beginning' and 'speech-link' rhymes.[46] But for Shakespeare, always keen to wriggle prosody's rules, rhyme's raucous sense of sequence accorded with his own writerly instincts. Throughout *The Rape of Lucrece*, for example, he rhymes 'night' with 'delight' (356-7, 485-7, 697-8, 741-2, 925-7). The rhyme is like one of the imagistic leaps adduced by Edward Armstrong in *Shakespeare's Imagination* (1946): we can imagine Shakespeare hearing the ironies of rhyming 'night' with 'light', then steeping himself in those ironies by adding his prefix, by rhyming on how 'night' involves a reduction of light, a de-light (the rhyme is a black opposite to John Donne's in 'The Sun Rising', a poem in which light is spread across a room by a widening and widening rhyme: 'Shine *here* to us, and thou art every *where*; / This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy *sphere*' (29-30)).

Searching for a representative example of Shakespeare's wordplay, Molly Mahood chose the moment in *Macbeth* 1.3 when 'news comes to Macbeth that he is now thane of Cawdor'.[47] Banquo remarks 'Look how our partner's rapt!' (142) and 'the secondary meaning of "wrapped" is shown to be in the air by his next words: 'New honours come upon him / Like our strange

[43] Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes*, p.7.
[44] Webbe, *Discourse*, p.64.
[45] Sidney, *Defence*, p.234.
[46] Frederic Ness, *The Use of Rhyme in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), pp.44-70.
[47] Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, p.165.

garments; cleave not to their mould / But with the aid of use" (143-5).[48] Mahood asks 'Is this the product of quite unconscious verbal linkage or is it a deliberate reinforcing of the clothing motif that runs through the play?'[49] By considering rhyme (or ghost rhyme), a third possibility arises: that Shakespeare's tendency to make his concatenations also connections – whether in language or image – is essentially the tendency of rhyme too. Rhyme is always 'begetting' one thing from another, as opposed to one thing more simply being *after* another. It is 'the dynamic aspect of narrative'; structuration rather than structure, or plotting rather than plot.[50]

Rhyme's begettings are nevertheless sequential. In Shakespeare's histories the royal 'begetting' of heirs is sometimes described as a 'sequence' (*King John* 2.1.96, *Richard II* 2.1.200). However for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, royal begettings were rarely straightforward: consider Henry VIII's divorces, Edward VI's attempts to disinherit Mary, and Elizabeth's lack of a biological heir. One of the playlets at Anne Boleyn's coronation pageant (1533) used a heraldic badge in order to represent the new queen as mother to the Virgin Mary, Mary Salome and Mary Cleophe – a highly 'preposterous' interpretation of inheritance, setting 'that before which should be behind', putting 'the cart before the horse'.[51] As it happens, the playlet was probably in rhyme: Wynkyn de Worde's post-coronation pamphlet describes it as 'poetical verses said and sung with a ballad in English to her great praise […] and to all her progeny'.[52] The playlet does not survive, but its author(s) seems to have found the twists and turns of rhyme the best way to think about – and travel through – the twists and turns of late Tudor begettings.

Though Shakespeare only rhymes once on 'begets' or 'begetting', relatively early in his career in *Venus and Adonis* (789-80), the word always does the connective, procreative work of rhyme. 'His eye begets occasion for his wit', says Rosaline of Berowne (2.1.69). Leontes speaks of 'begetting wonder' (5.1.132; in the grammar of his lines, both a situation that begets wonder and a wonder that begets). Richard II imagines his brain and soul to 'beget / A generation of still-breeding thoughts' (5.5.7-8). There is a similar paradoxical whimsy in *Cymbeline* – a lively deathliness – when one of the gaolers imagines how 'a man would marry a gallows and beget young gibbets' (5.5.292-3). This is a language of fruitful abundance no matter what its subject matter; and it is so thanks to the way the words 'begetting' and 'begets' assume a meta-syntactical

[48] Ibid.
[49] Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, p.166.
[50] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992 [1984]), p.35.
[51] Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.20-55; Puttenham, *Art*, p.253.
[52] Anon., *The noble triumphant coronation of queen Anne wife unto the most noble king Henry the viii* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1533), printed/excerpted as pp.106-114 in *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments*, 2nd ed., ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p.108.

function, nudging us to attend to the order and sequence and causation of the things they bring about. The kind of connections – both fetchings and reproductive spoolings – made by the words 'beget' and 'begetting' are also those made by rhyme. Rhyme is one, though not the only, begetter in Shakespeare's verse. If pun is the representative trope of poetic language, then perhaps rhyme is the representative trope of how poetic language is sequentially made into a poem; something Renaissance writers struck upon, confusingly often, when they referred to a poem as 'a rhyme'.

Rhyme also begets action from action, as when Hal speaks couplets over (the presumed dead) Falstaff on Shrewsbury field: 'Embowelled will I see thee by and by, / Till then, in blood by noble Percy lie' (*1H4* 5.4.108-9). The subsequent stage direction (usually attributed to Shakespeare) continues Hal's rhymes in assonance: 'Falstaff *ri*seth up'. It is as though the rhymes have hoisted Falstaff to his feet, and mustered him back to life. The sentiment of Hal's couplets teeters between wanting Falstaff alive and wanting him dead – he should 'have heavy miss of thee', yet only if he 'were mad in love with vanity' (104-5) – but the rhymes themselves are always wanting to beget, to bestow more life upon their subjects.

Finally rhyme begets exemplary or representative, as well as idiosyncratic, sequences of thought (however mad they turn out to be). Mid-anger, Leontes imagines himself a cuckold with 'his pond fished by his next neighbour, by / Sir Smile, his neighbour' (1.2.196-7). Lodged at the end of the line, 'by' has barely been spoken before Leontes rushes it into a slant rhyme with 'Sir Sm*i*le'. We know already that Leontes is quick to jump to conclusions, and we hear it in the way he jumps to rhymes which are more often at a line's conclusion. Indeed the first half of *The Winter's Tale* has no end-rhymes at all. The play's prosody is more aware than Leontes that an acoustically satisfying conclusion need not be a rational or accurate one. There can be rhyme without reason.

Is Leontes led astray by rhyme, or does he lead himself astray with rhyme? The question is ultimately unanswerable, which may be how rhyme would have it. Regardless of an answer, Shakespeare finds in rhyme a weird resource to progress – it can move a scene along, assemble a poem, prompt a thought, suggest a word, shift a conversation (or simply 'beguile the time', as Robert Greene has it (*James IV* Ch3.7)). Shakespeare's defence of rhyme is therefore not limited to the etymology of the word or the nativity of the thing. He turns the quantitative criticism of rhyme on its head by demonstrating how rhyme's waywardness, its proliferation of begettings, its sense of indirect sequence, can be either purposeful or put to good purpose. It offers a mode of narrative progress and regress, or prolepsis and analepsis, that is separate from (though sometimes related to) the tasks of plot and emplotment.

This might be why Shakespeare so often fashions repetition as rhyme's obtuse doppelganger. Repetition urges us to re-examine a word, to contemplate it under new pressures, but it cannot be said to propel us through verse in the same way as rhyme: repetition tends to be an obstacle where rhyme is an aperture. Yet repetition is also the absolute instance of rhyme, or the most perfect rhyme imaginable. John Lennard calls it 'autorhyme', a coinage that cannily hedges over whether repetition is automatic or autonomous.[53] In one sense, Macbeth's choked reiterations of 'Amen' are his attempt upon autonomy (2.2.24, 26, 29, 30). Saying the word seems to offer him a release from the contracts he has made with the satanic world, even if not said when 'most in need of blessing' (30). In another sense, however, the autorhyme is a tic, an impulse, (what psychoanalysts would call) a displacement response to Lady Macbeth's mockery. 'Amen' is a linguistic transference of Macbeth's desire to be 'a man' (1.7.46). The autorhyme, or repetition, is a *fort/da* recapitulation of Macbeth's trauma – in psychoanalytic terms, it is as though his personality 'has stopped at a certain point and cannot expand anymore by the addition or assimilation of new elements'.[54] Macbeth's autorhymes are like the knocking that hammers through the scene, a knocking that seeks not admittance but escape – in this case, an escape into rhyme proper.

Like Macbeth's, Titus Andronicus's repetitions seem to seek rather than arrive at rhyme. His repetition of 'hands' at the end of lines – 'And wherefore dost thou urge the name of hands' (3.2.26), 'O handle not the theme, to talk of hands' (29), 'As if we should forget we had no hands / If Marcus did not name the word of hands' (32-3) – awaits a rhyme that can offer the possibility of harmony, or at least a respite from harm. If Titus can 'handle' his theme – 'the technical term for dealing with a subject in a formal rhetorical discourse' – perhaps, he thinks, he can recuperate his daughter's hands.[55] As a trope of attachment and connection, rhyme assumes an almost surgical quality in Titus's speech (present only in the Folio). Yet, again like Macbeth, Titus is seeking for rhyme in blank verse. Both characters are tragically out of prosodic place.

These repetitions also threaten the narrative movement offered by Shakespeare's rhymes (whether that movement be spasmodically forward, suddenly backward, or elaborately sideways). They edge into the domain of lyric – a genre or form considered, at least by Plato and Aristotle, 'a speech event, epideixis, rather than [like drama] a representation of action'.[56] They help fashion

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[53] John Lennard, *The Poetry Handbook: A Guide to Reading Poetry for Pleasure and Practical Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.220.

[54] Pierre Janet, *L'état mental des hystériques*, 2nd ed. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1893), p.532. [Fr. *se serait arrêté à un certain moment et ne pourrait plus se développer par l'ajout ou l'assimilation de nouveaux éléments*]

[55] Jonathan Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, 2nd ed. (London: Arden, 2003), n.3.2.29.

[56] Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2015), p.35. See W.R. Johnson, 'On the Absence of Ancient Lyric Theory', pp.19-21 in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, ed. Jackson and Prins.

a 'lyrodramatic' hybrid or 'bicorporate' form in which repetition (and even certain kinds of rhyme) stay still rather than move along (think of Juliet in 3.5, rhyming 'as if unwilling to let the magic moment go').[57] This 'predilection for stasis and repetition' poses a threat to rhyming sequence.[58] It risks being 'subsumed by, trumped by, the present of lyric enunciation (narrating is no longer the right word)', making 'Shakespeare's lyricized drama', in Aleksandur Shurbanov's phrase, a menace as well as an achievement.[59]

The repetitions, these frustrated or 'null-rhymes', remind us that rhyme (at least for Shakespeare) is also like the musical notion of audiation, the ability to hear music or the possibility of music for which the sound is not or is no longer present.[60] As a composer can feel inevitably the progression from one note to another, or even (in Shakespearean fashion) one note begetting the other, so Shakespeare hears or thinks rhyme onward to its completion. His prosody is, in W.P. Ker's phrase, a matter 'not only of what has actually been composed in verse, but of this shadowy bodiless music in the mind of the poet before the poem is made'.[61] The wayward begetting of Shakespeare's rhymes is their prize rather than their defect: they have a capacity for discovery that can find out new sound, and with it new sense.

When Sidney's Old Arcadian shepherd Lalus thinks hard about it, he realises that 'a great number of rhymes […] die as soon as they are born'.[62] Shakespeare audiated, even if he did not hear, the same melancholy perception: that all words are potential rhymes, though few survive into it. Yet he also found in Lalus's perception a wonderful asset – the ways in which words are pointed in particular directions at the moment of their conception. In Shakespeare rhyme is the fulfilment of a word's sonic shape, however much that shape might resist sonic fulfilment (usually by half-, eye- or thwart rhyme). It is as if, sometimes, Shakespeare could hear in a word its range of origins and destinations, its comings and goings, even (playwright that he was) its entrances and exits. Shakespeare's rhymes are the audible palimpsests upon a word's destiny.

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[57] Aleksandur Shurbanov, *Shakespeare's Lyricized Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), p.248; Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p.183; Shurbanov, *Shakespeare's Lyricized Drama*, p.123.

[58] Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.262.

[59] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p.36; Shurbanov, *Shakespeare's Lyricized Drama*.

[60] Lennard, *The Poetry Handbook*, p.220.

[61] W.P. Ker, *Form and Style in Poetry: Lectures and Notes*, ed. R.W. Chambers (London: Macmillan and Co, 1928), p.101.

[62] Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, p.364.

Rhyme tracks the fetch of words. Sonnet 126 rhymes a sequence from the 'power' (1) of an 'hour' (2), which 'show'st' (3) and 'grow'st' (4), through to the hour's 'wrack' (5) which will 'pluck' the poem's addressee 'back' (6), and beyond. We can hear the sonnet's rhymes becoming more and more pinched – from the open vowels of 'power' and 'hour', each word seeming to stretch the other, down to the thin, sharp rhymes between 'skill' and 'kill' (7-8). The sonnet is uniquely laid out in couplets not the usual cross-rhymed quatrains, so that none of the rhyme words is allowed to reach across multiple lines; they are quickly, and rather sourly, hemmed in (despite vibrations against the rhyme scheme, such as when the 'k' of 'wrack' and 'back' persists – displaced – into the next couplet's 'skill' and 'kill'). The sonnet famously ends with two pairs of brackets enclosing, or marking the unenclosing of, white space. The brackets have been variously interpreted as an invitation to silence, perhaps that of the grave; as forming the image of an hourglass; as Thomas Thorpe's printerly intervention to spare the blushes of the sonnet's named addressee, or to identify missing lines; as deliberately or deliberatively unresolved; as lunular lunulae; even as a distorted 'S' for 'Shakespeare'.[63] They also call to mind Puttenham's diagrams of rhyme, each of which look like a small solitary bracket (see Fig. 2). The similarity is almost certainly accidental, but it is providential too. Like pun, rhyme has a way of making its auditors ingenious by offering a tantalisingly incomplete evocation of the possible semantic and logical connections between two (rhyming) words.

In Sonnet 126, then, rhyme sculpts 'the shapes of time'.[64] It sounds out the winnowing of an infatuation. In that absent-present (or present-absent) final couplet, it gives us an early modern, literary, temporal version of analytical cubism: view those brackets from one angle and they signal eternity, view them from another and they signal mortality. The poem is the only one of Shakespeare's to make good on the 1609 volume's habitual claim to have eluded time's ravages, but it can only make good as such by ceasing to be a poem (at least as conventionally understood) and yielding to the abstraction of a white space inked on either side.

In writing about the sonnet, readers – including this one – find themselves implicated in its business. We end up treating time as something to be slowly contemplated, paused for reflection, and therefore annulled or overcome, partly because of the sonnet's 'complex retarding mechanisms' and partly because we are accustomed to thinking of literary tropes as 'emphatically opposed to' time, or as 'instances of a temporality so radical that they escape sequence'.[65] These treatments or attitudes nevertheless occur in time; like the relatively unstoppable time of a

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[63] Rayna Kalas, 'Fickle Glass', pp.261-276 in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Michael Schoenfeldt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

[64] David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

[65] Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.534; Catherine Gallagher, 'Formalism and Time', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 61:1 (March 2000), pp.229-251, 247.

theatre performance, this is a kind of time which contradicts our 'lyric', 'timeless' (or slow) present by rushing blithely on – such that literary form is often not 'a refuge against time but […] a refugee from it, a thing startled and driven before time's onslaught'.[66]

Most contemporary prosody likewise presents metre as something 'ongoing'.[67] It plods forwards, one foot at a time, a little relentlessly, with any rhythmic 'variety' separated from its metrical 'base'.[68] This account of metre makes 'ongoingness' out to be tedious, as going on a bit, by advancing 'the old opposition between formal, literary moments and sequence' in which form becomes little more than 'the momentary refusal of sequential integration'.[69] However, as Catherine Gallagher has argued in relation to the novel, it is often the 'techniques of ongoingess', properly defined, that most affect readers: 'Daedalus gets a cold bath; Clarissa Dalloway rejoins the party'.[70] Rhyme is a type of 'ongoingness' that need not be boring; it manages, instead, to be at once sequential and strange.

This is Shakespeare's most daring defence of rhyme. Consider the concluding couplet to Sonnet 17, one of the 'begetting' or 'procreation' sonnets: 'But were some child of yours alive that *time*, / You should live twice – in it and in my *rhyme*' (13-14). Or consider that it is Time who supplies the first end-rhymes of *The Winter's Tale* (4.1). In Shakespeare's writing rhyme is a means of sequential timing, and in that respect an alternative to the timings of quantitative verse. Whereas quantitative prosody finds time innate in a syllable or a foot, rhyme finds it sequentially arranged by the gaps between rhyme words and the manner in which those gaps can seem to be fulfilled or thwarted when we reach a rhyme's culmination. Indeed Sonnet 17 describes the 'stretchèd metre of an antique song' (12) which sounds like the ungainly quantitative poetry that Spenser and Harvey were writing (stretching the middle syllable of '**car**-pen-ter' into 'car-**pen**-ter'). If Shakespeare had quantitative prosody in mind in Sonnet 17, then the quarto's spelling of 'metre' as 'miter' could be a joke at that prosody's expense. As Helen Vendler has noticed, 'miter' is a near-anagram of 'time' and 'rime' – that most un-quantitative of partnerships.[71]

Rhyme offers a sequential alternative to quantitative verse's innate timing, but Shakespeare does not bluffly oppose rhyme to quantity. In *As You Like It* (1599) he stages prosody's multiple timezones, fashioning a prosodic double-time scheme; and he is able to do so because of the play's ecumenical approach to time: 'Time travels in divers places with divers

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[66] Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1953), p.268; Gallagher, 'Formalism and Time', p.232.
[67] Gallagher, 'Formalism and Time', p.246.
[68] Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.183.
[69] Gallagher, 'Formalism and Time', pp.246-247.
[70] Gallagher, 'Formalism and Time', p.251.
[71] Vendler, *Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p.118.

persons' (3.2.301-2). Its characters locate time in everything from 'chanticleer' (2.7.30) to the 'dial' (33), sun-time to bird-time, time for the ear as well as the eye. With no clock in the forest, they have to forge their own language of time. Often they speak in a quantitative vocabulary, fleshing out time in 'feet' and thereby writing it 'into the very gait of the body' (as in Chapter 1).[72] Rosalind complains that a lover's 'sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of Time as well as a clock' (3.2.297-8). Orlando adds that they could detect 'the swift foot of Time' too (299) and, in an earlier scene, speaks of time's 'creeping hours' (2.7.112). Yet in Act 3 Scene 2, at least, we have another type of prosodical timing. Rosalind and Orlando converse about rhyme. She asks him 'But are you so much in love as your rhymes speak?' and he replies 'Neither rhyme nor reason can express as much' (382-5). Here the rhymes 'speak' of their own accord, and 'express' their sense of time (of the gap between rhyming words, for instance) quite independently of verse 'feet'. Act 3 Scene 2 occurs mostly in prose, as though on neutral ground, but the neutrality is only ostensible. Orlando's 'rhyme' rhymingly recalls Rosalind's 'Time' eighty or so lines earlier. Prosodic claims can be asserted in prose, even when rhyme's fetch is far.

As You Like It was written three years before Campion's *Observations* and four years before Daniel's *Defence*. It reads like a premonition of the argument to come. Unlike the *Observations* and the *Defence*, it does not conclude in favour of quantitative verse or rhymed verse (although the play evidently has the latter not the former). As such, it must tread close to paradox: *As You Like It* entertains, without reconciling, two seemingly contradictory prosodic positions. Since paradox can be 'the telltale trope of political quietism', an ambiguity that recoils from commitment and decision, we might wonder whether Shakespeare's defence is somewhat pusillanimous.[73] What exactly is he defending? Rhyme, quantity, both? Is he in fact defending himself from the requirement to mount a defence? – he appears unwilling to commit not only to one side of the argument, but to having the argument in the first place. But rather than shying from challenge, Shakespeare's paradox or near-paradox might be 'giving utterance to an argument that is not there': an argument that English verse does not need to choose between quantitative and rhymed verse (or not in the way that Campion and Daniel would want to choose), though nor does it need to pretend that there can be a smooth, unruffled concord between the two.[74] If Shakespeare is making an argument here, he is doing so with the rhetorical

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[72] Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales 1300-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.87.

[73] Paul Stevens, 'The Political Ways of Paradox: Renaissance Literature and Modern Criticism', *English Literary Renaissance*, 26 (1996), pp.203-225, 207.

[74] A.E. Malloch, 'The Techniques and Functions of the Renaissance Paradox', *Studies in Philology*, 53 (1956) pp.191-203, 192.

figure of syneciosis (what Puttenham called 'the Cross-Couple') in mind; that is, a 'rhetorical thinking' which allows him a 'coupling or bringing together of contraries, but not in order to oppose them to one another (as in antithesis)'.[75] Nor, we might add, in order to hitch them to one another.

Today, most scholars disregard the notion of an English quantitative prosody. The English language seems independent of classical duration; it is instead stress-timed or isochronous (like rhyme, it is measured by its gaps). Yet poets have often thought otherwise. Alfred Lord Tennyson claimed to know the duration of every English word except 'scissors'.[76] Ezra Pound thought the 'desire for *vers libre*' was 'due to the sense of quantity reasserting itself after years of starvation'.[77] These poets, among others, attest to a lingeringly quantitative quality in English prosody. Robert Pinsky suggests that we hear the syllables of 'popcorn' as respectively (if not absolutely) shorter and longer.[78] Likewise 'ass', 'lass' and 'glass' are all one syllable but seem to have different durations (at least in some pronunciations). There is a slight difference in metrical quantity between something being full (full of beans, full of gold) and something being suffixed –ful (beautiful, bountiful). Returning to Shakespeare, consider the quantitative difference between the counterintuitively 'brief hours' (long) 'and weeks' (short) of Sonnet 116 (12). Quantitative prosody might have, and have had, its residual uses – especially when shorn of its absolutism. Shakespeare's rhymes tend to exalt, while seeking to replace, the durational quality of metrical feet; they develop, then, more than oppose, the timeliness of a quantitative prosody. Rhyme makes duration a property not only of prosody narrowly construed, but of language, thought, action, and sequence (as Shakespeare had also done with verse feet).

When Michael Drayton praised Sidney in 'To Henry Reynolds, Esq.' he did so for Sidney's prosody of reconciliation: Sidney 'thoroughly paced our language, as to show / The plenteous English hand in hand might go / With Greek and Latin' (87-8). Drayton looks to be praising the equanimous Sidney of the *Defence of Poetry* (who, like Drayton, rhymes) more than the incipiently partisan Sidney of the early to mid 1570s (although Sidney's reconciliation of English 'With Greek and Latin' is effected by the *pacing* of 'our language' in feet). Shakespeare's reaction to the Renaissance prosody wars was different. He does not effect, as Sidney eventually did, a careful balancing of quantity and rhyme or the classical and the indigenous. He does not give us a prosody *à la carte*, or As You Like It, cutely negotiated or avoided by paradox. His verse is,

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[75] Thomas O. Sloane, *Donne, Milton, and the End of Humanist Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p.233; Richard Allen Shoaf, *Lucretius and Shakespeare on the Nature of Things* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p.51.
[76] Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1897), vol. 2, p.231.
[77] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, p.12.
[78] Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999 [1998]), p.15.

instead, almost madly macaronic or 'mixing'; it is a hybrid of quite irreconcilable prosodies, or reference to prosodies, set 'cheek by jowl' (*Dream* 3.2.339).[79] None of the prosodies entirely wins out, nor are they separated in the manner of *Love's Labour's Lost*: 'You that way, we this way' (5.2.914). As with code-switching in linguistics (where a speaker alternates between multiple languages or language varieties within a single conversation), Shakespeare's prosody speaks with double-tongue. Here are prosodies in the same play, sometimes in the same voice, nonetheless refusing to accept the eminence or prominence of another. Rhyme bristles against the quantitative, and the quantitative bristles back. This is not the 'accentual-syllabic compromise' Shakespeare is so often associated or credited with; rather, this is a verse hispid with hostility.[80] Shakespeare had encountered that hostility when Campion and Daniel lashed each other about rhyme, straining all the while for a royal hearing – and in listening to those two adversaries, and their putative contrarieties, he had heard something else. He had heard, or, better, audiated, the sound of variety.

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[79] Ernst Honigmann, *Myriad-minded Shakespeare: Essays, chiefly on the tragedies and problem comedies* (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1989), p.148.
[80] Henry Tompkins Kirby-Smith, *The Origins of Free Verse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p.4.

3: World

As the island in *The Tempest* (1611) is 'full of noises' (3.2.138), so *As You Like It* is full of prosodies: a rhyming prosody of courtship which can, sometimes, be courtiership, and persistent reference to a quantitative prosody that steps from 'th'measures' (5.4.177) of the court into the forest and back again. The play has an 'auditory landscape' or 'soundscape', albeit one which ultimately refuses us a hearing of the quantitative prosody it invokes (dangling the prospect of 'sonic possible worlds' before its audience).[1] Ros King has argued that Shakespeare fashions 'a distinctive sound system for each play' and each 'playworld' (as all those who listen to *Antony and Cleopatra* know, the sounds of Rome are not the sounds of Egypt).[2] Certainly, many of Shakespeare's plays have an individual auditory character (although not one which exists quite independently of its listeners), such that John Bayley can write of 'the Othelloness of *Othello* […] or the Macbethness of *Macbeth*'.[3] The soundscape of *As You Like It*, then, would be disputatiously unsystematic, existing in the midst of Shakespeare's 'mighty opposites': the quantitative and the rhymed.[4]

'In playworlds like Shakespeare's', Simon Palfrey writes, 'the living places are many'.[5] It is possible to encounter 'the temples of lost civilisations', 'dusty ancient battlefields', 'the ramparts of Danish castles and Scottish hill forts', 'swaths of the eastern Mediterranean' and 'the Levant into Turkey and Egypt' – all of which can win our assent without 'minute, documentary accuracy' (sometimes without accuracy at all: Shakespeare famously gave the landlocked Bohemia a shoreline).[6] We have 'the glittering cosmopolitan city of Venice' and 'the regimented world of Athens'; here too is 'the mysterious forest' and Shakespeare's 'minor obsession with

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[1] Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p.307; R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1993), orig. *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977); Salomé Voegelin, *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014). Ari Kelman reminds us that Schafer's notion of 'soundscape' is itself polemically exclusionary – see Ari Y. Kelman, 'Rethinking the Soundscape', *The Senses and Society*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp.212-234.

[2] Ros King, '"Action and accent did they teach him there": Shakespeare and the Construction of Soundscape', pp.180-194 in *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*, ed. Tom Clayton, Susan Brock and Vicente Fores (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), p.183. 'Playworld' is the term used by Simon Palfrey – see *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) and *Shakespeare's Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[3] John Bayley, *The Characters of Love: A Study in the Literature of Personality* (London: Constable, 1960), p.44.

[4] Robert Grudin, *Mighty Opposites: Shakespeare and Renaissance Contrariety* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[5] Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare*, p.xiii.

[6] Andrew Dickson, 'Why Shakespeare is the world's favourite writer', BBC Culture, 21 October 2014 http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140422-shakespeare-the-worlds-writer, developed into Andrew Dickson, *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys Around Shakespeare's Globe* (London: Vintage, 2016); A.D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p.130.

islands', each yielding an idiosyncratic aural experience.[7] Thinking about these landscapes and 'soundscapes' could also change the way we think about the metrical individuality of Shakespeare's plays. When George T. Wright notes that *Richard II* (1597) 'eccentrically contains' fifty-four hexameters, we might wonder whether 'eccentrically' should bear (as it appears to) *OED* 6a's sense of 'capricious […] proceeding by no know method' or whether, instead, the play's hexameters lean on their heroic classical past – Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid* – as part of the play's august soundscape, where they are appropriately alongside 'the magniloquent speeches, the stately balances and symmetries, the courtly etiquettes and mannered formalities of speech and movement' which characterise the drama.[8]

Readers and audiences often find these living places 'have another time signature, a different metabolic rate' and 'As we move closer and closer to the end [of the plays] these new worlds seem more and more real'.[9] They have an essential ubiety, the feeling of being in a place, which seems to have something to do with their sonic properties or qualities (ubiety *n.* 'The fact or condition of occupying a certain place or position; the place in which a person or thing is' (*OED*)). That movement into belief – a suspension, in the sense of a holding-aloft, of belief – is for many 'the journey of a Shakespeare play'.[10] These playworlds seem to partake of reality, then, in ways that go beyond imitation. Shakespeare does not appear to be drawing upon an Aristotelian instinct for imitation ('implanted in men from childhood', making man 'the most imitative of living creatures') or the kinds of emulative imitation recommended in Renaissance compositional practice (*imitatio*: 'the use of models in learning to write, from the elementary stages of language-learning to advanced composition').[11] No records survive that suggest Shakespeare travelled outside England and, perhaps more pertinently, scholars have been unable to find sources for Shakespeare's 'geographic imagination' in the same way that they have done for, say, his plots.[12]

However, Aristotle's notions of imitation and 'mimesis' – '*the* concept of literature that reigned until the nineteenth century' – were not as inhibiting as we might today suppose.[13] For Aristotle, poets imitate not only 'what has happened' (the 'imitation of an action') 'but what may

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[7] Dickson, 'Why Shakespeare is the world's favourite writer'.
[8] Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.143; Charles R. Forker, ed., *Richard II* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002), p.58.
[9] Brian Kulick, qtd. in Charles Ney, *Directing Shakespeare in America: Current Practices* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p.281.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S.H. Butcher, ed. Richard Koss (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997), p.5; Brian Vickers, ed., *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p.22.
[12] John Gillies, *Shakespeare's Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.44.
[13] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (1972), trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.138 n.63. For evidence of the *Poetics*' reception in early modern England, see Micha Lazarus, 'Aristotelian Criticism in Sixteenth-Century England', *Oxford Handbooks Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 30pp.

happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity'.[14] A few pages, or notes, later he observes how it is also probable 'that many things should happen contrary to probability'.[15] These 'improbable possibilities' have their place in poetic writing.[16] So do the representation of things 'as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be' – what Sidney, easing Aristotle into a grammar at once permissive and prescriptive, refers to as 'what may be or should be'.[17] Poets may 'preserve the type and yet ennoble it'.[18] So imitation rhymes its way toward creation, though (as always with the *Poetics*) it is difficult to know whether Aristotle is endorsing or merely recording that transition. His 'world-reflecting' version of mimesis – the 'instinct of imitation' that makes us distinctively human – keeps ceding to a 'world-simulating' or 'world-creating' mimesis (which makes us more like gods, as George Puttenham warily recognised).[19]

The 'world-simulating' or 'world-creating' mimesis may happen to remind us of the material world in certain ways, but it can also be judged on its 'fictional coherence or congruity' – like the fantastical microcosms that Shakespeare works into his plays, from the fable of the belly in *Coriolanus* (1.1) to the world of the garden in *Richard II* (3.4).[20] On this point, Sidney is bolder than Aristotle. In his *Defence*, the poet can 'in effect' grow 'another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature', as part of 'an imitation or fiction'.[21] If this seems audacious, it is also cautious. Sidney's central assertion – that the poet can produce things which nature cannot – is trimmed with qualification ('in effect') and seems to resolve into a safer argument: that the poet's ostensible fecundity could, after all, be imitative ('an imitation or fiction'). Yet, as Catherine Bates has observed, the force of Sidney's 'or' can imply a rekindling or sustaining of the original argument. 'Imitation' and 'fiction' may not be synonyms, in which the latter resigns to the former, but antonyms; they may be 'two quite separate things – this *or* that'.[22] Poets can imitate, and they can create.

Shakespeare's plays are of course well-stocked with mimetic and meta-dramatic episodes: characters turning playwright, actors performing acting, plays occurring within plays, metaphors of the world as stage (and vice versa). In its circularity, the 'absolute metaphor' (Hans

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[14] Aristotle, *Poetics*, pp. 6, 17.

[15] Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.36.

[16] Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.51.

[17] Aristotle *Poetics*, p.53; Sidney, *Defence*, p.218. For evidence of Sidney reading the *Poetics*, see Micha Lazarus, 'Sidney's Greek *Poetics*', *Studies in Philology*, vol. 112, no. 3 (Summer 2015), pp.504-536.

[18] Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.29.

[19] Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.23; Puttenham, *Art*, p.94.

[20] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.23.

[21] Sidney, *Defence*, p.216.

[22] Catherine Bates, *On Not Defending Poetry: Defence and Indefensibility in Sidney's Defence of Poesy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.144.

Blumenberg's term for a metaphor that cannot be translated into non-metaphorical language) of the world-as-stage comparison offered Shakespeare 'a horizon of infinite regress, a *mise-en-abyme* of mimesis, inducing allegorical vertigo' and perhaps, with it, the dizzying illusion of ubiety that derives from, or helps to incarnate, his playworlds.[23] He is the playwright of 'mimetic desire', central to René Girard's theory of imitative behaviour, often advancing a 'mimesis of mimesis' or threatening a 'hypermimesis' and 'mimetic contagion'.[24] But he is also, in Lorna Hutson's labile word, 'extramimetic'; he manages to be so elastically, superfluously mimetic as to exceed mimesis.[25] For Anne Barton, Shakespeare 'creates a world in which illusion and reality are indistinguishable and the same' – moving, over the course of his writing life, from achieving 'resemblance' to securing 'identity'.[26]

The kinds of sonic creation present in Shakespeare's plays might better be described with the vocabulary of eighteenth-century Shakespeare criticism (though it probably began with Milton's vision of a Shakespeare warbling wood-notes wild): 'natural', 'Nature', 'naturally'. In Alexander Pope's 'Preface of the Editor to *The Works of Shakespear*' (1725), Shakespeare was 'not so much an Imitator, as an Instrument of Nature'.[27] Imitating and then outgoing Pope, William Guthrie argued that Shakespeare 'is not so much [Nature's] imitator as her master, her director, her moulder'.[28] For Doctor Johnson, writing later still, Shakespeare was 'above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature'; 'his power was the power of nature'.[29] In versifying these contentious orthodoxies for *The Rosciad* (1761), Charles Churchill reckoned that Shakespeare 'look'd through Nature at a single view' (266) and, in so doing, 'Call'd into being scenes unknown before, / And, passing Nature's bounds, was something more' (269-70). Within Shakespeare's lifetime, in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), Ben Jonson sought to differentiate himself from dramatists who 'make Nature afraid […] like those that beget Tales [*The Winter's Tale*?], Tempests [*The Tempest*?], and such like Drolleries' (Ind. 96-8). This sounds dismissive until we realise, with Simon Palfrey, that Jonson's thought 'has the most enormous temerity' and the 'hint of religious terror that occasionally surfaces in Jonson's discourse when, no longer scoffing or disdainful, he really believes that things have gone too far'.[30] In the

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[23] Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp.5, 14-17; Björn Quiring, 'Introduction', pp.1-25 in *If Then the World*, p.2.
[24] René Girard, *A Theatre of Envy: William Shakespeare* (New Malden: Inigo, 2000 [1991]), p.64; Robert Weimann, 'Mimesis in *Hamlet*', pp.275-291 in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), p.281.
[25] Lorna Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.7.
[26] Anne Barton, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1962), p.192.
[27] Alexander Pope, 'The Preface of the Editor to *The Works of Shakespear*' (1725) in *The Major Works, 1725-1744*, ed. Rosemary Cowler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.13.
[28] William Guthrie, *An Essay upon English Tragedy* (1757), no ed. given (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1971), p.11.
[29] Johnson, 'Preface', p.421.
[30] Palfrey, *Shakespeare's Possible Worlds*, p.53.

prefatory material to *The Alchemist* (1610) Jonson had more easily disparaged an earlier dramatic culture, which will always 'run away from nature, and be afraid of her' ('To the Reader' 5). Making nature afraid is the awestruck opposite. By the end of Shakespeare's career, and perhaps only with that career in retrospect, nature could appear to have an equal, a rival, or a superior.

In order to understand Shakespeare's 'great creating nature' (*The Winter's Tale* 4.4.89; F 'great creating Nature'), we need to think about one element of his prosody in particular: the syllable. All prosodies depend on the syllable; if quantitative verse and rhymed verse have thus far seemed symbiotic as well as antagonistic, that might be because they both have the syllable as their prosodic foundation (rather than, say, the foot). The syllable is 'a basic unit of linguistic rhythm' – perhaps *the* basic unit – and 'an overarching, organising entity' (although, at the same time, it is 'one of the most elusive concepts of twenty-first century linguistics').[31] It 'forms a word or an element of a word' or another 'corresponding element of written language' (*OED* 1a). It has an atomic quality, being both the basis of and catalyst for linguistic creation. Indeed, Renaissance atomists returned again and again to the syllable – partly because Lucretius had repeatedly written of the 'atom' in terms of *elementa* (see *De rerum natura* 1.841-850), a word which could punningly mean either physical or linguistic 'elements'. The esoteric atomist Giordano Bruno sketched a diagram of interlocking wheels in which syllables, each invested with a particular power, combined like atoms to produce words (the first syllables of words were 'agents', the second 'actions', the third 'adjectives', and so on until the word came into being).[32] Lucy Hutchinson, who first turned Lucretius into English, wrote of numbering 'the syllables of my translation by the threads of the canvas I wrought in' while weaving – so that the *elementa* of her poetry found material kinship in the *elementa* of fabric.[33] Lucretius's Renaissance annotators paid close attention to his syllables, marking odd syllabic arrangements, noting 'unusual or defective scansion', and adding their own 'poetic notes' on individual syllables.[34]

However, syllabic prosody in this period was more concerned with the syllable's contribution to the verse line than with the syllable in its own right. Syllabic prosody became concentrated and popularised in particular sorts of line, like the alexandrine (or French hexameter) – crossing the Channel to emerge, in diluted form, into the poetry of the English Renaissance: first in Henry Howard's translation of Psalm 55 (probably composed during his

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[31] Charles Cairns and Eric Raimy, 'Introduction' to *Handbook of the Syllable*, ed. Cairns and Raimy (Boston: Brill, 2011), pp.2, 8; *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene, Stephen Cushman, Clare Cavanagh and Jahan Ramazani (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p.1390.

[32] Ingrid D. Rowland, *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp.123-124.

[33] Lucy Hutchinson, letter to Lord Anglesey, preface to *Lucy Hutchinson's Translation of Lucretius: De rerum natura* (1640s-1650s), ed. Hugh de Quehen (Trowbridge: Redwood Books, 1996), pp.23-24.

[34] Ada Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp.54-55.

1547 imprisonment), then in George Turberville's 'Of Lady Venus' (printed 1567), then Philip

Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, and finally 'indenized' through particularly English epics like Michael

Drayton's *Polyolbion* (1612/22) or Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (we can read the final line of

the Spenserian stanza as an alexandrine in its own right).[35] Textbooks like James Bellot's *The*

French Method (1588) or John Eliot's *Fruits for the French* (1593) outlined the 'kinds of metres' an

English student would discover in French literature, above all the syllabic alexandrine.[36]

Yet Shakespeare inferred a sort of syllabic prosody (much as he had inferred from, rather

than explicitly used, quantitative prosody) from another source, which expressly privileged the

syllable. It is the same source that first introduced him to quantitative ways of reading and

writing verse, and so amounts to further evidence of his ability to synthesise seemingly discrete

prosodic systems: William Lily's *Grammar* textbook (see Chapter 1). At the start of Lily's section

on 'Prosodia', he divides the apprehension of Latin verse into three parts. Pupils should consider

'Tone', 'Breathing' and 'Time'. If Lily's emphasis on 'Breathing' might have suggested the

gasping caesuras that we heard in Chapter 1 (caesuras so noisy as to be syllables in themselves), it

also formed Shakespeare's understanding of verse's most basic unit. For Lily, 'A Syllable is the

pronouncing of one letter or more, with one breath' (a definition echoed by sixteenth and

seventeenth century grammarians from Francis Clement to Elisha Coles, and derived from

classical grammarians such as Priscian).[37] In using the Latin word *spiritus* for 'breathing', Lily

aligns the syllable with the breath of life that animates Adam in Genesis; for s*piritus* descends

from the Proto-Indo-European word *peis* (to blow), arriving into English through the Vulgate

where it served as a translation for the Greek *pneuma* and Hebrew *ruach* (*OED*). (The Latin *anima*

– 'spirit' or 'soul' – is also breathily related to *anemos*, a flow of air or wind.) The syllable's

breathiness affords it an originary spirit; it can seem to create as well as constitute breath and,

with it, voice (glimpsed in Francis Bacon's ambiguous description of a breath which '*maketh* the

voice', with '*maketh*' somewhere between 'making up' and 'producing').[38]

When Shakespeare writes of syllables, he always attaches them to a voice (sometimes an

explicitly breathing voice). In *Henry VIII*, Sir Thomas Lovell wonders 'who dare speak / One

syllable against' the Cardinal Wolsey (5.1.38-9). Macduff hears a 'syllable of dolour' being 'yell'd

out' by 'New widows' and 'new orphans' in Macbeth's Scotland (4.3.5-8). The Duke of *Measure*

for Measure urges his listeners to 'Mark what I say, which you shall find / By every syllable a

faithful verity' (4.3.122-3) and in *All's Well That Ends Well* Bertram tells Paroles that the duke will

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[35] Daniel, *Defence*, p.201.

[36] James Bellot, *The French Method*, ed R.C. Alston (Menston: The Scolar Press, 1970), Dd.

[37] Hampton, trans., p.8; Clement, *The Petty School* (1587), p.11; Coles, *The Compleat English Schoolmaster* (1674), p.108;
Priscian, *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, trans. David W. Porter (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), p.55.

[38] Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum: Or A Naturall Historie* (London: William Lee, 1626), n.199.

'speak of' his 'worthy exploit […] even to the utmost syllable of your worthiness' (3.6.69-71). In some ways, *Othello* turns on the breathing of syllables as much as it does on a handkerchief. When Emilia reports on watching Desdemona speak to Cassio, she assures Othello that she 'saw no harm, and then I heard / Each syllable that breath made up between 'em' (4.2.4-5). This reassurance can seem to calm Othello, except that he straightaway rages at Desdemona when she enters the scene twenty lines later. Perhaps Desdemona's entrance is enough to incite him, but it may be that Emilia's testimony is more damning than it first appears. In sharing syllables, and making them up with their breath, Desdemona and Cassio are performing the linguistic equivalent of a kiss. It therefore seems dramatically apt for Othello to murder Desdemona by stifling her breath: 'He smothers her' (5.2.93).

For Renaissance observers, the breath had a 'material nature'.[39] Many of them ventured that 'voice is composed of indestructible and unpredictable units of matter so small that they cannot be sensed', drawing on everything from Aristotle's *minima naturalis* to Paracelsus's 'seminal particles' to the atoms of Lucretius and Epicurus (for the latter, breath was 'a squeezing out of certain particles, which produce a stream of breath').[40] Uttering syllables with a breath, or thinking of syllables as identical to breath, lends them a material foundation – one which can also be considered a 'spirit' (Lily's *spiritus*) of creation and generation. In this reading of Emilia's testimony, Desdemona and Cassio are not mouthing airy nothings; they are exchanging bodily matter in a manner frankly reminiscent of (if not indicative of) sex.

Shakespeare allows the material quality of the syllable – its 'thinginess', in Maurizia Boscagli's word – to sound out in his plays.[41] *King Lear* is a drama full of powerful monosyllabic lines and passages. Nearly all of the words that compose Lear and Cordelia's reunion are monosyllabic, for example (many more than in the similar reunion of Pericles with Marina). Helen Gardner thought Lear's monosyllables 'the stuff of the sublimest poetry' while Marvin Rosenberg named one of the play's dominant stylistic strains 'the monosyllabic simple' in which, often, the monosyllables 'are not voiced as such: they are inarticulate sounds of physical disgust that may be accompanied by grimace, spitting, vomiting'.[42] The monosyllabic 'irreducibility' of the play's lines, especially in the final scene, make them 'the most instantly memorable in the

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[39] Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, p.96.

[40] Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, p.97.

[41] Maurizia Boscagli, *Stuff Theory: Everyday Objects, Radical Materialism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p.3.

[42] Helen Gardner, 'From *King Lear*', pp.251-274 in *King Lear: Critical Essays*, ed. Kenneth Muir (New York: Routledge, 1984), p.252; Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1972), p.274.

whole Shakespeare canon' for Helen Cooper.[43] This gamut of monosyllables is part of the soundscape of *King Lear.*

The syllables in *Lear* seem defiantly present, despite the play's language tending toward 'nothing'. While the word 'nothing' appears thirty-three times in the drama, its range of opposites cumulatively appear more often: 'something' nine times, 'anything' five times, 'everything' twice and 'thing' – perhaps nothing's starkest cancellation – twenty four times.[44] These alternatives appear more often as the play continues, while the word 'nothing' appears less and less. By Act 5 Lear is speaking to Cordelia not, obsessively, of 'Nothing' but of 'the mystery of *things*' (QF 5.3.16); her voice, which once uttered 'Nothing', he now remembers as 'soft, / Gentle, and low – an excellent *thing* in woman' (Q 5.3.268-9, F 247-8, my emphases). Cordelia's contentious line ('Nothing, my lord' (Q 1.1.81, F 87) is in part a protest against the bogus thinginess of her sisters' speeches which, with their thoughtless oscillation from proper to abstract nouns, are full of emptiness – 'metal' (QF 1.1.69), 'eyesight' (QF 56), 'grace, health, beauty, honour' (QF 58). Goneril and Regan regard these 'things' not as particularly powerful but as tactically dispensable.

Indeed, in this play and others, the word 'nothing' forfends nothingness by being disyllabic, by being two syllables away from void. It contains its opposite – 'nothing' paradoxically shelters the word 'thing', making 'nothing' syllabically and substantively rebel against itself. When Macbeth speaks of the 'last syllable of recorded time […] Signifying nothing' (5.5.20, 27), he is still in the business of signifying even if he is only signifying zero or nil (rather as Angela Leighton reads W.H. Auden's 'Poetry makes nothing happen' with a 'tiny inflection' on the first syllable of '**ha**ppen' so that 'By this accentual difference, "nothing" shades into a subject, and happens').[45] The last syllable we can record in Macbeth's speech is the word 'thing'. There is something – some thing – left, peeping out of nothing's abyss.

By thinking of syllables in this substantive way, Shakespeare gave his playworlds a syllabic basis that made them of a piece with the world beyond the page and stage. He reminds us that even the most seemingly immaterial parts of a theatre performance – the syllables being spoken – are composed of much the same stuff as the rest of the material world. If the Shakespearean playworld comes to feel pressingly real to its audiences and readers, while eschewing 'documentary accuracy' (A.D. Nuttall's phrase), this may be because of Shakespeare's emphasis upon the playworld sharing a physical instantiation with the material world. His

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[43] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p.38.
[44] The figures only vary slightly between the Quarto and Folio texts.
[45] Angela Leighton, *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.145.

playworlds are redistributive extensions of the "real" world, rather than mimeses of it; they require a constitutive structure of particles in the same way a building or a newborn does. His particular syllables are an addition 'to the stock of available reality' rather than an imitation of that reality.[46]

This need not be a revelation or a wonderment. Honour is 'but air' to Falstaff (*1H4* 5.1.133), after all; a word that becomes windy (like the 'windy suspiration of forced breath' in *Hamlet* 1.2.79) rather than breathed into profound materiality. But there can be a beauty in syllables doing poetic work which reverberates by analogy and actuality through the living world. In this, we see Shakespeare finding inspiration for his prosody in the forms of the world around him and in the literary tropes that govern how we think about those forms (in this case Lily's description of the syllable as *spiritus*, which turns out to be (like onomatopoeia) the thing it otherwise purports to describe). Most importantly, he makes his prosody the stuff of life – with each syllable a figment by which his playworlds come to be not only real, but a supplement to the real. It is therefore no accident that Prospero's dreamy playworld will melt 'into air' (4.1.150) since it shares the air's material substance. It is no accident, either, that Shakespeare adds an adjective to Prospero's remark: 'into *thin* air' (my emphasis), as though the world left behind in the playworld's wake has been deoxygenated or depleted; as though it is less real than before; as though it has been stripped into fiction.

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Syllabic prosody has become an aesthetic curiosity – it required a 'revival' in the twentieth century – but it still exists, albeit usually in a somewhat covert manner. It is present in every tidying up of a verse line's syllables, whether that be an editor assuming that Shakespeare has or wanted ten syllables per line and that therefore such-and-such a disyllable must be truncated (saying like Holofernes 'You find not the apostrophus, and so miss the accent' (*LLL* 4.2.120-1)); or whether that be a poet retreating their nine-syllable line into tetrameter. Syllabic prosody is present whenever we hear a syllable as strictly mono-, di-, or poly-syllabic in order to fit it into our perception of how long a verse line ought to be. In fact, syllabic prosody is prepositionally present in metrical language: critics often write of syllables being 'in' a verse line, as though the line is the already-formed container into which syllables are placed, rather than the syllables being 'of' the verse line in a constitutive reciprocity.

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[46] R.P. Blackmur, *Form and Value in Modern Poetry* (London: Doubleday, 1952), p.349.

In many guises, syllabic prosody has told us that syllables are used 'to fill a syllabic space', or to 'bodge up a blank verse', or to 'fill up the paper in writing', or to 'fill up your metre'.[47] William Scott found one line from *The Rape of Lucrece* – 'To endless date of never-ending woes' (986) – to be 'very idle' and 'stuffed'.[48] Marina Tarlinsjaka has written of 'the pleonastic "do"', which is 'for emphasis' or is 'mere filler'.[49] All of this can be true, but not so often. Syllables are not redundant padding or stuffing. Such prosodic judgements first assume bad faith on the part of the author (speciously looking to fill a gap in their deficient line) and then conflate intention with effect. What may have been intended as 'mere filler' (though what's mere about filler?) can become fulsomely more for a reader or audience. One gets the impression that Tarlinskaja would rather Wordsworth hadn't added that heartbreaking 'pleonastic "do"' to the final line of the 'Intimations' ode: 'To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears' (207-8).

The metrically parsimonious prosody described here has to ignore a number of questions. Do we feel estranged by a word if we don't know how long it is? Is it thereby made strange, as the Russian Formalists would have it? When a word becomes longer, gains in substance, does it become more substantial? Is the word 'bounty' more bountiful if it is three syllables rather than two (see *Richard II* 2.3.67)? Do we say with Dante 'whenever things of value are magnified, their value itself is magnified also'?[50] Conversely, does rendering the word 'heaven' in a monosyllable risk blasphemy by appearing to contract God's full scope and extent? Few of these questions are answerable by a thinly mimetic account of Shakespeare's lines, which will expect syllables simply to mimic the things they describe. Nor are they especially interesting to a syllabic prosody which insists on the ubiquity of metrical 'filler'. In Shakespeare's writing, by contrast, world-making syllables can create, shape and size things of their own accord, dissolving by elision and expansion the boundary between autological words (which seem to describe themselves, like 'pentasyllabic' or 'unhyphenated') and heterological words (which don't, like 'French' or 'long').

Aristotle thought syllables were 'non-significant sounds […] for GR without A is a syllable, as also with A'.[51] For Shakespeare the immanent non-significance of syllables (that is,

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[47] Marina Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama, 1561-1642* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p.29; Robert Greene, *Menaphon by Robert Greene and A Margurite of America by Thomas Lodge* (1589), ed. G.B. Harrison (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1927), p.9; John Hart, *An Orthographie* (London: William Seres, 1569), p.15; Joseph Scaliger, qtd. in Scott, *The Model of Poesy* p.53.
[48] Scott, *The Model of Poesy*, p.53.
[49] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, p.29.
[50] Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia* (early 1300s), trans. and ed. Steven Batterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.61.
[51] Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.38.

their tendency not to signify in themselves) is one of their most suggestive attributes. As Aristotle begins to notice, syllables often assume significance only when felicitously joined: TA- is a kind of nonsense until it fuses with –BLE, for example. Syllables are of 'the mediate world', in Robert Browning's quietly paradoxical phrase (*The Ring and the Book* 12.857): they are materially immaterial, substantially insubstantial, poised between form and formlessness but ready to be either, like the 'cloud-capped towers' of Prospero's speech (4.1.152). Renaissance writers were alert to the suddenness and significance of these syllabic recombinations. The preacher Thomas Adams notes how one seemingly 'superfluous' syllable can change the nature of a word completely, as when 'turning *amorem* into *amarorem*, love into bitterness'.[52] In John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), Monticelso grieves how 'brittle evidences of law' can 'forfeit all a wretched man's estate / For leaving out one syllable' (3.2.89-91).

Renaissance writers think syllables are fugitive things, 'slippery' as well as slipper.[53] Thomas Middleton's Inesse claims 'your one-syllables are your bawdiest words' (*A Mad World My Masters* 1.1.194) yet William Loel translated David's psalms into monosyllables. Richard Carew located 'The Excellency of the English Tongue' in the fact that 'the most part of our words […] are monosyllables' but William Camden thought monosyllables treacherous since they are 'rife in our tongue' though 'not so originally'.[54] Even Puttenham's description of the syllable as 'slippery' poses a syllabic difficulty. Is 'slippery' two syllables or three? In Ben Jonson's *The New Inn* (first performed 1629) Fly and Peck argue about how many syllables they each find in the word 'foundered' (3.1.164-8): again, two or three? We do not have the language for syllables; they are so often the unspeakable, foundering foundations of speech. Like atoms, we can't grasp their size. We are reduced to tapping out words and syllables with our fingers to get a better sense – though it is only ever a sense – of their full magnitude; a futile attempt to bring the syllable into the surer world of the haptic 'as though the existence of matter must be registered in matter itself'.[55] Like the word 'stuff', a verb of enlargement and a noun of diminution, syllables can grow or shrink depending on their observer or hearer or place in grammatical and linguistic orders. The reader of syllables is often like the observer in quantum physics, implicated in the thing that they are supposed to detachedly observe.

For Renaissance readers, words shuffled between being monosyllabic and disyllabic (partly because of the changing orthography of English and partly because of arguments about whether some suffixes should be pronounced). Words like 'prayer' or 'being' became, in

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[52] Thomas Adams, *Diseases of the soul* (London: George Purslowe, 1616), p.19.
[53] Puttenham, *Art*, p.167.
[54] William Camden, *Remaines, Concerning Britain* (London: Nicholas Okes and Simon Waterson, 1623), pp.52, 25.
[55] Elaine Scarry, ed., *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p.viii.

Tennyson's phrase, 'neither monosyllabic nor disyllabic, but a dreamy child of the two'.[56] As Peter Holland has noticed, Coriolanus's name (especially its honorific) seems to shift in syllabic size: is 'Caius' one syllable or two, is 'Martius' two syllables or three, and is 'Coriolanus' four syllables or five?[57] His name syllabically slips and slides, vulnerably mutable in the process – he risks becoming 'a kind of nothing, titleless' (5.1.13).

For Shakespeare, as for us, shape-shifting syllables can challenge the prejudices of syllabic prosody and put something more tentative, and more richly ambiguous, in its place. Sometimes Shakespeare's (best) lines are best described as containing ten and eleven syllables at the same time, an effect that can 'crowd the air with meanings only half-spoken', with the possibility of two subtly different worlds existing simultaneously (like the multiple islands Antonio imagines sowing from an apple kernel in *The Tempest* (2.1.97-8)).[58] When persuading Mark Antony that the conspirators were right to kill Caesar, Brutus uses a parallelism at once ethical, rhetorical and prosodical: 'As fire drives out fire, so pity pity' (3.1.171; Norman Sanders glosses the line 'pity for Rome has driven out pity for Caesar').[59] In prosodic terms, the line is convincingly unconvincing. What are we to syllabically make of the word 'fire' and its repetition? Are both instances of the word monosyllabic (as Tom Hood argues) or disyllabic?[60] Is the first instance of 'fire' monosyllabic but the second disyllabic (as Delbert Spain argues), or is it the other way around?[61] This is not pedantry, since the acoustics of Brutus's speech can undermine his argument. If the first 'fire' is monosyllabic and the second disyllabic, Brutus's action sounds defensive and defensible: he fought a vast destructive fire (Caesar) with a more modest, purgative fire (Caesar's assassination). But if we hear the syllables take on opposite proportions, Brutus's assassination of Caesar sounds like a resolution of violence with carnage. The suspension of these two possibilities, which need not be decided upon until performance, creates an ominous sense of Brutus's speech, and with it his world, on the brink of ruin.

In his address to the plebeians, Mark Antony ironically recapitulates Brutus's 'forced disyllable'.[62] He tells the crowd that Caesar was his 'friend', 'faithful' and 'just' (3.2.86), 'But Brutus says he was ambitious, / And Brutus is an honourable man' (87-8). He repeats the final phrase thrice in a hundred lines (Plutarch ironically calls it an 'amplifying of matters').[63] This

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[56] Alfred Lord Tennyson, qtd. in *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1987), p.431.

[57] Peter Holland, 'Coriolanus: The Rhythms and Remains of Excess', pp.150-169 in *The Forms of Renaissance Thought: New Essays in Literature and Culture*, ed. Leonard Barkan, Bradin Cormack and Sean Keilen (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[58] Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.158.

[59] Norman Sanders, ed., *Julius Caesar* (London: Penguin, 1967), n.3.1.171.

[60] Tom Hood, *The Rules of Rhyme: A Guide to English Versification* (London: James Hogg & Son, 1869), p.ix.

[61] Spain, *Shakespeare Sounded Soundly*, p.80.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Plutarch, trans. and qtd. in Sanders, ed., *Julius Caesar*, n.3.2.87-8.

repetition enforces a strain that can be heard in 'ambitious' and 'honourable'. If we accept that the line should be ten syllables long, then both words must be stretched from three to four syllables (unless other words in the lines are elided only to avoid extending 'ambitious' and 'honourable', which seems a rather drastic form of 'meter maintenance').[64] We can imagine an actor speaking the words as Paul Scofield spoke Timon of Athens, with 'the four syllables of "detestable" in "thou detestable town" spat out in individual gobbets'.[65] Mark Antony's syllabics make Brutus's honour sound incredibly puffed. He has learned from Brutus's rhetoric of syllables, appreciating how stretching a word can also snap it.

If Brutus ends the scene hounded by his own sounds, it is partly because we accept that Mark Antony's line should be ten syllables long. We could instead condemn that condition as stiff syllabic orthodoxy, more the work of a doctrinaire than a Shakespeare. Yet it is possible to entertain (if not exactly to possess) both attitudes rather than settling upon a cohesive prosody that Shakespeare does not have. Some of Shakespeare's verse lines are syllabically neat and some aren't. An individual line can be both at the same time. Shakespeare adheres to the conventions of syllabic prosody when it suits him. Only when we read Mark Antony's speech with an inflexible syllabic prosody do we notice the effects adduced above (for rigidity can be no less a source or function of meaning than fluidity). But we can insist, too, that prosodic interpretation should not be identified with prosodic measurement. Rather, prosodic measurement should be a component of any interpretation (whether that be Roman Jakobson's 'search for the symbolic value of phonemes' or a formalist's or historicist's entreaty that any symbolic value must be contextual not universal).[66] If we lack this 'imaginary puissant' (*Henry V* 0.26), we end up thinking of syllables as insignificant filler rather than things of material substance.

The more dogmatic sort of syllabic prosody has also inflected editorial work. Editors have long attempted to 'fit' Shakespeare's syllables into his verse lines, fixing the syllabic length of words when they deem it necessary. One of the first of these editorial interventions happens throughout the Folio text of *Othello*. We do not know what kind of text the compositors of the Folio relied upon when they came to set the play. Textual scholars have variously argued that the Quarto (1622) and Folio (1623) versions of the play are set from different manuscripts (with the Folio possibly deriving from an authorial or non-authorial revision), or the same manuscript misconstrued (typically because of Shakespeare's or another scribe's handwriting), or that the Folio relies on the Quarto to some extent (as the Second Quarto (1630) relies on both the First

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[64] Alan Holder, *Rethinking Meter: A New Approach to the Verse Line* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), p.90.

[65] Stanley Wells, *Great Shakespeare Actors: Burbage to Branagh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.209.

[66] Roman Jakobson, *Six Lectures on Sound and Meaning*, trans. John Mepham (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1978), p.114.

Quarto and the Folio, standing as an early example of editorial 'conflation'), or even that the Quarto text relies on the Folio text (despite the apparent illogic of its having a slightly earlier publication date).[67]

If the Folio utilises the Quarto text in certain respects, then its compositors frequently shorten Desdemona's name seemingly to 'fit' the lines 'in' which it appears. By doing so, they refuse the possibility that Desdemona's name composes, rather than enters, the verse line. Even if we accept the still-dominant editorial view (that syllables should be thought of as 'in' not 'of' a verse line), the decisions made by Folio's compositors can mute the expressive effect a name (or a word) can have when it seems to object to its place or length in a verse line. When Othello accuses Desdemona of being 'false' in the Quarto, the line shivers in protest:

> DESDEMONA To whom, my Lord, with whom? how am I false?
> OTHELLO O *Desdemona*, away, away, away.

> [Q 2.7.33-4]

> DESDEMONA To whom my Lord?
>   With whom? How am I false?
> OTHELLO Ah *Desdemon*, away, away, away.

> [F TLNs 2733-5]

The 'a' at the end of Desdemona's name, a kind of nominal feminine ending, provokes a tremor in Othello's verse – an epic or dramatic caesura (see Chapter 1), like a sinkhole in the line, before the continuation of an iambic rhythm through the second syllable of 'a**way**' (which, if every 'away' is unelided, helps tip the line into eleven syllables). The Folio text replaces this with a more unbothered, uninterrupted metre. Yet the combination of syllable and stress effect in Quarto – the line's length and its dramatic caesura – suggests an intention to metrically disturb, which is then soothed by Folio's revision.

The distinction between Quarto's 'Desdemona' and Folio's 'Desdemon' may, of course, be an accident of handwriting. Perhaps the final letter of her name was not altogether clear at this point, and others, in the manuscript. However, in metrical terms the Folio is slightly tidier.

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[67] In order of publication date: E.K. Chambers, *A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), vol. 1, pp.457-463; Alice Walker, 'The 1622 Quarto and the First Folio Texts of *Othello*', *Shakespeare Survey* (1952), pp.16-24; W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp.357-374; Nevill Coghill, *Shakespeare's Professional Skills* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), Ch.7; Gary Taylor, 'The Folio Copy for *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34 (1983), pp.44-61; E.A.J. Honigmann, *The Texts of Othello and Shakespearean Revision* (London: Routledge, 1996); Scott McMillin, ed., *The First Quarto of Othello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

There is some debate among scholars about which of the two texts sports a higher degree of 'mislineation' (Michael Neill thinks Folio while Scott McMillin thinks Quarto; suggesting, if nothing else, that mislineation exists largely in the eye and ear of the beholder), but there are certainly a greater number of half-lines in Quarto.[68] Most of the Quarto's speeches end with a half-line, and there are dozens in the middle of speeches too. Of the nine lines that only appear in the Quarto, roughly half could reasonably be described as short of pentameter; this is not generally true of the additional lines in the Folio. In his 1958 edition of *Othello* (reprinted into the mid-1980s), M.R. Ridley located two instances of the Folio adjusting Quarto lines 'to the regulation ten syllables' (5.1.86, 4.3.21) and argued, more widely, that 'whoever prepared the copy for Folio disliked metrical irregularities'.[69] And the contraction of Desdemona's name is unlikely to be the result of a straightforward compositorial fondness for abbreviation: the Quarto has substantially more contracted word-forms than Folio (if anything, Folio will tend to expand a phrase like 'in th'nick' to 'in the interim', presumably in the interests of linguistic 'sophistication').[70] The Folio's sometime truncation of Desdemona's name seems, then, to be part of its broader commitment to syllabic precision.

In the final scene of *Othello*, Shakespeare recreates the syllabic effect induced by Desdemona's full name. The effect is reduced in Folio:

> OTH Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphure,
>
> Washe me in steepe downe gulphes of liquid fire:
>
> O *Desdemona, Desdemona*, dead, O, o, o.

[Q 3579-81]

> OTH Blow me about in windes, roast me in Sulphure,
>
> Washe me in steepe-downe gulfes of Liquid fire.
>
> Oh *Desdemon*! dead *Desdemon*: dead. Oh, oh!

[F TLNs 3579-3581]

In the Quarto, Othello sounds the full length of Desdemona's name so that we hear a prolonged moan within Desde*mo[a]n*a, absent from Folio's 'Desdemon' (even if pronounced 'Desdemoan' it loses the reverberation of the final 'a'). Folio also trims Othello's triple moan into two. This

[68] Michael Neill, ed., *Othello* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.432; McMillin, *The First Quarto of Othello*, p.38.

[69] M.R. Ridley, ed., *Othello* (London: Arden, 1958), pp.xxii, xxxi.

[70] Ridley, ed., *Othello*, p.xxxi.

co-ordinately pares back one of the scene's extraordinary acoustic aptitudes or 'refrains': the way in which the shared Os of Othell*o* – his name sonically hemmed by the sounds of woe – and Desdem*o*na bring the characters together at the moment of their sundering, before being dispersed into the scene's verbal atmosphere of moans and the o-filled names of the play's other characters: Brabantio, Gratiano, Lodovico, Cassio, Iago, Roderigo, Montano.[71]

Folio's 'Desdemon' (rather than Quarto's 'Desdemona') syllabically reduces Shakespeare's character to her etymological and literary origin, the 'ill-fated one' (*des* + *daimon*) of Cinthio's *Heccatomithi* (1565). It robs Desdemona of her proper name and with it her propriety (the words are cognate); it even enjoins the stigma of namelessness (see Deuteronomy 7:24 and 9:14). Although most modern editors prefer Quarto's 'Desdemona' to Folio's abbreviation, they share Aristotle's sense that syllables are 'non-significant sounds' so that trimming or tinkering with a verse line to make its syllables 'fit' seems a neutral act. Many Renaissance writers conversely knew that syllables carried meaning like freight, shipping it from word to word or sound to sound. Lose a syllable and meaning is lost too; add a syllable and meaning is diluted as well as dilated. The Folio editors do not admit the crucial distinctions between 'Desdemona' and 'Desdemon', and their uncompromising syllabic prosody ends up compromising Desdemona. Syllabic prosody gives her a bad name.

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Shakespeare's seventeenth-century critics also dwelt on his lines to the detriment or exclusion of his syllables. For Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's lines were 'richly spun, and woven so fit' (49). This makes Shakespeare into, or out to be, a labourer warping and wefting in a tapestry workshop – a description perhaps too artisanal and banal for an encomium of sorts (even a sharp-edged encomium like this one). Jonson moves over his own verse line to arrive at a more evocative criticism: that Shakespeare writes a 'living line' (59), suddenly transforming 'spun' from the tedious routines of a weaver into the alacritous activity of a spider or bug. The textile Shakespeare, weaving 'so fit', becomes a textual Shakespeare writing 'living' poetry. Jonson's line even picks up a thread from Shakespeare's, since in *Henry VIII, or All is True* (1613) the Cardinal Wolsey thrives in 'his self-drawing web' (1.1.63), forever creating the contours of his own power and abundance, both an act of imaginative range and limitation. By writing of Shakespeare's 'living line', Jonson suggested or pre-empted the metaphor of a later classicist. In the *Essay on*

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[71] Joel Fineman, 'The Sound of O in *Othello*: The Real of the Tragedy of Desire', *October*, vol. 45 (Summer 1998), pp.76-96, p.87.

Man (1734) Alexander Pope's spider 'Feels at each thread, and lives along the line' (7.12). We hear the truth of that statement in the alliterative, assonant reach from 'lives' to 'line' where the sound is not so much a divisible echo of Pope's sense as the spider's experiential confirmation of it. Like Pope's, Shakespeare's web is forever self-drawing and never finally 'drawn' (Rowe's deadening emendation to *Henry VIII* 1.1.63).

Hugh Holland connected Shakespeare's 'lines' with 'life' in another poem for the First Folio, 'Upon the Lines and Life of the Famous Scenic Poet, Master William Shakespeare' – concluding 'For though his line of life went soon about, / The life yet of his lines shall never out' (13-14). The typography of Holland's language makes the connection yet more plain: if we turn the 'n' in 'lines' upside down, or 'about', we have the early modern rendering of 'lives' as 'liues'. Leonard Digges, again writing for the Folio, claims that 'every line' of Shakespeare's 'shall revive, redeem' Shakespeare from his 'hearse' (9-10). Milton's poem 'On Shakespeare' (written in 1630, then included in the Second Folio of 1632) praises Shakespeare's 'Delphic lines with deep impression' (12). Finally, in Abraham Wright's mid seventeenth century commonplace book we find a criticism of *Hamlet* and *Othello* in terms of their lines. The former is 'an indifferent play, the lines but mean' whereas the latter is 'A very good play both for lines and plot' (though 'especially', Wright adds, for the plot).[72]

Like Shakespeare's syllables, the Renaissance preoccupation with the line had a classical origin – even when that preoccupation effaced the equally classical notion of the elemental or atomic syllable. Nearly two centuries before Shakespeare, Filippo Brunelleschi had rediscovered and redeployed the ancient techniques of linear perspective (by which artists could accurately render three-dimensionality using two-dimensional lines) as part of an experiment upon the Baptistery in Florence. From the 1420s onwards, artists made linear perspective 'the organising principle' of any space they chose to represent.[73] Within five years, Masaccio had moved from painting the mathematically obtuse *San Giovenale Triptych* (1422) to the alarmingly accurate *Holy Trinity* fresco in Santa Novella, Florence (1427). Paolo Uccello had brought a new dimensionality to his painting, beginning with the shallow unhorsing episode in the *Battle of San Romano* series (1435-40) and ending with the deep, ranging perspective of *A Hunt* (c.1470) with its vanishing lines rushing headlong into hectic darkness. Around the time he painted *A Hunt*, Uccello produced perspective studies of a chalice and a mazzocchio (a Florentine head-dress) that are made up of nothing but lines – scores of lines that busily limn every curve and lip and rim and

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[72] 'Abraham Wright on *Othello* and *Hamlet*' (c.1633) in *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols., ed. Brian Vickers (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), vol. 1, p.29.
[73] Gerard Legrand, *Renaissance Art* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap, 2004), p.36.

circle. Uccello's wife was said to complain that he romanced 'sweet perspective' more than her.[74] Painters reproduced each other's perspectival accomplishments. Pietro Perugino decorated the Sistine Chapel with his fresco of *Christ handing the Keys of Heaven to Saint Peter* (1481-2), replete with vanishing point and orthogonal floor tiles. Raphael must have seen this painting on one of his visits to Rome from Urbino, since his early *Marriage of the Virgin* (1504) matches Perugino's perspectival accomplishments virtually line for line (with one substantial exception: the size of the tempietto in Raphael's painting is incompatible with the distance between it and the foreground, 'as if Raphael's aim was to impose the ideal and therefore unreal character of the temple by withdrawing it from the ordinary laws of perspective').[75]

Around the same time as the rediscovery of linear perspective, the manuscript-hunting humanist Poggio Bracciolini discovered Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture* (1st century BC) in the Abbey of St Gallen (a few months earlier, he had found Lucretius's *De rerum natura*). In doing so he unearthed Roman conceptions of line that complemented Brunelleschi's renaissanced linear perspective – whether that be in Vitruvius's ideas of symmetry ('a proper agreement between the members of the work itself, and relation between the different parts and the whole general scheme, in accordance with a certain part selected as standard') or of *eurythmia* ('when the members of a work are of a height suited to their breadth, of a breadth suited to their length').[76] Vitruvius's *Ten Books* were Englished by 1543 and known in England long beforehand. In addition, Leon Battista Alberti's influential treatises *De Pictura* and *De Re Aedificatoria* were closely modelled upon Vitruvius and available in a facing-page English translation by 1452. Alberti's treatises are thronged with lines: curved lines 'that have gone from point to point […] having made an arc', straight lines drawn 'directly from point to point', lines stuck together 'like close threads in a cloth' to form a 'surface […] not recognisable through a certain depth but only by length and width'.[77] For the first time since antiquity, Alberti defined the line. It is 'a sign, the length of which is certainly possible to divide into parts, but whose width will be so thin that it can never be divided'.[78] The line was no longer a composite of smaller things, though it remained arbitrarily dividible lengthwise; it was by now a thing in its own right.

Shakespeare noticed this new world of lines; in fact, he noticed on a map of the New World. Thinking he will inherit the Lady Olivia's fortune, Malvolio 'does smile his face into more

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[74] Stefano Borsi, *Paolo Uccello*, trans. Christine Cesarini (Florence: Giunti Gruppo, 1992), p.7.

[75] Jean-Pierre Maquerlot, *Shakespeare and the Mannerist Tradition: A reading of five problem plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 [1995]), p.31.

[76] Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture* (1st century BC), trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), p.14.

[77] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* (1435), trans. and ed. Rocco Sinisgalli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.113-114.

[78] Alberti, *On Painting*, pp.23-24.

lines than is the new map with the augmentation of the Indies' (3.2.74-5, at least in Maria's report). The 'new map' is probably Edward Wright's, published in 1599 as part of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. It was scored with rhumb lines, 'fanning out from several compass roses placed at strategic positions around the world', as well as the more conventional lines of latitude and longitude (which in this map were both helpful and magisterial).[79] Rhumb lines were another of the Renaissance's linear innovations: they were pioneered in the 1530s by the Portugese mathematician Pedro Nuñes then refined by Thomas Hariot through the 1590s. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare construes these rhumb lines, humanistically, as human wrinkles. They attest to his belief in the emotional appeal of lines, the way lines give shape and form to feelings (the old lined face being more evocative than the young smooth face, as with the 'lines and wrinkles' of Sonnet 63 (4)). Yet Shakespeare's metaphor also finds humour in the reduction of a face's perversity to a map's putative accuracy and rigidity (so that the joke is partly upon Malvolio's map-like demeanour; he becomes one of Tamburlaine's 'blind geographers' (*1 Tam* 4.4.81-8)). Perhaps rhumb-lines, linear perspective, Alberti's sketches and Vitruvian symmetry too often cast the line as smooth, diagrammatic, harmonious, accurate, and straight, when lines can also be disruptive, jagged, expressive, bent.

Shakespeare frequently writes of poems as 'lines', even when in something like *propria persona* for the dedication to *The Rape of Lucrece* ('my untutored lines'). On the other hand, his poetry as regularly mitigates and displaces its lines, shifting from rhetorical end-stop to a verse style more turbulently run-on (see Chapter 5); in Shakespeare, the symmetrical rarely becomes sym-metrical. His lines can make 'the ear jump just as the eye jumps across a mannerist façade'.[80] In fact, the only artist he mentions by name is Giulio Romano – a Mannerist committed to tugging and stretching linear perspective (Shakespeare is probably knowingly absurd, rather than doubly incorrect, to think Giulio a sculptor of 'natural posture' (*Winter's Tale* 5.3.23)). By the time of Shakespeare's writing, the neat linear perspective evinced by Brunelleschi was nearly two hundred years old; painters of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century were much more interested in *sfumato* and *chiaroscuro* (those smoky, colouristic distortions of a line's edge and length) and, even moreso, the marvellous effects of Mannerist painting.

Shakespeare's verse lines increasingly spurn the geometrical or proportional regularity evinced by linear perspective – particularly in the case of his 'shared' verse lines, those lines which are somehow incomplete or awaiting the complement of another. By the early seventeenth

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[79] Philip Armstrong, 'Spheres of Influence: Cartography and the Gaze in Shakespearean Tragedy and History' pp.119-151 in *Shakespeare and History*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Sean Keilen (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), p.123.
[80] Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style* (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), p.128.

century, nearly ten per cent of his verse lines are shared between two or more characters; by the 1610s the figure can be as high as twenty per cent.[81] Shared lines pose many of the same unsettling questions as rhyme. Do characters know they are sharing a line? Is 'share' the right verb for their (particular) interaction? Does the nature of the sharing change depending on where the line relays from one character to another? Shared lines – fractured, distributed, in-between voices – are not the clearly defined lines of linear perspective or Vitruvian architecture. They are self-disestablishing, forever calling attention to their junctures, overlaps and edges. When we read or hear Shakespeare's shared lines, we encounter the provisional nature of all lines – we are reminded that the line is a composite of syllables as well as an entity in its own right.

Shared lines are uneasy. They mingle one character's personhood – already abundantly vague and contested – with another's. The shared-line persuasion scenes in *Othello* (3.3, 3.4, 4.1), for example, are imbued with an awkward, half-sexual, coy energy as the partnership between Othello and Iago begins to displace that of Othello and Desdemona. 4.1 opens in metrical medias res with a slew of shared verse lines:

> IAGO   Will you think so?
> OTHELLO   Think so, Iago?
> IAGO   What,
>   To kiss in private?
> OTHELLO   An unauthoriz'd kiss.

(4.1.1-2)

These lines are not only shared with each other but with those an act earlier (3.1.108-110). There Iago 'echoes' (110) Othello's word 'think' (109), although in Act 3 Othello notices Iago's ploy whereas in Act 4 he doesn't (or doesn't want to). Prompted by Iago and Othello's verb – 'Think' – we can see the shape of their joint thought in the line, rushing out to the edge of the page before retreating, hushed and euphemistic, even embarrassed, into a new line of Iago's ('To kiss in private?') shared with Othello ('An unauthoriz'd kiss'). In 3.3 Othello utters his most disturbing line to Iago: 'I am bound to thee for ever' (218). Othello and Iago's miserable bond is, like Shylock's to the pound of flesh, a pun too blackly forked for Othello to bring to light (he is 'bound' first in obligation, then in tragic destination, then in captive destruction). It is fitting – constricting – that 3.3.218 is not only Othello's line. It is Iago's as well: 'I humbly do beseech you of your pardon', he says, 'For too much loving you' (217-8). Shakespeare makes Iago's 'loving'

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[81] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Table B.5.

the cause of or cue for Othello's 'bond', a breath-taking burlesque of the marriage bond he will sunder. Their shared line at once underwrites that 'bond' and is the bond's subtext, the chthonic death-drive that solders these men to murder.

Richard III courts Lady Anne in shared lines, a prosody which Anne is either complicit with or seduced into. When 'She spits at him', her saliva becomes the glue that sticks her speech ('Where is he?') to his ('Here […] Why dost thou spit at me?') in one shared line (1.2.144). The spit is not only meta-prosodical (the grotesque physical manifestation of a shared line) but meta-theatrical: actors often project spittle with their speech, something Shakespeare here adduces as an instance of dramatic talk colleagued to dramatic gesture (the subject of Chapter 1). There is another fluid coursing or coagulating through the scene. It is the blood of Anne's late husband, King Henry VI. This too binds Richard to Anne: in her words, 'Cursèd the blood that let this blood from hence, / Cursèd the heart that had the heart to do it' (15-16). Anne's rhetorical energies summon the connection. She draws a preposterous blood-line of inheritance from Richard to Henry ('the blood that let this blood') before he enters; her shared verse lines, and their saliva, are the seal on a bond – between Henry and Richard, therefore between Richard and herself – which has already been reckoned.

All of these shared lines invite a mimetic reading. They appear to be representative of the relationship between characters at the moment they are spoken: Othello and Iago are bound together in their lines as well as in their lives, while Anne and Richard find themselves sharing speech alongside spit. Yet, as often in Shakespeare's auditory landscapes, the shared lines have a purport all their own. It is not quite right to say that the shared lines 'represent' Othello and Iago's joint-thought; they *are* its thought, for the thought and the line are indivisibly the same – we cannot, in verse at least, have the thought without the line. Richard and Anne's shared lines are an elaborate goading of mimesis: the scene makes Anne's spit a belated mimesis of the play's shared lines, rather than the other way around. When performing 1.2, actors know that they must avoid spraying saliva as they speak in order to make the greatest impact at 1.2.144. The shared lines of the scene mock the actors with the possibility of a reverse-mimesis: if the actors do spit in the run-up to 1.2.144 then their spitting mimics what will happen in the play rather than the play mimicking life (as mimesis would usually have it). We get something like what Lubomír Doležel calls the 'pseudomimesis' or 'ruse' in which 'fictional particulars somehow pre-exist the act of representation'.[82]

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[82] Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp.6-7.

This is not Erich Auerbach's 'representation of reality'.[83] One of Shakespeare's strangest, and most beautiful, shared lines is in *King Lear* (5.3.240, QF). Here is how the episode is formatted in Quarto:

> *Duke.*   Great thing of vs forgot,
>
> Speake *Edmund*, whers the king, and whers *Cordelia*
>
> Seest thou this obiect *Kent.*   *The bodies of Gonorill and*
>
> *Kent.*   Alack why thus.   *Regan are brought in.*
>
> *Bast.*   Yet *Edmund* was beloued,
>
> The one the other poysoned for my sake,
>
> And after slue her selfe.   *Duke.*   Euen so, couer their faces.

<div align="right">(Q 5.3.235-241)</div>

The Quarto bustles with shared lines, as though every character wants to participate in one (does Kent's 'Alas why thus?' share with Albany's 'Seest thou this object, Kent?' or Edmund's 'Yet Edmund was beloved' or, somehow, both?). There is a sad stillness to Edmund's words – 'Yet Edmund was beloved' – as though he is unsure what to make of himself: is he finally a narcissist roué ('Edmund's sole thought is of himself') or a ruined boy ('Edmund's career of crime was caused by his feeling that he was not loved')?[84] Harold Bloom finds Edmund 'suddenly startled by overhearing' himself, as though in the midst of others' voices – others' lines – he locates his own.[85] His short line could be an answer to Kent's question ('Alack why thus?') but it is not framed as such, for it begins in a syntax of self-disputation not conversational response ('*Yet* Edmund was beloved' (my emphasis)). His epiphanic line seems to share more with the action described in the stage direction ('The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in') than it does with Kent's question. It is as though the dead evidence of Goneril and Regan's love summons its live equivalent in Edmund: 'Thou metst with things dying, I with things new-born' (*Winter's Tale* 3.3.110-111). His line is shared not with Kent but with Goneril and Regan's corpses, which cannot speak.

When describing the 'art of imitation' which Aristotle 'termeth *mimesis*', Sidney immediately began to back away from the word: 'that is to say, a representing, a counterfeiting, or figuring forth'.[86] These are three somewhat different verbs, the second with a 'faint suggestion

[83] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003 [1953]).

[84] Kenneth Muir, ed., *King Lear* (London: Methuen, 1972), n.5.3.38.

[85] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), p.505.

[86] Sidney, *Defence*, p.217.

of inferior derivation', and none of them serve as untroubled synonyms for Aristotle's 'term'.[87] Yet Sidney's flight into an alternative vocabulary attests to the ways in which mimesis can give rise to – or, in a Sidneyan word we have previously encountered, 'beget' – a host of new, though related ways of thinking about imitation and its cognates (just as, earlier in this chapter, we found the word 'mimesis' progressively gathering prefixes in twentieth and twenty-first century criticism). Perhaps part of the force of 'mimesis', both as word and idea, is that it can so viscerally attract objections and, indeed, repel us. By thinking of the syllable as a material thing, to be breathed into the air which it also constitutes, Shakespeare made something of a Lucretian swerve (or *clinamen*) from mimesis. Existing both at the level of the line and the particular syllable, his playworlds paradoxically yield a fiction that is at least as real as the world which receives it – an 'Artificial strife / Lives in these touches, livelier than life' (*Timon of Athens* 1.1.38-9). At this moment in *King Lear*, then, we are quite far from mimesis. We are instead in the province of those 'intractable and unrepresented intensities' that literary theory has termed 'affect' but which might, more colloquially, be thought of as mystery.[88] Shakespeare has here written a conversation between the living and the dead; which is to say, in another set of terms – those of theology – that he has written a miracle.

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[87] John C. Ulreich Jnr, '"The Poets Only Deliver": Sidney's Conception of Mimesis', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 15:1 (1982), pp.67-84, 70.

[88] Peter Vermeulen, *Contemporary Literature and the End of the Novel: Creature, Affect, Form* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.7.

4: Character

T.S. Eliot found Shakespeare hidden: '*Hamlet*, like the sonnets, is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art'.[1] There is 'that within which passeth show' (*Hamlet* 1.2.85). *Hamlet* is 'unknowable […] the "Mona Lisa" of literature', quite as mysterious as the silent corpses who share Edmund's verse line in *King Lear*.[2] Although he thinks '*Hamlet* the play is the primary problem, and Hamlet the character only secondary', Eliot frequently reverts to a kind of character criticism (even his ekphrastic analogue involves a character: Mona Lisa as well as 'Mona Lisa').[3] He holds forth on the play's versification, ancestry and critical reception from the eighteenth century onwards, but this only forestalls Hamlet the character – who finally erupts into Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative': 'Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it', 'The levity of Hamlet, his repetition of phrase, his puns, are not part of a deliberate plan of dissimulation, but a form of emotional relief'.[4] For Eliot, then, the irretrievable depth of '*Hamlet* the play' still has something to do with 'Hamlet the character'.

Eliot was too fastidious to write of Shakespearean character in a conventional critical language. In his essay, words like 'deep', 'depth' and 'deeply' are evoked rather than used. Other critics have had fewer qualms; as Lorna Hutson has noted, character criticism thrives on 'the sense of the inner life implied by words like "development" and "depth"'.[5] So: Shakespeare's characters have a 'deeply physical sense of self' (M.C. Schoenfeldt), a 'deep subjectivity' (Wes Folkerth), and a 'depth' which suggests 'all sorts of possibilities in them' (Imtiaz Habib), even if those possibilities are – as one of the first character critics observed – 'those parts of the composition which are *inferred* only and not directly shown', lingering somewhere below the surface of expression.[6] Shakespeare's characters are routinely figured as both horizontal, 'rounded', and vertical, plunging from surface simplicity to deep complexity.[7] They are

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[1] T.S. Eliot, 'Hamlet' pp.45-9 in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p.48.
[2] Eliot, 'Hamlet', p.47.
[3] Eliot, 'Hamlet', p.45.
[4] Eliot, 'Hamlet', pp.48, 49.
[5] Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, p.41.
[6] M.C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.2; Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.26; Imtiaz H. Habib, *Shakespeare's Pluralistic Concepts of Character: A Study in Dramatic Anamorphism* (London: Associated University Presses, 1993), p.71; Maurice Morgann, *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777) in *Eighteenth-Century Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.230.
[7] Menzer, 'Lines'.

psychologically or characteristically voluminous, with 'Inner selves', 'inwardness' or 'an interior space capable of containing a complicated inner self'.[8]

This 'depth ontology' of Shakespearean inwardness implies that a physical pressure is required to produce psychological depth; it assumes that character is something to be moulded and shaped, or even forced.[9] Although character criticism (and related arguments for a Renaissance 'self') are sometimes dismissed as an eighteenth-, nineteenth- or twentieth-century anachronism, Renaissance writers also emphasised 'the impress which constitutes an identity' (in Henry James's phrase).[10] They kept the word 'character' very 'close to its etymological roots: it meant a brand, stamp or other graphic sign' (although it also carried a more abstract Catholic aspect, the 'indelible quality which baptism, confirmation, and holy orders imprint on the soul' (*OED*)).[11] While these explicitly physical characterisations can today seem strange, we continue to articulate our apprehension of Shakespeare's characters on and with its terms: 'depth', 'deep' and 'deeply' – those 'keywords' of character criticism – all rely on a perception of verticality supervened by authorial pressure.[12]

Where syllables were the metrical and material foundation of Shakespeare's playworlds, it is Shakespeare's talent with prosodic stress that allows for the deep physical verisimilitude – again, perhaps something more than verisimilitude – of his characters. Writing to Coventry Patmore in 1883, Gerard Manley Hopkins defined 'stress on a syllable (which is English accent proper)' as 'the making much of that syllable, more than of others'.[13] Hopkins's poetry makes much of that 'making much': his stresses can be heavy, dark and insistent, yet also outspoken, aspirational, like a cry or yelp; and while his metrical markings ('the stigma of meter', in Meredith Martin's phrase) are often oppressive, bearing down upon sound like a lid, they can also be lightsome, curlicue-like, picking and plucking at a line's sounds.[14] Hopkins treats the verse line as a permeable surface: stress exists across the length of the line but also seems to press in or out of it, bulging and dipping and curving along the way. Renaissance pedagogues like Charles Hoole and Edward Coote afforded stress a similar verticality, defining it as 'the manner of pronouncing a syllable by lifting it up, or letting it down' and 'the lifting up of the voice higher in one syllable

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[8] Bloom, *Invention of the Human*, p.11; Mary Thomas Crane, *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.36.

[9] Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p.50.

[10] Henry James, 'Preface' to *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), ed. Nicola Bradbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.9.

[11] Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare*, p.240.

[12] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Flamingo, 1983).

[13] Gerard Manley Hopkins, letter to Coventry Patmore, 7 November 1883, in *Further Letters, including his correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), p.179.

[14] Meredith Martin, 'Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Stigma of Meter', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2008), pp.243-253.

than in another'.[15] An anonymous elegy for Richard Burbage praises the 'weight' of his verse speaking, which could 'ballast' (or, presumably, sink) his words.[16] Puttenham refers to 'the sharp accent' as 'that which was highest lifted up and most elevated' in the ear; conversely, 'the heavy accent' was that which 'seemed to fall down rather than to rise up'.[17] Like Shakespearean character, stress relies upon and exploits a sense of depth. Even Derek Attridge, a prosodist who uses the term 'beat' rather than the word 'stress', writes of syllables being 'promoted' and 'demoted', up and down, in a reader's ear.[18]

The shape made by stress – its seeming movement out of, as well as along, the verse line – contributes to Shakespearean characterisation, with the 'depth' and 'impress' of the former inculcating a 'depth' and 'impress' in the latter. His characters are measured out by their verse in a kind of metrical echolocation; like the parish limits at Rogationtide, their bounds are beaten. Both character and stress rely on a sense of virtual space: the depth of a character (or 'the psychological depth to which we have given the name "character"') is partly produced by the depth of stress rhythm in the lines that they speak.[19] Clearly, when we hear a character talk a blank verse of incessant binary (de-dum-de-dum) we tend to find them obvious. However, metrical complexity does not on its own entail psychological complexity. Shakespeare's composition of character is more finely achieved; as we shall see (or hear), our inkling of his characters' depth can originate in the verse that they do not speak.

In Shakespeare's writing we often 'feel less the immediacy of statement, and more the preventions that lurk just behind what is being spoken', or what A.D. Nuttall termed 'undermeaning'.[20] Likewise, when we make our way through a verse line we are always between what George T. Wright calls 'the marked syllables of the metre [de-dum-de-dum], and the stressed syllables of the line [natural- or speech-stress]' (he is indebted to Halle and Keyser's effort 'to differentiate *actual stressing* from the *abstract metrical scheme*').[21] We sometimes bestow natural- or speech-stress upon a syllable which the metre (in, as it were, official terms) downplays as unstressed. Contrariwise, the metre sometimes foists emphasis upon a syllable which might otherwise have gone unstressed and unnoticed. In these circumstances, stress supplies something

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[15] Charles Hoole, *The Latin grammar fitted for the use of schools* (London: William Du Gard, 1651), p.270; Edward Coote, *The English School-Master* (London: R&W Leybourn, 1656), p.26.
[16] Anon., 'A Funerall Elegye on ye Death of the Famous Actor Richard Burbage', in *A Dictionary of Actors and of Other Persons Associated with the Public Representation of Plays in England before 1642*, ed. Edwin Nungezer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), p.75.
[17] Puttenham, *Art*, p.168.
[18] Attridge, *Rhythms*, pp.164-172.
[19] Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, p.44.
[20] Nuttall, *A New Mimesis*, p.176.
[21] Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.195; Tarlinskja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, p.4.

like Constantin Stanislavski's 'subtext […] the meaning lying underneath the text'.[22] For Stanislavski, subtexts could only be heard in the theatre (the text itself could be read 'at home').[23] Yet no actor can evoke in a single performance all the combinations of stress that are available to a reader (although they might be able to do so over a play's run). Reading Shakespeare's plays, more than watching them, 'you can feel something of those possible variations momentarily massing as the background to the route that is taken'.[24]

This is keenly the case in *Hamlet*, a play which can seem to offer too many options to its performers and readers (including Eliot); as though it has more combinations and contrarieties of stress than can be realised or fathomed. Modern productions have laboured to represent Hamlet's psychological depth with physical space – in the case of Laurence Olivier's 1948 film, almost literally zooming in and out of Hamlet's head. In 1964 Richard Burton's Hamlet soliloquised entirely to himself, recessed within the proscenium arch of New York's Lunt-Fontanne Theatre; while the next year David Warner's Hamlet moved to the lip of the Stratford stage and addressed the audience directly. These are physical manifestations of Hamlet's psychological amplitude, using the depth of the set to mimic and communicate the depth of the character (an older model of *locus* and *platea* seems to exist behind these stagings).[25] 'But inwardness as it becomes a concern in the theatre is always perforce inwardness displayed: an inwardness, in other words, that has already ceased to exist'.[26]

Characters in the drama frequently dwell upon Hamlet's interiority, often in terms of depth. Claudius thinks about Hamlet's 'inward man' (2.2.6) and his 'deep grief' (4.5.74), Polonius of what exists 'Within the centre' of Hamlet (2.2.161). 'There's something *in* his soul', reckons Claudius, 'O'er which his melancholy sits' (3.1.167-8, my emphasis). For his own part, Hamlet speaks about his 'heart's core' (3.2.71) and his 'lowest note' (355). He wants Gertrude to see her 'inmost part' (3.4.20) and knows Claudius is deceiving him 'as deep as to the lungs' (2.2.577). The play stages its own kind of depths – the ghost crying from beneath the stage (1.5), the drowned Ophelia (4.7), the gravediggers (5.1) – which precipitate yet more vertical (even vertiginous) language: the ghost, for example, has been 'cast [..] up' (1.4.32), tempting Hamlet to 'the dreadful summit of the cliff' (51). Hamlet talks obsessively of moles and mines, burrowing their way beneath surfaces: of the 'vicious mole of nature' (1.4.24), of the ghost as an 'old mole' (1.5.164)

[22] Constantin Stanislavski, 'Subtext' in *An Actor's Handbook*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (London: Methuen Drama, 1990), pp.134-138.
[23] Stanislavski, 'Subtext', p.136.
[24] Philip Davis, *Shakespeare Thinking* (London: Continuum, 2007), p.28.
[25] See Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
[26] Katherine Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.32.

but also a 'worthy pioner' (165), of 'rank corruption mining all within' (3.4.139), of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's 'mines' (3.4.185). *Hamlet*, then, is a play unusually preoccupied with 'The inward service of the mind and soul' (1.3.13) and their respective depths.

Rather than attempting to represent this through staging, we might better hear Hamlet's (and *Hamlet*'s) interiority by reading – or in Eric Griffiths's carefully loose application of the word, 'voicing' – the stresses of his verse.[27] Consider Hamlet's 'first extended utterance in the play', also his first soliloquy: 'O that this too too sullied [Q2; 'solid' F] flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew, / Or that the Everlasting had not fixed / His canon 'gainst self-slaughter' (1.2.129-132).[28] Stress hangs indeterminate across the first third of line 129, somewhere between artifice and access. None of the words is quite 'brought to light', in Eliot's phrase: they seem to exist *sous la signe* of the hole or zero at the start of the line ('O'), less a word than a gap. This could be what Attridge has called 'rhythmic blurring', in which 'the beat is not precisely located, and its force spreads into the adjacent syllable [or syllables], momentarily blurring the sharpness of the rhythmic alternation' where, in this case, the force of Hamlet's 'O' is diffused across other syllables.[29] Or this might be a moment, in Ted Hughes's account, 'where an apparently heavy beat surrenders its metrical precedence to other syllables elsewhere', where the first 'O' surrenders precedence to its counterpart vowels in '*too, too*'.[30]

Which 'too' in line 129 receives more stress? When the line is read according to a strict iambic pattern the first 'too' is stressed above the second, and the next stressed syllable is at the start of '**sull**ied' (or '**su**llied'). It is also possible for the second 'too' to be stronger than the first as though Hamlet's sense of his egregious situation overwhelms any iambic decorum. This option will diminish stress on 'sullied' so that the adverb ('too') becomes more sonically prominent than its verb. As a result, we have two possibilities within Hamlet: a Hamlet for whom 'sullied' flesh is repulsive in the first place, and a Hamlet who can imagine an acceptably sullied flesh but not this one, his one, which is 'too *too* sullied'. Only an actor need promote one stress pattern above the other and render the depth of Hamlet's interiority suddenly superficial. In reading the line we have a Hamlet – and a reader of Hamlet – who cannot decide what is objectionable about his predicament: is it that his flesh is sullied, or that it is too sullied? It is not simply that Hamlet cannot make up his mind (in a version of Lawrence Olivier's famous remark); it is that he cannot make up his mind about quite what to emphasise or prioritise. The

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[27] See Griffiths, *The Printed Voice in Victorian Poetry*.

[28] Maus, *Inwardness*, p.1.

[29] Attridge, *Rhythms*, pp.238-239.

[30] Hughes, *Winter Pollen*, p.338.

play is perhaps best read, then, 'not as a single unconscious wish, but as a totality of competing unconscious wishes' with that competition occurring through a prosodic medium.[31]

Like Freud 'I have here translated into consciousness what had to remain unconscious in the mind of the hero' (his first statement on Hamlet, below the page in a footnote to *The Interpretation of Dreams*), athough the depth plumbed by Shakespeare's stresses is more like the Freudian *das Vorbewusste* (pre-conscious or 'foreconscious'), 'latent […] capable of becoming conscious', which unlike the unconscious is always on the cusp of language.[32] Prosodic stress is forever nudging at language too – promoting or demoting syllables, inflecting or subjecting words, and interceding its own type of vertical rhythm into a line. The 'ghostly iambic undervoice', adjacent but not identical to the stress rhythms of a Shakespearean character's speech, lurks underneath the line like one of Hamlet's 'mines' – sometimes achieving realisation in stress, sometimes left unsummoned.[33] In Hamlet, then, we have a personage whose speech is interanimated but not suasible by the iambic.

In an early essay on 'The Unconscious' (1915), Freud notes how psychoanalysis 'seems to take account of psychical topography' (hence the term *Tiefenpsychologie* coined by Eugen Bleuler and promptly adopted by Freud).[34] The pre-conscious is layered underneath the conscious but above the unconscious. By the 1920s Freud was figuring consciousness as 'the surface of the mental apparatus; that is, we have ascribed it a function to a system which is spatially the first one reached from the external world – and spatially not only in the functional sense but, on this occasion, also in the sense of anatomical dissection'.[35] This reaches back, knowingly or otherwise, to the Renaissance instinct for a psychical anatomy which also emphasises transitions between the conscious and the latent, and does so with a vocabulary of verticality. For Thomas Rogers, in *The Anatomy of the Mind* (1576), a man 'may subdue his coltish affections' in an act of repression (or at least suppression) although, as Timothy Bright noted, the vapours of melancholy could also rise unbidden from deep within the spleen.[36] Thomas Fienus, the Flemish professor of medicine, warned of how 'the humours and spirits are borne upwards, downwards, within and without'.[37] Complementing this, and developing roughly in parallel, was an especially Protestant

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[31] Norman Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p.220.

[32] Sigmund Freud, 'A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis' (1912) in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Angela Richards (London: Pelican Books, 1984), pp.47-57; Freud, 'The Unconscious' (1915) in *Metapsychology*, p.175.

[33] Hughes, *Winter Pollen*, p.361.

[34] Freud, 'The Unconscious', p.175.

[35] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923) in *Metapsychology*, p.357.

[36] Thomas Rogers, *A philosophical discourse, entituled, The anatomie of the minde* (London: A. Maunsell, 1576), p.63; Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London: John Spencer, 1641 [1586]), p.102.

[37] Thomas Fienus, *De viribus imaginationis* (1608), qtd. in Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.62.

language of the 'inward heart' and 'the inward man' (one of John Calvin's recurring phrases), in which 'the innermost recesses of self and mind' could be discussed.[38] Perhaps, like Polonius ('irritating us as well as Hamlet with his officious claims to omniscience'), some of this writing aspires to 'find / Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed / Within the centre' (2.2.159-161).[39]

In making these comparisons, we are responding to Stephen Greenblatt's appeal to historicise the procedures of psychoanalysis (and doing so, as he suggests, through a 'conception in language and more specifically in literary practice').[40] Or perhaps we are discovering that psychoanalysis might not need as much historicising as some would imagine. Literary psychoanalysis has suffered from its associations with character criticism – perhaps most notoriously in the form of Ernest Jones's Oedipal reading of Hamlet.[41] Yet it is worth thinking of psychoanalysis in metrical terms because Freud's early conception of the preconscious has much the same vertical function as prosodic stress (and indeed of early modern conceptions of the interior; it is not only 'according to Freud' that 'intellectual life', in the broadest sense, derives from 'the working out of the corporeal topography of interior and exterior').[42] All of these paradigms structure any utterance as a matter of suppression and emphasis, above and below a surface (whether consciousness or a verse line or an exterior part of the body). Jonathan Bate's objection to a Shakespearean psychoanalysis depends on the perception that Freud's readings are 'not verifiable': 'You cannot confute it by saying that there is no textual evidence of it, since repression is the very premiss of the theory'.[43] It would be better to say that there is abundant textual evidence for repression; not in the form of the 'censorship between the preconscious and the unconscious' but rather – something Freud never entirely acknowledges – in the censorship between the preconscious and the conscious.[44] This form of pre-conscious repression (again, perhaps something more like suppression) can be made manifest if we pay attention to the underlying metre of verse as well as its more obviously audible natural- or speech-rhythms.

For Freud, the unconscious could only come to the surface of consciousness once a thought or impulse had become pre-conscious such that 'The question "how does a thing

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[38] Daniel Dyke, *The mystery of self-deceiving* (London: Thomas Snodham, 1641), p.316; John Calvin, *Whether Christian faith may be kept secret in the Heart, without confession to the world* (London: John Day[?], 1553), A4v; Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.76.

[39] David Bevington, ed., *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Hamlet: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1968), p.3.

[40] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture', pp.176-196 in *Learning to Curse: Essays in early modern culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007 [1990]), p.191.

[41] Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: Norton & Co, 1949).

[42] David Hillman, 'The Inside Story', pp.299-324 in *Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Carla Mazzio and Douglas Trevor (New York: Routledge, 2000), p.301.

[43] Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997), pp.264-265.

[44] Freud, 'The Unconscious', p.196.

become conscious?" would thus be more advantageously stated: "How does a thing become pre-conscious?"[45] It could only become pre-conscious once 'connected with the word-presentations corresponding to it'.[46] The pre-conscious is therefore an explicitly verbal site (as well as medium) in Freud's early topography. Although he initially twinned the pre- and un-conscious as part of a 'descriptive' entity, Freud would later downplay the pre-conscious.[47] He eventually excluded it from the realm of 'dynamic' activity which he now reserved for the unconscious alone.[48] In developing a formalism of psychoanalysis or a psychoanalysis of formalism, we could think of the relationship between 'the marked syllables of the metre, and the stressed syllables of the line' (Wright) as sometimes a relationship of slippage between the preconscious and the conscious.

In Shakespeare's plays we can hear a sort of preconscious bubbling beneath the lines. At the end of 4.4 Hamlet pledges to 'spur' – or let 'occasions' spur – his otherwise 'dull revenge' (31-2). His speech ends with a vow promising 'fresh determination', concluding 'O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth' (64-5).[49] In Kenneth Branagh's 1996 film adaptation, this became a yell of resolution with the camera zooming out to reveal Fortinbras's vast army massing in the distance; the film's swelling music suggests that Hamlet's newfound bloodiness is a match for this military clout even as the film's visuals insist otherwise. If the speech can be a 'striking climax', it also has 'a touch of the claptrap' (David Garrick clearly felt unconvinced by its ending, revising the final line of Hamlet's speech to 'My thoughts be bloody all! The hour is come' and adding another: 'I'll fly my keepers – sweep to my revenge').[50] In most performances of 4.4.65 the first major stress alights on '**bloo**dy' (with a much gentler stress on 'thoughts', an instance of an 'apparently heavy beat [surrendering] its metrical precedence to other syllables elsewhere' (see above)). Such a voicing emphasises Hamlet's official line, as it were, that his thoughts will soon be realised in blood and therefore, presumably, in action. However, if we exclusively hear the line's metrical stresses a different Hamlet emerges – or rather, the same tentative, vacillating Hamlet we have heard thus far. When reading with only the metre's stresses in our ears, we find that emphasis settles not on Hamlet's implicit promise of action but (once again) on his thoughts: 'My **thoughts** be bloody or be nothing worth'. Combining the two readings or voicings – with the speech stresses naturally overlaying the metrical stresses, like a prosodic palimpsest – we can hear the tussle within Hamlet's mind:

[45] Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.358.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.353.
[48] Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.354.
[49] Peter Iver Kaufman, *Elizabethan Introspection: Prayer, Despair, and Drama* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), p.128.
[50] Alexander Leggatt, 'Standing Back from Tragedy: Three Detachable Scenes', pp.108-111 in *Shakespeare Performed: Essays in Honor of R.A. Foakes*, ed. Grace Ioppolo (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), p.118.

thoughts or deeds, cognition or carnage? The speech can seem to fuse the two (into bloody thoughts rather than, say, unstained cerebral activity) but the metrical and speech stresses of the line work to prise this combination apart. In other words, we can sense in this something of Hamlet's depth. It is not that the 'marked syllables of the metre' are always telling us a truth; as with dreams, they can resist conscious exegesis by presenting easy but misleading explanations. Prosody can deceive, or abstain from truth-claims. These prosodic 'slips' are less like confessions and more like exudations or secretions of that which 'lies hid' in Shakespeare, where the distinction between marked and stressed syllables can (paradoxically) give voice to motivations which are 'not speakable at all'.[51]

In the 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) William Wordsworth felt 'pleasure' in 'the most pathetic scenes' of Shakespeare, 'an effect which, in a much greater degree than might at first be imagined, is to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement'.[52] George T. Wright similarly asks us to read Shakespeare's verse for its 'variety and grace' – put more boldly, for its purely aesthetic qualities – as much as for its utilitarian functions (however various and graceful those functions can be).[53] To Simon Palfrey, Florizel's praise for Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* (4.4.135-146) 'could hardly be more basic, more emptied of anything but thrumming existential compulsion', in which the grace and variety of the verse seem paramount.[54] Here the iambic metre's stress falls frequently on the copula or on verbs abstracted from any particular activity ('do', 'doing'), as though purpose has been exalted beyond utility. This is stress which moves lightly, dancing across, without calling attention to, rhetorical chiasmus – '**move** still, **still** so' – rather than bludgeoning both instances of 'still'.

Yet Shakespeare finds a use for the surprises which stress can elicit from a verse line (surprises which are not always as 'pleasurable' as Wordsworth makes out). He realised that the rhythm of his characters' prosodic stress was much more like the rhythm of their minds, and their complicated or frustrated expressions, than, say, the rhythms of rhyme or syllabics or quantity. The movement of stress – up and down, in and out of, above and below, as well as along the verse line – is an uncanny cognate of non- or semi-verbal mental activity like the instinctual, the pre-conscious and the automatic; it is like those 'passions of the mind' in Thomas Wright's 1601 treatise that always 'stand betwixt' and 'border' more clearly delineated mental

[51] Thomas Carlyle, qtd. in Davis, *Shakespeare Thinking*, p.7.
[52] William Wordsworth, 'Preface' (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones (London: Routledge, 2005), p.306.
[53] Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.183.
[54] Palfrey, *Shakespeare's Possible Worlds*, p.251.

states.[55] Shakespeare's stresses assume a psychoanalytic function: they sound out the depth of his characters (the persona becomes a per-sona, something sounded through). Psychoanalysis often tells us that we are at once more and less peculiar than we imagine – riddled with strange complexes that are also universal human traits. In other words, we are not so different from the standardisations and individuations that define literary character; like characters in a text, we are always alternating between the typical and the singular. If Shakespeare's characters seem verisimilarly deep, that could be because they are so much like us but it could also be because we are so much like them.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In the first three chapters of this thesis, we have encountered Shakespeare's metrical 'inheritance': classical and neoclassical quantitative prosody, rhymed verse, and syllabic prosody.[56] Shakespeare inherits these verse histories in the 'radical etymological sense' of the word 'inherit': 'to put one in possession as heir' rather than 'to receive as heir' (*OED*).[57] That is, he forcefully assumes and repudiates traditions or ignores them in favour of something more idiosyncratic. He reckons with quantitative prosody to usher a new gestural language onstage, turns the sixteenth-century debates about rhyme on their head, and shuns orthodox syllabic prosody in favour of Lily's schoolboy suggestions. It is more difficult to find a historical or prosodical cue for Shakespeare's characteristic and characterising stresses. Ted Hughes thought they had indigenous origins in an 'old or unorthodox tradition': the accentual (particularly alliterative) metres of Anglo-Saxon and medieval England.[58] These metres were founded on the arrangement and distribution of stress; in Robert Bridges's distinction, accentual verse is noticeable or fallible when a stress is removed just as syllabic verse is noticeable or fallible when a syllable is removed.[59] In the case of alliterative verse, for example, a line would be divided into two halves (an a-verse and a b-verse, also known as hemistichs), each of which bears a certain number of stresses. Scholars of alliterative verse disagree on exactly how many stresses we should expect to find in the a-verse and b-verse: four in the former and three in the latter, or two in each, or a

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[55] Thomas Wright, *The passions of the mind in general* (1684 text), ed. William Webster Newbold (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), p.94.

[56] Terence Hawkes, 'Bloom With A View', pp.27-31 in *Harold Bloom's Shakespeare*, ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p.28.

[57] Geoffrey Hill, 'Poetry as "Menace" and "Atonement"' pp.3-21 in *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.4.

[58] Hughes, *Winter Pollen*, p.369.

[59] Robert Bridges, *Milton's Prosody* (London: Henry Frowde, 1901), pp.111-112.

greater degree of flexibility and inductivity still.[60] Nevertheless, stress (or groups of stresses) remains the basis of alliterative (and, more broadly, accentual) verse.

While we have increasingly discovered a 'medieval Shakespeare' or a Shakespeare interested in 'medievalism', emerging through Chaucer, Gower, and the mystery or morality plays which he might have seen as a boy in Warwickshire, it remains unlikely that he ever countenanced alliterative verse.[61] There are only eight extant unrhymed alliterative poems dating from after 1450; indeed, for Eric Weiskott alliterative metre had experienced something like 'metrical death' by the middle of the sixteenth century.[62] We can glimpse this in early modern editorial attempts at alliterative verse, as when Robert Crowley came to assemble a 1550 edition of *Piers Plowman* (c.1370-1390), reissued in 1561. While Crowley could see or hear that Langland 'wrote altogether in metre', he certainly did not do so 'after the manner of our rhymers [poets] that write nowadays (for his verses end not alike)'.[63] Crowley saw that 'the nature of [Langland's] meter is to have these words at the very least in every verse which begin with some one letter' that, once 'noted', made the verse 'very pleasant to read'.[64] And in composing his epigrams (also 1550), Crowley can seem to have been influenced by the alliterative tradition he half-observed when writing about *Piers Plowman*; John N. King argues that the epigrams exist 'at the juncture of the indigenous alliterative tradition with the imported tradition of rhyming couplets'.[65] Nevertheless, Crowley's epigrams lack many of the more technical features we might expect to see or hear in alliterative verse (like the short 'dip' in the b-verse) and sport others we might not expect (like three-lift half-lines).[66] Some decades after Crowley's edition, Puttenham thought *Piers Plowman* was 'but loose metre'.[67] Alliterative metre would not be properly recognised and regarded until the eighteenth century.

Nor can we draw easy lines of influence from Anglo-Saxon to Shakespeare, even though the Anglo-Saxon language was being rediscovered and reclaimed in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. Matthew Parker's newly assembled library of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts was emerging into print. His *Testimony of antiquity* (1567, a version of Aelfric's *Homily*) was the first printed text to use typefaces resembling Anglo-Saxon letters. By the 1580s, Puttenham could

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[60] See Eric Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse: Poetic Tradition and Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Ad Putter, Judith Jefferson and Myra Stokes, *Studies in the Metre of Alliterative Verse* (Exeter: Short Run Press, 2007) and J.P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1930).
[61] Peter Holland, 'Performing the Middle Ages', pp.204-223 in *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*, ed. Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.204.
[62] Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse*, p.171.
[63] Robert Crowley, 'The Printer to the Reader', *The Vision of Pierce Plowman* (London: Robert Grafton, 1550), 2r.
[64] Crowley, 'The Printer to the Reader', 2r., 2v.
[65] John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp.343-344.
[66] Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse*, p.164.
[67] Puttenham, *Art*, p.150.

refer to 'the Saxon English', and by the 1620s Henry Wotton to 'the Saxon (our mother tongue)'.[68] 'Old English is English', these and other writers imply.[69] Thomas Middleton became the first playwright to stage the language, having Hengist King of Kent twice cry 'Nemp your sexes! [Grab your daggers!]' (4.3.21-3, 38). There might have been an earlier dramatic version of the Hengist story which gave voice to Old English, since Philip Henslowe lists 'henges' in his 1597 record of theatrical productions. If so, it has been lost.

There was no corresponding recognition of Anglo-Saxon prosody. The first printings of Old English verse (Alfred's *Metrical Preface*, printed by Matthew Parker in 1574 and William Camden in 1603) treated their text as prose. Seventeenth-century poems composed in Old English (like those in *Irenodia Cantabrigiensis* (1641) and *Musarum Oxoniensium* (1654)) were anachronistically written in trochees, iambic tetrameter and couplets. Danielle Cuniff Plumer suggests that it was only in the late seventeenth century that the Dutchman Francis Junius recognised Anglo-Saxon poetry for what it was.[70] Transcribing and printing the Caedmon manuscript which now bears his name (Bod MS. Junius 11), Junius reproduced the punctuation points which identify its hemistichs. He later did the same for the *Meters of Boethius* (BL MS. Cotton Otho A.vi), although it was not until 1698 that the poem's half-lines were printed discretely (by Christopher Rawlinson). Plumer excuses her antiquarian predecessors by observing that Anglo-Saxon lineation was anyway 'extrinsic' not 'intrinsic' – for example, the manuscript containing *Beowulf* (c.700-1000 AD) effectively sets out the poem in prose.[71] It is just possible that English Renaissance antiquarians realised that they were dealing with poetry but attempted to reproduce in print the metrically amphibious format of their Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. We cannot know. As with these manuscripts and their printings, so with Shakespeare: in the case of his stresses, at least, we find a Shakespearean prosody somewhere between the past and the present.

Any criticism of Shakespeare's prosody which attempts precision must risk both laborious pedantry and fanciful speculation. Shakespeareans habitually exist in the optative subjunctive: wishing, hoping, wondering, guessing. Indeed from the nineteenth century, bardolatry made the optative subjunctive into a mode of apotheosis. Shakespeare was afforded a 'wonderful philosophic impartiality', not needing further definition since he is forever 'Out-

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[68] Puttenham, *Art*, p.156; Henry Wotton, *The Elements of Architecture* (London: John Bill, 1624), A1.

[69] Lucy Munro, *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590-1674* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016 [2013]), p.40

[70] Danielle Cunniff Plumer, 'The Construction of Structure in the Earliest Editions of Old English Poetry', in *The Recovery of Old English: Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Timothy Graham (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 2000), pp.243-281.

[71] Plumer, p.273.

topping knowledge' (Matthew Arnold, 'Shakespeare' 2).[72] John Keats wrote of Shakespeare's 'negative capability' (which he 'possessed so enormously'), that state of mind or body 'when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'.[73] William Hazlitt found Shakespeare 'nothing in himself; but […] all that others were, or that they could become' (a sort of Renaissance uncertainty principle), and Emerson thought 'Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare, and even he can tell nothing, except to the Shakespeare in us'.[74] For all the beauty and intelligence of these remarks, it is unsurprising that scholars and theatre practitioners have sometimes preferred a prosody of brass tacks, whether in the syllabics of editorial practice or the anti-rhyme absolutism of the sixteenth century, however inaccurate or misleading that prosody can be. Yet Shakespeare's prosody so often defies logical paraphrase and invites heady abstraction. His life, founded on hard fact (wills, court testimony, parish records), is frequently presented as ineffable mystery; while his prosody, founded on the insubstantial (airy syllables, aimless rhymes, inaudible quantities), is too often treated dogmatically. If this forms something of a paradox, it is one Shakespeare might winkingly have appreciated – or created.

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[72] S.T. Coleridge, marginal note to *Coriolanus* 4.7.28-57 (c.1818), in Hawkes, ed., *Coleridge on Shakespeare*, p.275.

[73] John Keats, letter to George and Thomas Keats, 21 December 1817, in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. by H.E. Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), vol. 1, pp.193-194.

[74] William Hazlitt, 'On Shakespeare and Milton' (1818) in *The Fight and Other Writings*, ed. Tom Paulin and David Chandler (London: Penguin, 2000), p.84; Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Shakespeare, or, The Poet' in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), p.720.

5: Blanks

Around three years into his career as a dramatist, Shakespeare's blank verse came under attack:

> there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide* supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country. O! that I might entreat you rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses and let these apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions.[1]

This passage from *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) is the first recorded response to Shakespeare's writing and the first reference to Shakespeare in print. It was written by some combination of Henry Chettle and Robert Greene – although most scholars now think Chettle was the principal author, it was designed and marketed as Greene's (even John Jowett, the most assiduous proponent of Chettle's authorship, accepts that there are 'little fragments' by Greene, as well as intimations of Greene's 'disoriginated' voice, spread throughout the text).[2] The passage can be characterised by 'lasts' as well as 'firsts': it appears at the end of the *Groatsworth* and at the end of Greene's life. Across the summer of 1592 Greene had been dying – if we believe his adversary Gabriel Harvey, he had succumbed to 'a surfeit of pickle herring and Rhenish wine' after a lifetime of boozing (even his occasional ally Thomas Nashe would admit, and then assert, that Greene's 'only care was to have a spell in his purse to conjure up a good cup of wine with at all times').[3] By the end of September 1592, Greene was dead. The *Groatsworth* was published posthumously by Chettle and concludes with a letter 'To those gentlemen his quondam acquaintance that spend their wits in making plays'. In this catalogue of abuses, Greene (or Chettle) lashes Marlowe for his atheism, Nashe (or Thomas Lodge) for his wit, and George Peele for being neither Marlowe nor Nashe. While Greene allows a little admiration for these three 'gentlemen' (his 'sweet boy' Nashe, and 'the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferior'),

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[1] Robert Greene, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, facsimile (London: John Lane, 1923), pp.45-46.
[2] John Jowett, 'Johannes Factotum: Henry Chettle and "Greene's Groatsworth of Wit"', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 87, no. 4 (December 1993), pp.453-486, 466, 481.
[3] Gabriel Harvey, *Foure letters, and certain sonnets* (London: J. Wolfe, 1592), p.12; Nashe, *Strange News* (1592) in Steane, ed., pp.477-478.

Shakespeare emerges without anything like the 'Million of Repentance' semi-sardonically promised in the *Groatsworth*'s subtitle.[4]

The *Groatsworth*'s salvo at an 'upstart crow' has long been considered an accusation of plagiarism – the 'Shake-scene' Shakespeare beautifying his plays with others' feathers – in a manner that has overshadowed alternative or accompanying explanations and observations. For instance, scholars have barely attended to Greene's dramaturgical jab at the *Henry 6* plays: Shakespeare is a 'Shake-scene' because his stage wobbles with supererogatory armies marching on and off it (when Ben Jonson composed his poem about the dead Shakespeare he seems to have turned Greene's boiling indignation at Shakespearean stagecraft into a frosty Jonsonian praise: if only Shakespeare could 'live again', we might 'hear thy buskin tread / And shake a stage' (36-7)). We have paid even less attention to the *Groatsworth*'s remarks about Shakespeare's blank verse: that he 'supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of' the best playwrights. To 'bombast' is to 'stuff' or 'swell'. The *OED* gives three sixteenth-century definitions of the verb: 'To stuff, pad, or fill out with cotton-wool, or the like' (1), 'To stuff, swell out, inflate' (2), 'To swell out, render grandiose' (3). According to Greene, Shakespeare's blanks are both too little and too much; he pads out their essential emptiness (their blankness, even) with portentous rhetoric and vacuous, though loud, sound. (In some ways, Greene's criticism draws upon the syllabic prosody we encountered in Chapter 3.) In thinking about Shakespeare's alleged 'bombast', we might consider whether he spoke others' blank verse with a bellow (if he is one of the 'puppets (I mean) that speak from our mouths'), and whether his own blank verse was especially or exclusively bombastic (or whether the *Groatsworth* was condemning the blank verse of the period as typically and vexatiously loud, and then condemning Shakespeare for being unable to reach even that miserable standard).[5] We might wonder, in other words, whether the *Groatsworth* was right, rather than treating it 'as something to attack, or a document from which Shakespeare needs defence or exoneration'.[6]

The *Groatsworth* slightingly and slantingly refers to *3 Henry 6*: 'his *tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide*' leans on 'O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!' (1.4.138). The line is part of York's long polemic against Queen Margaret: 'She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France, / Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!' (112-3). Margaret urges York to 'Stamp, rave, and fret' (92), and he evidently obliges. She is 'an Amazonian trull' (115), 'vizard-like' (117), 'as opposite to every good / As the Antipodes are unto us, / Or as the south to the

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[4] Greene, *Groatsworth*, p.45.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Andy Kesson, 'His fellow dramatists and early collaborators', pp.235-247 in Wells and Edmondson, eds., *The Shakespeare Circle*, p.236.

Septentrion' (136-8), 'stern, indurate, flinty, rough, remorseless' (143), 'ruthless' (157) and 'abominable' (134), 'more inhuman, more inexorable – / O, ten times more – than tigers of Hyrcania' (155-6). Is this the 'bombast' which Greene (or Chettle) hears in Shakespeare?

York acknowledges that he is raging (144-5), but the bombast of his speech is widespread in the play – often regardless of occasion, mood or character. It has accordingly seemed 'dreary' to some modern critics, and perhaps seemed so to Shakespeare: E.M.W. Tillyard imagined him writing the play when 'tired or bored: or perhaps both'.[7] Russ McDonald attributed the persistent bombast of *3 Henry 6* to 'the correspondence between the main grammatical unit, the independent clause, and the chief poetic unit, the pentameter line' – that is, Shakespeare 'seems to be thinking [and writing] in ten-syllable units' so that York's rage would sound the same even if it changed or varied its semantic content.[8] However, York's ten-syllable style is not only a matter of syntactical end-stop because he periodically speaks lines which grammatically over-run into subsequent lines (for example 114-5, 135-6, 153-4 and 166-7). Rather, it is a matter of (what we could call) *metrical* end-stop, for almost all of York's lines end with a stressed tenth syllable. Like a rhyme in other verse forms, the stressed tenth syllable makes clear we are at the end of a blank verse line (even though in grammatical and semantic terms some of the lines proceed beyond their typographical conclusion). It creates what Derek Attridge has described as 'self-arrested' lines (and therefore challenges Attridge's assertion elsewhere 'that the very end of the line is less crucial in determining the character of its rhythm than the opening').[9] It keeps juddering York's invective to a prosodic halt; he sounds as though he is barking individual expostulations rather than speaking at concatenated length. It sounds, indeed, like bombast, with almost every line showily stressed at its conclusion. While *3 Henry 6* may not be all Shakespeare's work, about ninety per cent of the play's lines end on a stressed tenth syllable (and Marina Tarlinskaja's measurements suggest the percentage is slightly higher in 'Shakespeare scenes' than 'non-Shakespeare scenes').[10] That is, Greene/Chettle noticed a genuine, and quantifiable, problem in Shakespeare's tyro prosody: while it is always 'artificial and highly structured', it can also be stiff, cribbed and at least susceptible to the accusation of bombast.[11]

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[7] Roman Dyboski, *Rise and Fall in Shakespeare's Dramatic Art* (London: Oxford University Press for the Shakespeare Association, 1923), p.9; E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), p.90.
[8] Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.91.
[9] Attridge, *Rhythms*, pp.103, 192.
[10] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Table B.1.
[11] McDonald, *Arts of Language*, p.90.

By the time Shakespeare was writing *3 Henry 6* (around 1592), blank verse was newly old. Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, was the first English writer to use blank verse – his 1554 translation of the fourth book of the *Aeneid* renders Virgil in blanks (so Shakespeare would write of Henry VIII, the man who ordered Surrey's execution, in the blank verse which Surrey had invented). In choosing to translate the *Aeneid* Surrey was gesturing to a possible prosodic renaissance of the classical past – not this time through Spenser and Harvey's quantitative metres (see Chapter 1) but through a transformation of the Latin dactylic hexameter into the English iambic pentameter. That transformation nonetheless involved 'simulating the exotic grace of Latin quantitative verse'.[12] It might not, therefore, be an accident that the first original English poem in blank verse (George Gascoigne's *The Steel Glass* (1576)) was printed by Henry Bynemann, who would go on to publish Spenser and Harvey's correspondence.

As with the revival of quantitative metre, blank verse was in the hands of literary pioneers. Many of its first authors had already experimented with new poetic forms and models. Prior to writing *The Steel Glass*, Gascoigne had been responsible for the first English prose comedy, the first translation of Greek tragedy into English and the first critical treatise on English poetry. Henry Howard had helped to introduce the sonnet from Italy to England. *Gorboduc*, the first English drama in blank verse, was also one of the first English stage tragedies. Yet these authors could – alternatively or also – have been gesturing toward classical prosody. Like free verse at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century, blank verse was Janus-faced: it looked backwards and forwards at the same time.

When printing part of Surrey's translation in 1554 (ten years before Shakespeare was born), John Day advertised its 'strange meter'.[13] Yet by 1557 Richard Tottel – editing and printing an expanded version of Surrey's *Aeneid* – could simply refer to blank verse as 'English meter' (Tottel might have been distinguishing Surrey's versification from the 'Scottish meter' of Gavin Douglas's 1553 translation, though he doesn't mention Douglas, but even if so he seems to have accepted blank verse's place within a canon of native metres).[14] By 1576 Gascoigne was able to brandish blank verse as a respectable metre: while once 'he pleased the vain of youthful age / With pleasant pen, employed in loving rhyme: / So now he seeks the gravest to delight' in blanks (or so says Nicholas Bowyer in a prefatory poem (3-5)). In 'The Author to the Reader' of

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[12] C.F. Tucker Brooke, 'Marlowe's Versification and Style', *Studies in Philology*, 19 (1922), pp.186-205, 187-8.

[13] Henry Howard, *The fourth boke of Virgill, intreating of the loue betwene Aeneas and Dido, translated into English, and drawne into a straunge metre by Henrye late Earle of Surrey, worthy to be embraced* (London: John Day, 1554).

[14] Henry Howard, *Certain bokes of Virgiles Aenaeis turned into English meter by the right honorable lorde, Henry Earle of Surrey* (London: Richard Tottel, 1557); Gavin Douglas, *The xiii. Bukes of Eneados of the famose Poete Virgill Translatet out of Latyne verses into the Scottish metir bi the Reuerend Father in God Mayster Gawin Douglas Bishop of Dunkel and vnkil to the Erle of Angus* (London: William Copland, 1553).

The Steel Glass Gascoigne explains that 'rimes can seldom reach / Unto the top of such a stately Tower' (7-8) whereas the 'reason' (12) of blank verse can win him 'an honest name' (17). However, *The Steel Glass* is hardly the work of an establishment poet; rather, it is an estates satire narrated by a raped hermaphrodite. Although blank verse was no longer 'strange', and was by now 'grave', 'honest' and 'English', it was still a prosody for and of the radical. Ten years later, it would be most closely associated with a homosexual atheist and his almost unstageable provocations: it would become, in Ben Jonson's words, 'Marlowe's mighty line' (30).

There was therefore nothing smooth or inevitable about blank verse's ascendancy. The term was coined late, in 1589, by Nashe, as an insult more than as a definition: it was 'blank' because bodged up with 'ifs and ands', ill-fitting pleonastic substitutes for 'the just measure' of a classical hexameter.[15] To Nashe, blanks were overwrought, 'weeping' or 'drumming', a 'vent' for 'bragging' manhood and 'choleric incumbrances'.[16] Indeed Greene's criticism of Shakespearean bombast ('supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you') sounds a lot like Nashe's description, in the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), of a 'swelling bumbast of bragging blank verse'.[17] By accusing or seeming to accuse Shakespeare of plagiarism, perhaps Greene aimed to divert attention from his own, audacious writerly debts. Nashe quickly overcame his aversion to blank verse – see for example the blank verse monologues in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592?) – but his remarks are representative of an ongoing unease about the metre, and indicate how easily it might have been supplanted.

So the metrical end-stop became an essential resource for early blank verse: it gave the blank verse line a definite cadence and character (albeit also giving it a definite bombast). While the stressed tenth syllable sounds laboured to modern ears, in the sixteenth century it rang with reassuring certainty. In the absence of rhyme, this new blank verse could still offer a sound of conclusion ('a purposed pause to the voice', in Dudley North's seventeenth-century justification).[18] Modern-day critics have elided this metrical end-stopping with the 'finely developed correspondence between the typographical line and the sense of a passage' even though, as we have already seen, the metrical end-stop often overrode a syntactical or grammatical run-on.[19] The metrical end-stop was more widespread (and more difficult to identify and sophisticate) than its syntactical or grammatical equivalents. Tarlinskaja finds stress on ninety per cent of the tenth-position syllables in Surrey's translation; across the Surrey canon, the figure

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[15] Thomas Nashe, 'Preface' to G.B. Harrison, ed., *Menaphon by Robert Greene*, p.9.
[16] Nashe, 'Preface', p.5.
[17] Nashe, 'Preface', p.4.
[18] Dudley North, dedication to *A Forest of Varieties* (London: Richard Cotes, 1645), n.p.
[19] Richard Bradford, *Augustan Measures: Restoration and eighteenth-century writings on prosody and metre* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p.187.

is even higher (95.2%).[20] Ninety per cent of tenth-position syllables in Gascoigne are stressed.[21] The same is true of *Gorboduc* (despite that play having almost as many syntactically run-on lines as *Hamlet*).[22]

We can see and hear the different types of end-stop at work in Surrey's *Aeneid*, for example in the Laocoön episode:

> And first of all each serpent doth enwrap
> The bodies small of his two tender sons:
> Whose wretchèd limes they bit, and fed thereon.
> Then wrought they him, who had his weapon caught
> To rescue them, twice winding him about,
> With folded knots, and circled tails, his waist.
> Their scaled backs did compass twice his neck,
> With rearèd hands aloft, and stretchèd throats.
>
> (2.268-76)

In some ways, Surrey edges beyond the individual blank verse line: lines 268-9 syntactically or grammatically emerge from one another, as do lines 271-3 (in fact, Surrey syntactically or grammatically runs on about a quarter of the lines in his translation).[23] Yet the verse still seems hemmed and hermetic; it reads, in C.S. Lewis's tart phrase, like 'Virgil in corsets'.[24] The lines' highly regular iambic stress patterns, including a crucial stress on the tenth syllable, mitigate their own enjambment. This is verse which aspires to be plastic but manages only to be wooden, aggravatingly unlike the serpents that wind around Laocoön and his sons. Surrey interestingly tries to suggest the snakes' movements – wrapping, biting, wringing – by introducing subclauses that coil along the limbs of his lines (e.g. at 273-4, 276), nosing their grammatical object further and further down the page. He may cancel or neuter this syntactical enjambment by insisting on a strong accent at the end of the line, but by displacing and delaying some parts of speech he largely avoids the bombast we otherwise encounter in a metrical end-stop.

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[20] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Table B.1.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Table B.1; Normand Berlin, *Thomas Sackville* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), p.102.
[23] Berlin, *Thomas Sackville*, p.102.
[24] C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p.234.

Even Christopher Marlowe – often reckoned to be the master of the pre-Shakespearean blank verse line – continued the 'metrical austerity' of his prosodic forebears.[25] His lines are mighty because they are not might-y: they do not hedge between blank verse and other prosodic forms. They maintain a metrical immanence, especially at his lines' endings where the metrical end-stop typically prevails. In making his lines accentually resistant to enjambment, Marlowe seals them at the point where they might leak into other lines and into other kinds of line (his blank verse is a little like Faustus's blood, congealing before it can spill). 'For all Marlowe's reputation as an overreacher, only rarely did he overreach the poetic line': at least three quarters of his lines terminate in a stressed tenth syllable.[26] Yet these end-stops are not altogether straightforward. In the two parts of *Tamburlaine the Great*, for example, Marlowe will frequently end a line with amphimacer (a trisyllabic name stressed on its first and last syllables e.g. Tamburlaine, Bajazeth, Calyphas), thereby tending to reinforce the metrical end-stop, while beginning fifteen per cent of the plays' lines with 'And', attempting to syntactically coax the preceding lines over their typographical endpoint.[27] The line endings in the *Tamburlaine* plays become another of Marlowe's dances between transgression and limit; in fact, at times the line endings are the only thing that can restrain the plays' protagonist.

If Greene (or 'Greene') was complaining about the bombast of sixteenth-century blank verse, as well as Shakespeare's, we might once again agree with him. Marlowe's 'mouth-filling prosody' – rammed with 'audacious rant' and 'epic rumble' – draws upon the metrical end-stop for its high-volume effects, and therefore has been said to lapse into 'a pretty simple huffe-snuffe bombast'.[28] But there are moments in which we glimpse (or in which Marlowe glimpses) 'the brilliant future of dramatic poetry over the next four decades' precisely because Marlowe eschews mightiness and its prosodic properties.[29] For instance, the first nine lines of Faustus's final monologue can be heard to contain (or not to contain) six hypermetrical endings, challenging the dominance of the metrical end-stop by reaching beyond the stressed tenth syllable. There are two ensuing lines in the A-text of the monologue which extend to twelve syllables. In one of the twelve-syllable lines Faustus appeals to Christ for salvation ('One drop

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[25] John Creaser, '"A mind of most exceptional energy": Verse Rhythm in *Paradise Lost*', pp.462-479 in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*, ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.473.

[26] Russ McDonald, 'Marlowe and Style' pp.55-69 in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.63; Tarlinskaja, 'Appendix' Table B.1.

[27] McDonald, 'Marlowe and Style' p.62 (more than a third of Marlowe's names come at the end of a line and with final stress – p.61); Harry Levin, *Marlowe the Overreacher* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p.61.

[28] Levin, *Marlowe the Overreacher*, p.30; Joel Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.10; Levin, *Marlowe the Overreacher*, p.40; T.S. Eliot, 'The Blank Verse of Marlowe', pp.86-94 in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co, 1932), p.88.

[29] McDonald, 'Marlowe and Style', p.67.

would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!' (76)), only to do the same in a twelve-syllable line addressed to Lucifer ('Yet will I call on him. O spare me, Lucifer!' (78)).[30] These lines bear terminal stress but their effect is frantic rather than confidently conclusive. We see and hear Faustus scrambling for a redemption outside the play's formal structures, whether theological or metrical. And, by his affording a prosodic parity to god and devil alike we see why he 'must be damned'; his metre limns him even as he speaks it, or refuses to speak it.

This is the myriad-minded metre which Shakespeare would eventually write, although his advancement toward, and adoption of, it was slow, unpredictable and discontinuous. To take an example with the previous chapter of this thesis in mind: while *Hamlet* is much more accentually various than Surrey's *Aeneid*, it sports slightly more stresses on its tenth-position syllables (92.9% to Surrey's 90%).[31] In some plays, Shakespeare stresses ninety-five per cent of his tenth-position syllables.[32] In stark statistical terms, this would suggest that Shakespeare's blank verse 'bombast' continued long after Greene's death. However, one reason why the blank verse of *Hamlet* runs on more successfully than that of Surrey's *Aeneid* is because its tenth-position syllables (however amply stressed) are not always its line-ending syllables.

There are no feminine endings (here defined as pentameter lines with an additional unstressed syllable at the end of the line) in Book 2 of Surrey's translation. There are no more than one per cent in *Gorboduc* and no more than three per cent in *Faustus* or the two parts of *Tamburlaine* (or indeed across Greene's canon).[33] Conversely, as early as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Richard III* Shakespeare was writing an additional unstressed syllable into around fifteen per cent of his pentameter line endings.[34] These plays were metrical anomalies – the proportion of feminine endings in Shakespeare's works slightly decreased through to 1597, as he battled to stabilise and reify the blank verse line in the manner of his prosodic predecessors – but they hint at what was to come. From 1597, the proportion of feminine endings in Shakespeare's plays jags upwards – from 18.8% in *Julius Caesar* and 19.5% in *Henry V* to 27.4% in *Othello* and 27.1% in *King Lear* to 33.4% in *The Winter's Tale* and 35.6% in *The Tempest*.[35] By 1609 every third or fourth verse line in Shakespeare's plays is given a metrical incentive to run across its putative ending.[36] Think of Shakespeare's (now) most famous lines, in Hamlet's speech at 3.1.58-92. The first five lines have feminine endings, as do many others in the speech. In a spirit

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[30] This reading depends on each syllable being voiced without elision.

[31] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Table B.1.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Marina Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare's Verse: Iambic Pentameter and the Poet's Idiosyncrasies* (New York: Lang, 1987), 'Appendix' Tables 5.1 and 5.3; Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Table B.4.

[34] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare's Verse*, Table 5.2.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

of somewhat banal metrical motive-hunting, we could consider this part of Hamlet's attempts to exceed himself, or to live beyond his span, or indeed as part of his inability to shut up (just as it might not be a coincidence that Books 9 and 10 of *Paradise Lost*, those most concerned with mankind's Fall, house more feminine endings than the rest of the poem put together).[37] It is perhaps enough to say that had Hamlet's blank verse line ended on the stressed word 'quest', he would be saying something quite different to the 'question' his feminine ending yields instead. However crude these readings can seem, at least they do not pretend that the feminine ending was a ubiquity or that it posed no threat to the integrity of the blank verse line.

1597 was an important year for Shakespeare's sense of an ending. Also in that year, Shakespeare's caesura (or 'dip') starts to slide from the sixth to the eighth syllable of a line; by 1605 it has settled on the eighth and never returns to its former position.[38] By shifting the line's centres of gravity further to the right, this combination of feminine ending with late caesura provokes a simultaneously metrical and syntactical run-on between verse lines. Shakespeare was writing himself beyond the end-stop which had defined and bedevilled so much early blank verse.

Toward the end of his career he added a final element to this line-broaching coalition of feminine ending and late caesura: midline beginnings and endings within and across verse lines, where syntax begins in the middle of one verse line and ends in the middle of the next (so that the resulting syntactical segment is roughly ten syllables in length, like a surrogate verse line). These midline transitions bother our sense of what a verse line is, and where it is, and how it should appear on the page or sound from the mouth (rather like the shared lines of Chapter 3). In Shakespeare's midline verse, lines are fashioned only to be dissolved or superseded: as Charles Lamb had it, 'Shakespeare mingles every thing'.[39] When we turn to a page of verse in *The Tempest*, for example, whether in a Folio or a modern edition, we can see 'shadow pentameters' ghosting across the typographical lines, with the phrase or sentence often appearing 'to have taken the line into its own hands'.[40] This 'looseness of facture' undoes any easy association between a typographical line and a specified rhythm because the iambic rhythm of a (roughly) ten-syllable segment can now transcend one verse line and find its culmination in another, subsequent line

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[37] Edward R. Weismeller, 'Blank Verse', *A Milton Encyclopaedia*, 9 vols., ed. W.B. Hunter (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press 1915-2006), vol. 1, p.186.
[38] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, ps.18, 126-7. The 'dip' is a missing stress on a normally stressed syllable. George T. Wright gives slightly different measurements of the caesura in *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.213, suggesting it moves from after the 4th/5th syllable to after the 6th/7th syllable.
[39] Charles Lamb, qtd. in *Lamb, Hazlitt, Keats: Great Shakespeareans Volume 4*, ed. Adrian Poole (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p.48.
[40] Nicholas D. Nace, 'Pointless Milton: A Close Reading in Negative', pp.125-134 in *Shakespeare Up Close: Reading Early Modern Texts*, ed. Russ McDonald, Nicholas D. Nace and Travis D. Williams (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p.133; Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.210.

(what E.A. Abbott called 'amphibious verse'), or can be said to start in the middle of a typographical line rather than proceeding along the full length of it.[41]

Prospero's insistently midline-to-midline speech in the final act of *The Tempest*, beginning 'Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves' (5.1.33-57), is quite unlike its source in Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid (first printed 1567). At most, only three of Golding's corresponding lines feature a midline transition. By contrast, Prospero habitually speaks from midline to midline; in relating his 'art' (50) to his audience, he relies again and again on midline jolts, enjambed twists, and feminine endings. In the middle of one verse line, he shifts from talk of his 'so potent art' to talk of renouncing it, running into the middle of the next typographical line as he does so: 'But this rough magic / I here abjure' (49-51). Modest verbs at the end of one verse line find epic objects at the start of the next: 'bedimmed / The noontide sun' (41-2), 'plucked up / The pine and cedar' (47-8). Again and again the midline verse springs its surprises. Prospero has not only 'rifted Jove's stout oak' at the end of line 45; he has done so, we discover over the line-break, 'With his own bolt' (46). No sooner has Prospero spoken of 'The pine and cedar' (at the start of line 48) than he boasts, midline, of how 'Graves at my command' – and then, over the line – 'Have waked their sleepers' (49), an alarming segue into the language of necromancy. In this speech we are witnessing, as much as hearing, something like the effect of Prospero's 'rough magic' coursing through the patterning and unpatterning of his lines. It is no wonder, amid the wonder, that the final words of Prospero's speech stand alone: as a renunciation of magic, 'I'll drown my book' (57) is appropriately untouched by midline interruption or feminine ending, nor is it enjambed into something richly strange.

Even if actors possess 'an inner rhythm of the iambic line', as Peter Hall argued, they must puzzle over these metrical and syntactical oddities: should they give rhythmic precedence to the typographical line or the midline-to-midline section, or somehow attempt to suggest or reconcile both?[42] One reason why William Davenant and John Dryden's adaptation of *The Tempest* (1667) held the stage until well into the nineteenth century is its addition of exclusively end-stopped verse, quite unlike Shakespeare's midline manner. This unbaffling of Shakespeare's versification was more easily spoken by its actors. Today, in a kind of actorly editing, many performers pare the rhythm of Shakespeare's lines back to the simply typographical; they tend to relay the lines as though they looked (and therefore sounded) like Surrey's.

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[41] Gordon McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing: Authorship in the Proximity of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.26; E.A. Abbott, *A Shakespearian Grammar* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1894), p.426.

[42] Hall, *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players*, p.15.

Christopher Plummer's Prospero (at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, 2010) – or Christopher Plummer himself – seemed tormented by the ways in which Shakespeare's midline verse was continuously 'forged and reforged' from typographical line to prosodic section to syntactical phrase.[43] Speaking 5.1.50-7 Plummer diced one midline-to-midline pentameter into two, lingering at the end of the first typographical line (50-1), but then he spoke two of the subsequent lines in a sixteen-syllable gulp. He voiced a symmetry into individual phrases ('I'll break [pause] my staff' (54) and 'I'll drown [pause] my book' (57)) while wildly varying the prosody of his utterances: sometimes speaking midline to midline, sometimes speaking only the typographical line, sometimes evoking or imposing another syntax altogether. By doing so, however intentionally, he intimated a Prospero veering between the equanimous and the restive.

In his promptbook for a 1998-9 production of *The Tempest*, Adrian Noble plotted the play's midline shifts and footloose run-ons in terms of movement. At the start of the typographical line 1.2.334 Caliban tells Prospero 'This island's mine, by Sycorax', at which point Noble recommends 'P[rospero] goes again to C[aliban] but stops'.[44] Caliban then finishes the typographical line with 'my mother'. The feminine ending nudges a transition to the next typographical line: 'Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first' (335). Noble inserts or elicits another movement at the midline ending of Caliban's syntax, noting that Caliban should now be 'behind P[rospero]'.[45] Where Plummer vocally elaborated or exacerbated some of Shakespeare's midline shifts, Noble translated them into a stage business which can clarify, highlight, replace or obscure the verse's prosodic movements.

Scholars have tried to find dramaturgical or historical cause for Shakespeare's most theatrically problematic verse. In his study of Shakespeare's 'late style', Russ McDonald noted similarities between the midline shift, Renaissance romance narratives and seventeenth-century tragicomic conventions: all make rapid or delicate turns from one thing to another, and sometimes turn back on themselves. In McDonald's argument, the midline-to-midline shift is effective as a conduit, guarantor, catalyst and emblem of larger generic properties.[46] Tarlinskaja has suggested, with varying degrees of plausibility, that Shakespeare's midline verse originated in the move 'from roofless public theatres' to a more complicated 'indoor' versification, or in 'A change in the taste of both the audience and the poets', or in 'A change in the verse sophistication of the audience' (whereby audiences could better 'hear' and 'recognise' verse).[47] It is possible that Shakespeare's later verse became increasingly private, as it were, unconcerned

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[43] Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.129.
[44] Adrian Noble, prompt book for 1998 RSC *Tempest*, Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, RSC/SM/1/1998.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare's Late Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Ch6.
[47] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare's Verse*, p.187.

with or unbothered by its efficacy on the public stage. Or maybe, after supplying his actors with easily memorable endstopped lines, Shakespeare came to trust their capacity for (and ingenuity in) speaking something more difficult.

In one sense, the cause of midline verse in *The Tempest* is Miranda: she is the first character to speak pentameters both along and beyond the typographical line. In her description of Prospero's storm (which turbidly mounts 'the sea […] to th'welkin's cheek' (4)), her verse becomes as visually choppy as 'the wild waters in this roar' (2) and froths from midline to midline (1.2.5-6, 8-9). This perturbed prosody looks in thrall to Prospero's meteorological tricks, so that even before he speaks we can see his influence upon his daughter. Yet Miranda's midline exclamations are also at a distance from the storm. They are moral and aesthetic observations upon it which redound with the *mirandum* (Latin 'wonder', 'marvel') of her name: 'O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer' (5-6), 'O, the cry did knock / Against my very heart' (8-9). Perhaps, then, her midline shifts are also interruptions of Prospero's spectacle, akin to the cued interruptions at the start of the play, or a metrical synecdoche of the play's many usurpations.[48] Perhaps they become a prosodical mode in which she can rebuff her father's magic and speak with a voice all her own. The rhythm of the midline verse at this point is largely consistent with that of the typographical line. We can read it either as detached from the pentameters as printed on the page or as contiguous with them, so that Shakespeare's midline verse is here unpledged either to Miranda's voice or to Prospero's vision.

Prospero speaks the play's next midline verse, telling Miranda that 'thy father / Was Duke of Milan' (1.2.56-9). If his narration seems peculiarly detached, it is not only because he is speaking in the third person. It is also because he is imitating – scornfully? hopefully? respectfully? fondly? humorously? – his daughter's midline verse, which had afforded her a degree of detachment from the subject matter she was relaying. Miranda also has an 'elastic correspondence' to Ferdinand's first midline verse.[49] As he staggers around the island, distracted by its music, Miranda speaks midline to midline (1.2.413-5). On seeing her, Ferdinand straightaway does the same ('Most sure, the goddess / On whom these airs attend' (420-2)) and continues speaking from midline to midline throughout their encounter. Miranda's prosody spellbinds (or spell-stops) the scene, eliciting and soliciting the midline shift in most of the characters she speaks with.

Except, possibly, Caliban. His first midline verse comes as, or soon after, he enters for the first time (1.2.325-6). Miranda has just spoken of Caliban from midline to midline: ''Tis a

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[48] Palfrey and Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, p.292.
[49] S.T. Coleridge, 'An Analysis of Act 1' (1811), in *The Tempest: A Casebook*, ed. D.J. Palmer (London: Macmillan, 1969), p.57.

villain, sir, / I do not love to look on' (312-13), such that we can imagine him lurking at the hinterland of the stage, awaiting his opportunity to speak, and profit on, the midline language which Miranda may have taught him (see 1.2.353-64 and 2.2.139-40). More contrarily, we could suppose that Miranda has absorbed Caliban's midline speech rhythms – his 'gabble like / A thing most brutish' (1.2.358-9) – in one of Shakespeare's 'unseen scenes'.[50] After all, Caliban's longest speeches (3.2.88-103, 138-146) move almost entirely from midline to midline. When Prospero speaks of or to Caliban at the end of the play, he does so in midline verse: 'Two of these fellows you / Must know and own; this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine' (5.1.277-9). If Prospero is speaking in Caliban's metrical register, more than in Miranda's, we might hear not only his sympathy for 'this thing of darkness' but also his secession to it (one reason we may be 'terrified by this man who has become / A duke again', in Rainer Maria Rilke's startling lines ('Ariel' 28-9), is that Caliban can become 'a king once more').[51] Where Prospero's first midline verse had been determined by Miranda's, his last can put him under the determination of Caliban – who has become, through their shared proclivity for the midline shift, Miranda's prosodic sibling. In fact, in Phyllida Lloyd's 2016 production Prospero's acknowledgement of 'this thing of darkness' was directed half at Caliban and half at his daughter.

Eric Griffiths has described how the midline verse in *The Tempest* (specifically, Prospero and Miranda's exchange about a 'brave new world' at 5.1.184-8) 'takes place in three dimensions; you can, so to speak, walk round it, and so need not take sides on it'.[52] In the exchange which Griffiths invokes, for example, we need not yield to the 'soft options' of Prospero as 'embittered killjoy' and Miranda as 'unashamedly rapt and attentive'.[53] We can instead hear Prospero 'talking without desire to wound but with a sense of the need to warn'.[54] This dimensionality – glimpsed and achieved in the many secessions and successions between and in the midst of Shakespeare's verse lines – both produces and sustains some of the prosodic feats that we have already encountered. Shakespeare's midline, metrically run-on blank verse allows a voice to colleague with an action, as described in Chapter 1: see Adrian Noble's plotting of midline movements in 1.2 of *The Tempest*, for instance. It is able to surprise with the fervid, and often frankly mad, sequences of language that we followed in Chapter 2, for example in the 'rough magic' of Prospero's 5.1 speech – perhaps prompted, even in this rhymeless verse, by Shakespeare's talent for a rhyming waywardness. In an act of auditory landscaping – the subject of Chapter 3 – the

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[50] See Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare*.

[51] Henry Beerbohm-Tree, qtd. in Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, eds., *The Tempest* (London: Arden, 2011 [1999]), pp.93-94.

[52] Eric Griffiths, 'What was new', *The London Review of Books*, vol. 7, no. 22 (19 December 1985), p.9.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

midline verse and its feminine run-ons can accord with the playworld it inhabits, or makes up, whether that be *The Tempest* or, as we shall see, *The Winter's Tale*. In seeking always to run down the page, from one line to the next, it has the verticality integral to Shakespeare's characters (Chapter 4) and might do something to bestow a characteristic Shakespearean depth upon the personages who speak it.

That is to say, Shakespeare's idiosyncratic blank verse was the form for his metrical accomplishments because it brought together – while productively opposing – the four traditions from which his verse seems to have taken flight: quantitative poetry (Chapter 1), rhyming verse (Chapter 2), syllabics (Chapter 3) and accentual metres (Chapter 4). Especially later in his career, Shakespeare's blank verse is a panoply of possible stress – as we have seen, actors can voice his lines typographically, or from midline to midline, or via syntax, or by some combination of the above – in a way that happens to pay a corrective tribute to the sometimes overly insistent accentual tradition in English poetry. It also tweaks and toys with the foundational principles of syllabic prosody, disestablishing verse lines while, and by, peppering them with the faintest of concluding syllables (so faint as to disestablish the syllable, too). Although this is a verse 'blank' of rhyme, we can hear in it rhyme's mixture of the lugubrious and redundant with the purposeful and terse; Shakespeare's blank verse owes much to the structures of rhyme even as it departs from rhyme's strictures. And in being thick with different rhythms – his late blank verse could be sedimentary, were it not also so quick – Shakespeare's blanks could remind us of his oddest, oldest prosodic inheritance: the quantitative ability to apprehend more than one rhythm (or kind of rhythm) at a time. If all this seems inimical to 'bombast', we must remember that Greene's verb was partly a matter of timing: the aspirational 'bombast' of his 'Shake-scene' is a first description of Shakespeare's versification that would go on to prove the worst description, but only some years after it was written and published. The whirligig of time would bring in Shakespeare's revenges.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Yet, far from biding his time, Shakespeare seems to have taken immediate umbrage at the *Groatsworth*. Chettle prefaced another 1592 pamphlet with an apology, noting how the *Groatsworth* had been 'offensively by one or two taken'.[55] He was 'as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault' (which, in fact, it might have been).[56] He proceeded to praise Shakespeare's

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[55] Henry Chettle, *Kind-Hart's Dreame*, facsimile, no ed. given (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1997), pp.3-4.
[56] Ibid.

'civil' demeanour, 'uprightness of dealing', 'honesty' and 'facetious grace in writing' – the opposite of 'bombast'.[57] However, this would not be the end of Shakespeare's dealings with Chettle. John Jowett has ventured that Chettle 'imped some of his own feathers' onto the First Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*, and Chettle appears to criticise Shakespeare in *Englands Mourning Garment* (1603) for not shedding 'one idle tear', one solitary poem, upon the death of Elizabeth.[58] Nor was it the end of Shakespeare's dealings with Greene (despite the small matter of his death). Stephen Greenblatt has argued that Shakespeare spent the late 1590s 'transforming [Greene] into Falstaff', that 'sweet creature of bombast' (*1H4* 2.5.330), culminating in Falstaff's deathbed babbling about 'green fields' in *Henry V* (2.3.16-17).[59] In *Hamlet* Polonius objects to 'beautified' as a 'vile phrase' (2.2.111-2), perhaps recalling the upstart crow 'beautified' with others' feathers. In Sonnet 112, written around the turn of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare seems punningly to remember Greene: 'For what care I who calls me well or ill, / If you *o'ergreen* my bad, my good allow?' (3-4, my emphasis).

In a commendatory poem to Ben Jonson's *Catiline* (1611), John Fletcher mentions 'Greene's dear Groatsworth' (he obviously regards the *Groatsworth* as Greene's, and depends on his readership doing so). Also in 1611, in *The Winter's Tale* Paulina scorns Leontes for 'jealousies [...] too green and idle / For girls of nine' (3.2.179-181). In this case, Shakespeare's recurring 'green'/Greene pun comes in a play which draws heavily upon Greene's 1588 prose romance *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* (reprinted in 1592, 1595 and 1607, though Shakespeare uses the 1588 text: closer to the wound, perhaps). Florizel's rationale for assuming a disguise in 4.4 is almost directly versified from *Pandosto* (a kind of beautifying with others' feathers) although – by now predictably – Shakespeare turns Greene's Neptune into 'the green Neptune' of Florizel's speech (28). Shakespeare's puns on the colour of Greene's name unschematically tie him to the green-eyed 'jealousies' of Leontes as though, in this late play, Shakespeare is finding humoral or pathological cause for Greene's attack earlier in his career. Should we, as Shakespeare appears to suggest, think of Greene as jealous? Or since, in Rosemary Lloyd's distinction, 'envy concerns what one would like to have but does not possess' whereas 'jealousy centres on what one has and does not wish to lose', we should refer to Greene's attack on the young Shakespeare as envious.[60] Any more exact description would depend on how much of Greene's venom originated in envious esteem, on whether he jealously feared an incubus-like Shakespeare draining his talent,

[57] Ibid.

[58] John Jowett, 'Henry Chettle and the First Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 91, no. 1, pp.53-74, 66; Richard Wilson, *Worldly Shakespeare: The Theatre of Our Good Will* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp.73-74.

[59] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p.225.

[60] Rosemary Lloyd, *Closer & Closer Apart: Jealousy in Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.xi.

or envied the way he had 'advanced suddenly, and *per saltum*', and on whether Shakespeare felt a lingeringly envious admiration of Greene even (or especially) in *The Winter's Tale*.[61] It would also depend on a clear early modern distinction between jealousy and envy, which does not everywhere exist.

Regardless of all this, critics have set a benevolent gloss on the relationship between *The Winter's Tale* and *Pandosto*, and between late Shakespeare and late Greene. Stuart Gillespie thinks Shakespeare's use of *Pandosto* 'can only imply approbation of some kind'.[62] Steven Mentz regards *The Winter's Tale* as 'a self-conscious act of reconciliation', 'a nostalgic return to Shakespeare's Elizabethan roots', a play in which Shakespeare 'reconciles himself with Greene's legacy'.[63] These critics enlist the play's language of forgiveness and contrition (itself far from naïve, sunny or absolute, even in the green pastoral scenes of Act 4) in order to downplay Shakespeare's more fractious ability to hold a grudge. Greene – or the 'brand name' we refer to as Greene – had punningly tried to ruin Shakespeare's name (without quite naming him) even as Shakespeare was trying to make it, and *The Winter's Tale* takes its punning revenge upon Greene's name (without quite naming him) in return.[64]

The frontispiece to Greene's *Valeria* (published posthumously in 1598) shows him as a ghost, 'raised from his grave' and decked in a winding sheet.[65] He is crouched over his desk, writing furiously (and theatrically: the scene occurs within a proscenium arch). There is a pen within his grasp and a knife within his reach. This ought to be menacing as well as funny – yet if the ghost of Robert Greene hovers about *The Winter's Tale*, it is rather Shakespeare haunting Greene than Greene haunting Shakespeare. By turning *Pandosto*'s prose into the blank verse of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare could demonstrate that his prosody had arrived at far more than 'bombast' (though bombast remained within his metrical arsenal). It could, for example, supply an excruciating enacted critique of Greene's prose rhythms; that is, Shakespeare's 'defence of verse' could take the form of an attack. When Pandosto first turns jealous, he does so with a laboured logic:

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[61] Francis Bacon, 'Of Envy' (1625), in *The Essays*, ed. John Pitcher (London: Penguin, 1985), p.85.

[62] Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sources* (London: Continuum, 2004), p.211.

[63] Steven Mentz, 'Wearing Greene: Autolycus, Robert Greene, and the Structure of Romance in *The Winter's Tale*', *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 30 (1999-2001), pp.73-92, 76, 74, 86.

[64] Steven Mentz, 'Day Labour: Thomas Nashe and the Practice of Prose in Early Modern England', pp.18-32 in *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Poetics of Reading*, ed. Naomi Conn Liebler (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.19.

[65] Robert Greene, *Greene in conceipt: New raised from his graue to write the tragique historie of faire Valeria of London. Wherein is truly discouered the rare and lamentable issue of a husbands dotage, and wiues leudnesse, & children of disobedience* (London: Richard Bradocke, 1598).

First, he called to mind the beauty of his wife Bellaria, the comeliness and bravery of his friend Egistus, thinking that love was above all laws, and therefore to be stayed with no law; that it was hard to put fire and flax together without burning; that their open pleasures might breed his secret displeasures. He considered with himself that Egistus was a man, and must needs love; that his wife was a woman, and therefore subject unto love, and that where fancy forced, friendship was of no force.[66]

This is the rhythm of considered argument, reinforced by syllogistic conjunctions, a highly linear syntax, and stylish parallelisms and inversions ('where fancy forced, friendship was of no force'). Contrast Leontes's first jealous eruption:

Too hot, too hot!
To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.
I have *tremor cordis* on me: my heart dances,
But not for joy, not joy. This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent – 't may, I grant.
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers
As now they are, and making practised smiles
As in a looking glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o'th'deer – O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows! Mamillius,
Art thou my boy?

(1.2.110-122)

Where Pandosto speaks with a measured linearity, Leontes speaks in the uneven sequences sometimes brokered by rhyme (see Chapter 2). The 'fertile bosom' of his wife, her 'entertainment' with Polixenes, and his own 'secret displeasures' (in Greene's phrase) prompt him to ask his son 'Art thou my boy?': both a fatherly endearment and a more searching question about Mamillius's paternity. There is a sort of logic to this, as though following the inferences in-between Pandosto's clauses. Yet Shakespeare strains Greene's parallelisms so that they nearly (and sometimes do) become repetitions: 'To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods', 'But not

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[66] Robert Greene, *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, facsimile (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1997), pp.8-9.

for joy, not joy', 'paddling palms and pinching fingers', 'My bosom likes not, nor my brows!', where the polished symmetry of Pandosto's arguments has become an obsessive fretting over, or fondling of, individual words. It is as though Shakespeare is correcting Greene's notion of jealousy by more truly versifying it; turning it from something sane, sophisticated and logical to something cantankerous, pedantic, obtuse and crazed.

Leontes's blank verse has a lunatic energy. His dancing heart, busy with *tremor cordis*, moves 'But not for joy, not joy', where the scarcely discernible spasm on the second 'not' incarnates the heart's jolt within Shakespeare's blanks. He crams later lines with pyrrhics (double unstresses) which suddenly yield to iambs so that the iambs come to sound over-eager, as if the regularity of the blank verse is itself (or has become) suspect. Its caesuras are heavy ('likes not, now') and the stresses are strong and alliterative ('paddling palms and pinching fingers'), as though Leontes is trying to secure a voice that is escaping from him. About half of his lines have feminine endings and almost all move from midline to midline; despite his efforts to load down the verse with stress and pause, it keeps sliding over the ends of his typographical lines. To the extent that this is a bombastic blank verse, it is the sort of bombast best delivered *sotto voce* or at a nervous pitch. But this is verse which has attained almost everything else too.

The Winter's Tale is not only concerned with the destruction of Greene's prosodical claims. For one thing, it sets out to transcend – as much as to destroy – the notion of a blank verse 'bombast': Leontes's speech often achieves a kind of non-bombastic bombast, a bombast that captivates and crisps the ear rather than appalling or offending it. Like all Shakespeare's later blanks, it is concerned with the destruction (or at least rejection) of the blank verse which his contemporaries and immediate antecedents would have recognised. Unlike, say, Surrey or Gascoigne, the majority of Shakespeare's lines in *The Winter's Tale* are not ten syllables long, nor are their stresses isochronous (i.e. regularly spaced across a verse line), and nor is there a consistently rising rhythm from unstressed syllable to stressed syllable. It can be difficult to find five stresses in his lines, or to be clear where those five stresses fall: there are at least six possible stresses in Leontes's line about '*tremor cordis*', for example (I, tre[mor], cor[dis], me, heart, dan[ces]). Only three of Leontes's lines (above) are in unproblematic pentameter and only one or two are clearly and persistently iambic. Indeed Shakespeare's later writing becomes blank verse – on its own terms – by being neither especially iambic nor regularly pentameter (the nineteenth-century term 'iambic pentameter' is better suited to pre-Shakespearean verse). If, as Doctor Johnson half-believed, blank verse is available 'only to the eye' (and therefore did not inhere in many accentual or syllabic qualities) then Shakespeare's midline transitions efface even the visual

aspects of what had traditionally been termed blank verse.[67] It seems, then, that in order to make a blank verse of his own, Shakespeare dismantled and remade the iambic pentameter of Surrey, Marlowe, Gascoigne and Greene. In so doing, Shakespeare wrenched it into a new form which centres – perversely, paradoxically – on the eccentric: his later blanks are always trying to move outside themselves by a combination of late caesura, feminine ending and midline shift.

Shakespeare's blanks became 'a poetic style like nothing he (or anybody else) had composed before', and it was some time before that style took hold in others.[68] While Thomas Middleton and John Fletcher's feminine endings are sometimes thought to be inspired by Shakespeare's, in their verse it is the eleventh and not the tenth syllable of the line which receives final stress.[69] (In any case, Middleton seems to have been writing more feminine endings into his verse than Shakespeare even in the early seventeenth century.)[70] This is not true of John Webster and John Ford. In most of Webster's plays, populated by 'all manner of tidbits from [his] voracious reading' of Shakespeare, we find a third to a half of the lines ending with an additional unstressed syllable.[71] The same is true of Ford, although he appears to have reverted to a Middletonian 'heavy' feminine ending toward the end of his career.[72] By 1642, Shakespeare had become part of the prosodic 'woodstore' to a good number of his fellow dramatists; there was by then, in David L. Frost's phrase, 'the school of Shakespeare'.[73] In fact, by the late seventeenth century Thomas Blount could claim that Shakespeare had invented blank verse in its entirety (he was 'the first who, to shun the pains of continual rhyming, invented that kind of writing which we call blank verse').[74]

For yet later writers, Shakespeare's metrical accomplishments would come to seem routine – as though they were innate to blank verse, rather than worked into it by Shakespeare and a cluster of his contemporaries. We hardly raise an eyebrow when we find a midline transition in Robert Browning's 'Caliban upon Setebos' (1864) or W.H. Auden's 'Prospero to Ariel' (part of *The Sea and the Mirror* (1944)), even though that particular resource would have seemed daringly novel to those hearing *The Tempest* in 1611 or reading it in 1623. Shakespeare's version of blank verse has survived into canonicity because it is various enough not to seem the

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[67] Samuel Johnson, 'Milton', *Lives of the English Poets* (1783), 3 vols., ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), vol. 1, p.193.
[68] McDonald, *Shakespeare's Late Style*, p.1.
[69] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Tables B.1 and B.4.
[70] Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Table 2.1.
[71] Coburn Freer, *The Poetics of Jacobean Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p136; Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Tables B.1 and B.4.
[72] Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Tables B.1 and B.4.
[73] David L. Frost, *The School of Shakespeare: The Influence of Shakespeare on English Drama 1600-42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.237.
[74] Thomas Blount, *De Re Poetica* (London: Richard Everingham, 1694), pp.103-4.

work of only one writer (or a few writers); we encounter it as a prosodic form rather than as an individual or coterie style. It is dazzlingly discrepant, including from itself, since most of its idiosyncratic prosodic resources (midline shifts, feminine endings, late caesura) tend to work against the verse that they are also defining or constituting. If Shakespeare inaugurates a blank verse tradition, held together more by resemblances than rules, then he does so by disturbing a previous, kindred tradition: the iambic pentameter of the mid- to late sixteenth century. Yet he also does so by hinting at the ways in which his own blanks might, in turn, be repudiated – which is to say, if Shakespeare's metre was most often his 'defence of verse' it was, at the same time, his verse's most implacable opponent.

6: Not Blanks

What is 'blank' about blank verse? The *OED* reminds us that blank verse is 'blank' of rhyme ('verse without rhyme' (*OED* 'blank' 8a)), though it need not therefore take the form of the iambic pentameter. Its rhymelessness could leave it 'Void of result, unsuccessful, fruitless, nugatory; amounting to or producing nothing' ('blank' 4b), especially if rhyme is one of verse's 'begetting' faculties (see Chapter 2). Yet the *OED*'s entry (4b) makes a fruitfulness out of potential fruitlessness; its description swells with adjective after adjective, not all of which agree with each other (viz. the lexicographer's concluding distinction between words 'amounting to' nothing and words 'producing' nothing). Many of the *OED*'s entries on 'blank *adj.* and *adv.*' are similarly abundant, various and unsettled. *OED* 1 defines 'blank' as both 'pale' and completely 'colourless'. In *OED* 5, a person may be 'blank' in respect of any of the following discrepant states: 'utterly disconcerted, discomfited, resourceless, or non-plussed'. In *OED* 6, blankness can be a 'Prostrating [of] the whole faculties' but also 'unrelieved, helpless, stark, sheer'.

All dictionary entries range across synonyms, but 'blank' ranges across more than most – as though the word itself approximates to blankness, instead of more straightforwardly describing or signifying it, and must therefore be salvaged by another, equivalent vocabulary. Take *OED* 2a, 'Of paper, etc.: Left white or "fair"; not written upon, free from written or printed characters, "empty of all marks" (Johnson); said also of orders, cheques, deeds, and official documents left with an empty space for special signature or instruction; not "filled up"'. This is definition by dint of re-description: from 'white' to 'fair', from 'not' written upon to 'free from' writing, from 'empty' to 'not "filled up"'. Such ways of thinking about and expressing blankness recall the particular syllables of Chapter 3 – at once things and nothing, and things within nothing. Like syllables, blanks are means for filling a space while being a space which requires filling (as with the 'blank space for different names' in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (2.1.71)). As blanks can 'bodge up' or 'fill up' a verse, and even 'bombast' or 'stuff' it out, they can – or so *OED* 2a suggests – be an unfilled, unbodged, unstuffed vacancy. So we could ask: what if Shakespeare wasn't writing 'blank verse', i.e. a verse structured and defined by the absence of rhyme, or by the presence of certain accentual and syllabic features, but 'blank' verse? Where 'blank verse' is a noun phrase or compound noun aspiring to definition, 'blank' verse is figured only by its opaque, oscillating adjective. 'Blank' verse aspires to be free of or free from definition, just as the 'paper' in the *OED*'s entry (2a) is 'free from written or printed characters'. 'Blank' verse, as opposed to 'blank verse', is a Shakespearean kind of prosody which seeks to undermine or confront or puzzle itself, or thread outside itself, even as it sometimes does so via

a combination of defined prosodic forms (the feminine ending, the midline shift, the late caesura).

Indeed, blank verse is usually said to be 'formed' or to be 'a form'. Yet in the case of Shakespeare's 'blank' verse there is a non- or un-forming tendency at work, perhaps because he was writing in the midst of (what H.T. Kirby-Smith has called) 'The first cycle of free verse'.[1] Whether it is best described as *vers libre* or *vers libéré* or as something more incipient still, readers have long detected a disturbance in sixteenth and seventeenth century poetry. Kirby-Smith finds a tendency to, and allowance for, free verse in Faustus's final speech, Lear's ravings on the heath, Barnabe Barnes's and William Drummond's 'literary madrigals', some of Donne's lyrics, and even parts of *Astrophil and Stella*.[2] Robert Shafer located a similarly free versification in Spenser, Francis Quarles, Thomas Carew, Henry Vaughan and especially Richard Crashaw.[3] Abraham Cowley's pindaric odes have been variously described as 'lax and lawless', 'leisurely experiments in free versification', 'pompous lyrics in *vers libres*', 'free or irregular verse', such that Cowley would 'probably have been in the van of the *vers librists* if he had lived in the second decade of the twentieth century'.[4] There are times when Cowley appears to agree. In the preface to the 1668 edition of his pindarics, he advertised his 'libertine way of rendering foreign authors'; the term 'free verse' is tantalisingly close.[5]

John Milton has always been central to the search for, and discovery of, Renaissance free verse (if such a search or discovery can justly have a centre). '[W]ith encouragement from Johnson', T.S. Eliot ventured that Milton was 'the greatest master of free verse in our language' (although only in his second assay at an essay about Milton).[6] Later in the essay Milton becomes 'the greatest master in our language of freedom within form', a slightly cooler claim, with *Paradise Lost* 'continuously animated by the departure from, and return to, the regular measure' of blank verse.[7] In fact, 'in comparison with Milton, hardly any subsequent writer of blank verse appears to exercise any freedom at all'.[8] While Eliot here has *Paradise Lost* – a poem frequently thought of

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[1] Kirby-Smith, *Origins*, p.57.

[2] Kirby-Smith, *Origins*, pp.55-80, 65.

[3] Robert Shafer, *The English Ode to 1660: An Essay in Literary History* (New York: Haskell House, 1966 [1918]), Ch7.

[4] Samuel Johnson, *Life of Cowley*, in *The Lives of the Poets*, vol. 1, p.63; James Taaffe, *Abraham Cowley* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), p.60; Edmund Gosse, *Seventeenth Century Studies* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1987 [1883]), p.214; Shafer, *The English Ode*, p.129; Arthur Nethercot, *Abraham Cowley, the Muse's Hannibal (*London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p.290.

[5] Abraham Cowley, 'Preface' to *Pindarique Odes, Written in Imitation of the Stile & Manner of the Odes of Pindar* (London: Henry Herringman, 1668), in *Poems*, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), p.156.

[6] T.S. Eliot, 'Milton II', pp.146-161 in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p.158.

[7] Eliot, 'Milton II', pp.160-161.

[8] Ibid.

as 'a precursor to free verse' – at the tip of his pen, he also has the choruses of *Samson Agonistes* (1671) at the forefront of his mind.[9]

With encouragement from Eliot, John Creaser has called the *Samson* choruses 'the earliest sustained passages of free verse in the language'.[10] These 'unjointed' (*Samson* 177), agonised sequences take shape on the page as both diffuse and instantiated. Many of the lines (or 'lines') have bulk and bulge, extending beyond pentameter with a liberal tumescence; they are the 'republican sublime' of Milton's prosody, as David Norbrook might put it.[11] Others seem almost gaseous or intangible in their float from margin to margin. Some of the lines look free of all prosodic restraint, drifting toward prose; others are densely bunched toward the gutter of the printed page. Which is to say: these choric utterances seem to move in a way that the characters of the 'dramatic poem' do not (or cannot).[12] The densely loose arrangements of the verse taunt the incarcerated, static Samson:

> Thou art become (O worse imprisonment!)
> The dungeon of thyself; thy soul
> (Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)
> Imprisoned now indeed,
> In real darkness of the body dwells,
> Shut up from outward light
> To incorporate with gloomy night;
> For inward light alas
> Puts forth no visual beam.

<div align="right">(155-163)</div>

Even in this relatively tame passage, we can see and hear what Eliot (referring to T.E. Hulme's free verse) called 'the constant suggestion and the skilful evasion of iambic pentameter' and, beyond that, of any regular metre.[13] It would take a samsonian effort of interpretation to find much consistency across these lines; they peel away from each other in stress and length only to

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[9] Richard Andrews, *A Prosody of Free Verse: Explorations in Rhythm* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p.44; Eliot, 'Milton II', p.155.

[10] John Creaser, 'prosody', pp.297-301 in *The Milton Encyclopaedia*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p.300.

[11] David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.5.

[12] John Milton, 'Of that Sort of Dramatic Poem which is Called Tragedy' (1671) in *Selected Poems*, ed. John Leonard (London: Penguin, 2007), p.214.

[13] T.S. Eliot, 'Reflections on Vers Libre' (1917), pp.31-36 in Kermode, ed., *Selected Prose*, p.33.

convene in a rhyme, of all things (160-1, though the rhyme is followed by another couple of lines that resist becoming a couplet). Milton describes 'The measure of verse used in the chorus' as 'of all sorts', where the tension between singular ('The measure') and plural ('all sorts') suggests his reluctance to sunder the verse from metre absolutely.[14] For him, the verse of *Samson Agonistes* is that 'call'd by the Greeks *Monostrophic*, or rather *Apolelymenon*, without regard had to Strophe, Antistrophe, or Epode'.[15] Milton's editors have often glossed 'apolelymenon' as an elaborate synonym for metrical freedom: 'free from all metrical restraint', '"free" in the sense that the choruses are not bound by strict divisions', and free of 'regular pauses'.[16]

Milton's note reminds us that the language of form, formlessness and freedom is anciently vexed; his syntax does not quite reveal whether the distinction between 'Monostrophic' form and 'Apolelymenon' is one that 'the Greeks' would recognise or one that he has anachronistically introduced. This has something to do with the vocabulary of form. The word 'form' etymologically derives from the Latin *forma* and *formare*, but conceptually derives just as much from the Greek εἶδος (*eidos*) and ἰδέα (*idea*), as well as related terms like μορφή (shape) and φαινόμενα (phenomena). It is 'an abstraction from matter' which is all the while 'subtly inflected towards matter', partly because in the *Republic* (380 BC) Plato's 'essential Forms' are 'unchangeably in the same state for ever' and yet 'manifest themselves in a great variety of combinations, with actions, with material things, and with one another'.[17] This 'platonic problem' or paradox has persisted into present usage: the form of the word 'form' derives from its intellectual as well as its etymological lineage.[18]

Angela Leighton has listed form's 'wealth of grammatical connections […] as if there were something unfinished, even unformed, about form'.[19] We have books which partner form and content, form and formlessness, form and informality, form and deformity, form and information, form and reform, form and feeling, form and intent, form and authority, form and contentment, form and meaning, form and time, form and format.[20] The word 'hangs on its other half, needing that support and relief' lest it collapse into abstraction (although by being paired with its alleged opposites, it also risks collapsing into contradiction).[21] And 'form' –

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[14] 'Of that Sort of Dramatic Poem which is Called Tragedy', p.215.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Charles Cowden Clark, ed., *Milton's Poetical Works* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861), p.406; Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., *The Complete Poems and Major Prose*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003 [1957]), p.550; Kirby-Smith, *Origins*, p.78.

[17] Leighton, *On Form*, p.1; Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Francis Macdonald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp.183, 187.

[18] Leighton, *On Form*, p.1.

[19] Leighton, *On Form*, p.2.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

whatever it is – seems to depend not only on other things, but on other forms. When Picasso looked at Cezanne's painted apples, he saw 'the weight of space on that circular form' rather than fruit 'as such'.[22] He noticed how forms are always drawn or motivated by other, surrounding forms, or by formlessness ('space' being a kind of formlessness, although brought into form by Picasso's metaphor of 'weight'). Indeed when forms are considered only in themselves, as discrete entities, they tend to be regarded as indolently aesthetic. In the English Reformation, for example, Protestant divines railed against liturgical 'form': it was a 'cloak', 'idle' and 'impertinent' (although for William Perkins, a 'form' of prayer can 'be used whereunto all the power of body and soul may be well fitted').[23] Form was then, as perhaps now, a 'dirty word', 'synonymous with the *merely* formal'.[24] It was a 'conventional observance' or a frippery (like the 'polished form of well-refined pen' (8) conjured by Shakespeare in Sonnet 85).[25]

The vocabulary of form, formlessness and freedom does not permit smooth progress between those three words. Free verse is not necessarily formless verse; in fact, as we have seen, Eliot would insist that free verse involved a constant conversation with form. When we define form, we often do so in terms of formlessness – but then how do we define formlessness except as a deprivation or absence of form? Indeed, we might wonder whether the opposite of metrical form is not formlessness or freedom, but prose (which carries its own formal requirements). Shakespeare's blanks are never entirely free, or 'free from' form. Nor are they formless. Rather, they hint at (or threaten) formlessness by establishing particular relationships between a trio of prosodic resources (feminine endings, midline transitions, late caesuras). As a result, they are almost what Irena Nikolova has termed 'forms of formlessness' – that is to say, literary forms structured on the impression of abstraction, or deviation, or mess, or distraction, or diversion, or vacuity, or deformity.[26] In this chapter, we will encounter two of these 'forms of formlessness' in Shakespeare's writing: the seven-syllable line and the fourteener line, both organised by and predicated on their proximity to the formless. They are also proximate to Shakespeare's blank verse, teasing it closer and closer to its destruction; in Eliot's terms, if metre is behind all free verse then perhaps free verse is behind all metre. For Nikolova, 'forms of formlessness' are a

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[22] Pablo Picasso, trans. and qtd. in Franklin R. Rogers, *Painting and Poetry: Form, Metaphor, and the Language of Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1985), p.152.

[23] Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdom Three Books* (London: Edward Blount and Will Aspley, 1608), p.152; John Bartlett, *The Pedegrewe of Heretics* (London: Henry Denham, 1566), p.49; William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition of Christ Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Thomas Pierson, 1608), p.250.

[24] Ben Burton, 'Forms of Worship: Shakespeare's Sonnets, Ritual, and the Genealogy of Formalism', pp.56-72 in *The Work of Form: Poetics & Materiality in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Ben Burton and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.56.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Irena Nikolova, *Complementary Modes of Representation in Keats, Novalis, and Shelley* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), p.183.

'convergence of materiality and immateriality' into an 'oxymoron'.[27] For Shakespeare, they are something similar but more fatally prolific: a paradox, that word which has appeared in every chapter of this thesis and which will appear once more yet.

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As one of Raymond Williams's 'keywords', 'form' was 'a visible or outward shape, with a strong sense of the physical body' – of what we refer to as 'the human form'.[28] Prosodic forms have always had kinship with the body. A verse line is made up of feet, fingers (the etymology of the dactyl) and the 'breathing space' of caesura (see Chapter 1). These anatomical feints afford the verse line, in Puttenham's terminology, an *energia* (vividness) as well as a more static *enargeia* (grace).[29] There is a particular tradition linking the form of the body with the form of blank verse – especially through metaphors of an isochronous heartbeat (again, see Chapter 1). With its ten syllables and its healthy-hearted rhythm, blank verse has a satisfyingly even and regular shape; if verse forms are like bodies, then blank verse is the sort of body we would want to inhabit.

Conversely, Renaissance writers described lines with an odd number of syllables – that is, with half or incomplete feet – as anatomically mangled or misshapen. Jonson and Nashe compare the seven-syllable line to a hobbling brewer's cart and a butterwoman's 'rank' to market, phrases Rosaline and Celia invoke or pre-empt in *As You Like It* (3.2.92-4, 160-1).[30] If they countenanced the possibility of an odd-syllabled line (Gascoigne didn't), Renaissance prosodists read them with their senses in revolt.[31] William Webbe briefly contemplated an odd-syllabled verse (a nine-syllable metre) before dismissing it as synaesthetically 'rough'.[32] Puttenham's palate could 'find no savour in a metre of three syllables nor in effect in any odd'.[33] Although he preferred 'even-footed verse' William Scott thought that odd-syllabled lines could be remedied if 'pressed down' (stressed) at their ending, since the reader could thereby imagine the line rectified with a closing unstress and a full foot.[34] For Puttenham, seven-syllable lines could be 'slid away with a flat accent' (i.e. if the stress falls on the penultimate syllable of the line) – so that they would move like limbless reptiles, unable to walk on their metrical feet.[35]

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Williams, *Keywords*, p.138.
[29] Puttenham, *Art*, p.227.
[30] H.J. Oliver, ed., *As You Like It* (London: Penguin, 1968), p.168; Ben Jonson, *Ben Jonson's Timber or Discoveries*, ed. Ralph S. Walker (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), p.102.
[31] Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes*, p.4.
[32] Webbe, *Discourse*, p59.
[33] Puttenham, *Art*, p.160.
[34] Scott, *The Model of Poesy*, p. 60.
[35] Puttenham, *Art*, p.160.

Shakespeare may have known about the prosodists' disdain. Orlando's execrable love poetry (so wooden as to be indistinguishable from the trees it garlands) is almost entirely in seven-syllable lines, as is Claudio's dubious love-epitaph for Hero at the start of *Much Ado About Nothing* 5.3. 'The Phoenix and Turtle', a poem that advertises its 'defunctive music' (14), is also rendered in seven-syllable lines. If we regard these lines as ending with an incomplete disyllabic foot, rather than thinking of them as headless or catalectic, then they can plausibly be figured as stumbling, uneven, lame and deformed.

However, there are many odd-syllabled lines in Shakespeare which are not 'rotten' (*AYLI* 3.2.117), 'tedious' (152), or in some way risible. In *Macbeth*, the witches speak in seven-syllable lines of memorable acoustic power. Their final half-formed feet strike the ear like thunder and lightning: 'When shall we three meet a**gain**?' (1.1.1), 'When the hurly-burly's **done** / When the battle's lost and **won**' (3-4), 'Fair is foul and foul is **fair**' (10). Critics are always attempting to resolve these lines – in Hamlet's sense of 'melt, / Thaw, and *resolve* itself into a dew' (1.2.129-130, my emphasis) – by reading them as trochaic tetrameter, because a seven-syllable line disrupts their preference for a more regular verse. So for D.L. Chambers, 'The speeches of the three weird sisters are prevailingly tetrameter', and George T. Wright refers to tetrameter as the 'signal' verse line of Shakespeare's witches and fairies.[36] While not entirely untrue – there is a trochaic beat through the lines, and it is possible to read them as headless – tetrameter is not these lines' prevailing or 'signal' feature. If it was, we could reasonably expect them to have eight syllables most of the time. Yet the witches speak more seven-syllable lines than all other lengths of line put together, and more than double the number of octosyllabic lines. In his seven-syllable lines, as opposed to his tetrameter lines, Shakespeare emphasises the length of the line above its stresses; he here prioritises a syllabic prosody (see Chapter 3) above an accentual prosody (see Chapter 4). What matters most in the seven-syllable line, at least, is its form and shape – or rather, its alleged formlessness and shapelessness.

The seven-syllable lines in *Macbeth* are a metrical version of the deformity they render, where syllable count is less important than the gruesome shape made during (and by) the counting. These lines are not 'about something' (as Samuel Beckett wrote of James Joyce), they almost *are* 'that something itself'.[37] For all Renaissance observers – from the sceptical Reginald Scot (witches are 'lean and deformed') to the assured accusers ('upon her left side near her arm

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[36] David Chambers, *The Metre of Macbeth: its relation to Shakespeare's earlier and later work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1903), p.11; Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, p.114.
[37] Samuel Beckett, 'Dante…Bruno…Vico…Joyce' (1929) in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp.26-27.

was a little lump like a wart') – agreed that the witch was deformed.[38] Witches were not only deformed in themselves; they were the cause of deformation in others. Children's hands were 'turned where the backs should be, and the back in the place of the palms'.[39] Witches 'pinch' and 'pull [into] pieces'.[40] In one account, they fold the tongue of their victim.[41] It seems fitting, then, to communicate the deformation and deformations of the witches through a supposedly deformed verse line, a verse line that never seemed to 'fit'. In the seven-syllable lines of *Macbeth* we encounter (what Walter Pater called) 'the great, irregular art of Shakespeare'.[42] We sense, too, what he can do with form when he is tugging or yanking at its edges, or challenging it altogether.

Why should *Macbeth*, in particular, be so full of seven-syllable lines, lines that are a little empty, one syllable short of a proper foot? Or, conversely, why should *Macbeth* be full of these supererogatory lines, with one syllable too many, as though suffering from a syllabic abscess? The answer originates in the play's patronage. *Macbeth* was probably performed before King James, and in the play's prosody Shakespeare strikes an uneasy congruence between his seven-syllable line and the Stuarts' dynastic line. Aged eighteen, James had written a dialect treatise about prosody, *Ane Schort Treatise conteining some reulis and cautelis to be obseruit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie* (1584). The treatise was reissued, alongside other of James's works, when he came to the English throne in 1603. In the treatise, he warned poets about odd-syllabled lines. 'Always take heed', he cautions, 'that the number of your feet [syllables] in every line be even and not odd: as four, six, eight, or ten and not three, five, seven, or nine'.[43] He excepts the use of odd-syllabled lines for what he terms 'broken verse' which is 'daily invented by diverse poets'.[44] The king's interest in versification continued well beyond adolescence or early adulthood: he is recorded as pronouncing on psalmody at the 1601 General Assembly of the Kirk and discussing poetic metre in a 1617 audience with William Alexander.[45]

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[38] Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: William Brome, 1584), p.5; Anon., *Depositions from The Castle of York, Relating to Offences Committed in the Northern Counties in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. James Raine (London: Surtees Society, 1861), p.30.

[39] Anon., 'A true and just Recorde, of the Information, Examination and Confession of all the Witches, taken at S. Osses in the countie of Essex; whereof some were executed, and other some entreated according to the determination of lawe. Wherein all men may see what a pestilent people Witches are, and how unworthy to lyue in a Christian Commonwealth. Written orderly, as the courses were tryed by evidence, By W.W. 1582' and 'A most Wicked worke of a wretched Witch' (1592-3) in *Witchcraft in England 1558-1618*, ed. Barbara Rosen (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), p.107.

[40] Anon., *Depositions* p.82.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.72.

[43] King James VI of Scotland, *Ane Schort Treatise, conteining some reuils and cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie* in *Ancient Critical Essays*, vol. 2 (London: T, Bensley, 1815), p.106.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI & I* (London: Pimlico, 2004), p.203; Jane Rickard, *Writing the Monarch in Jacobean England: Jonson, Donne, Shakespeare and the Works of King James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.41.

King James is one of the few Renaissance prosodists we can reasonably suppose Shakespeare and other writers might have read (if only through obligation or opportunism). James was known to be a 'favourer of poets', in Francis Meres's phrase.[46] John Donne thought, or wanted to be seen thinking, that James was entering into 'a conversation' with his writer-subjects.[47] Gabriel Harvey praised James 'as a David-like figure', and a couplet attributed to Richard Barnfield celebrates how 'The King of Scots now living is a poet'.[48] There is evidence that English Renaissance writers knew of, or knew, the *Schort Treatise*. Francis Bacon flatters James's literary knowledge in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605).[49] Samuel Daniel, who binds and presents his *Defence of Rhyme* with a panegyric to the king, praises James's 'happy inclination' to discuss poetics and the place of 'rhyme in this kingdom' (see Chapter 2).[50] Jane Rickard has demonstrated the extent of reciprocal allusion between James and Shakespeare – from Shakespeare's references to James's poem *The Lepanto* (1591, reprinted 1603) in *Othello*, to a meditation upon *2 Henry 4* in James's *Meditation upon Saint Matthew* (1620).[51] Given all this, it seems plausible that Shakespeare knew (at least something of) James's *Schort Treatise*.

The king's interest in witchcraft is much better known (James Joyce called him a 'Scotch philosophaster with a turn for witch-roasting').[52] In 1597 James published the *Daemonologie* (inspired by 'The fearful abounding at this time in this country of these detestable slaves of the Devil, the witches or enchanters') and introduced legislation to address English witchcraft in 1604. Shakespeare clearly responds to the King's interest in witchcraft with *Macbeth*; some lines in the play indicate Shakespeare's close knowledge of the *Daemonologie*.[53]

The seven-syllable line does double service to Shakespeare's newest patron by combining two of his preoccupations or pedantries. Macbeth straightaway refers to the witches as 'imperfect speakers' (1.3.68). The *OED* supplies this instance within its fourth definition of 'imperfect': 'of persons in respect of imperfect or defective action or accomplishment'. This is correct. Macbeth thinks their speech defective because they stop speaking, and make him want to hear 'more' (68). But it is an imperfect example, too, since the speech of the witches is imperfect in two other senses. In a now obsolete implication, it is 'positively faulty, vicious, evil' (first usage 1377). It is

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[46] Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, p.284.

[47] John Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* (London: Walter Burre, 1610), sig. A3r.

[48] Rickard, *Writing the Monarch*, p.25; Gabriel Harvey, *Pierces Supererogation* (London: John Wolfe, 1593), p.53; Richard Barnfield, qtd. in Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, sig. Oo4v.

[49] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. William Aldis Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p.3.

[50] Daniel, *Defence*, pp.198-199.

[51] Rickard, *Writing the Monarch*, pp.209-249.

[52] James Joyce, *Ulysses: The 1922 Text*, ed. Declan Kibberd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.751-2.

[53] John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.16-17.

also 'wanting some part or adjunct usually present [. . .] not fully formed, made, or done; unfinished, incomplete; of less than the full amount' (first usage 1340). Like King James in his writing on unevenly-syllabled 'broken verse', Macbeth complains that the numerical unevenness of the witches' lines is part of their 'broken' physical deformity – they need one more or one fewer syllable to end on a full metrical foot. Just before Macbeth speaks, Banquo points out the witches' 'withered' bodies or attire (38), their 'choppy' fingers (42) and 'skinny lips' (43), as physical accompaniments to their verse lines.

Shakespeare most often uses his seven-syllable lines in scenes of spoken supernatural action – the casting of spells, the application of curses, and the incantation of magic. In *Macbeth*, for example, the witches use seven-syllable lines when plaguing the shipman's card (1.3.14-23), going about and about the sea and land (30-35), adding ingredients to the cauldron (4.1.1-38), opening locks without contact (61-3) and conjuring the show of kings (126-7). The seven-syllable line's alleged deformity is also, therefore, its efficacy: by refusing the normalities or normativities of the body and the verse line, it attempts to be free of the line's physical constraints. Strictly speaking, it isn't. Yet the seven-syllable line provokes these reflections in a way that other lines could not; that is, certain kinds of thought and association can only occur in and with certain lengths of verse line.

The seven-syllable lines are eerie for their relationship to other verse lines, other bodies, other types of form. If verse lines are a little like our bodies, these deformed verse lines must be in a perverse proximity to us too. Since verse lines are also unlike our bodies, lacking some of the attributes that bodies have, it ought to follow that seven-syllable lines can be kept at the safe distance proffered by analogy. However, one of the ways Shakespeare's seven-syllable lines test their audience is by being at or in the hinterland of other verse lines; they are always close to both trimeter and tetrameter, only ever an elision or expansion away. Indeed in *As You Like It*, Jacques calls Orlando's seven-syllable love poetry infectious (3.2.110). It is as though deformity is catching; as though the chant of the seven-syllable lines could also en-chant; as though the witches speak with a 'socially poisonous tongue'.[54]

If *Macbeth* is threatened with deformation by the witches' seven-syllable lines, Malcolm's accession to the throne offers some respite to, and through, the play's prosody.

> this, and what needful else
> That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace

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[54] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.107.

> We will perform in measure, time, and place.
>
> So thanks to all at once, and to each one,
>
> Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone.
>
> (5.11.37-41)

In fairly smooth blank verse Malcolm brings some 'measure' back to Scotland, the word partly meaning 'metrical order' (*OED* 16a).

We can conjecture a few of James's responses to Shakespeare's witches. He may have been flattered and interested. Here was the chief writer of the King's Men connecting two of his published interests: witchcraft and prosody. He may not have responded at all, because he may not have noticed at all: although people sometimes wrote of going to *hear* a play in Renaissance England, and although James's ear seems to have been metrically sensitive, it can be difficult to register the exact prosodic arrangement of verse lines in performance (which could in turn mean that Shakespeare smuggled offence past the king). James thought that he had been the subject of assassination attempts by witches, so Shakespeare's grating stumbling prosody may have been eerie to the king's ear. Or James could have been angry: the play's conclusion contains a series of hints that Malcolm's (and therefore James's) unification of the kingdoms has the witches' endorsement (consider the thanes' hailings in 5.6). All of these possible reactions are accommodated within a court performance – 'treason's license', says Supervacuo in *The Revenger's Tragedy* (5.1.173) – in which the king's ability to react to Shakespeare's provocations was girdled by ceremony. Although the play's prosody is born out of patronage, *Macbeth* is 'aware of the fact of [its] compromise' while being 'in no sense compromised'.[55]

Perhaps *Macbeth*'s verse lines have been infected by those in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c.1594), another play dark with supernatural menace. The fairies of the *Dream* speak in seven-syllable lines too; to adapt Stephen Greenblatt, they are not exactly witches but they are not exactly *not* witches either.[56] The witches 'hail' Banquo thrice (1.3.60-62) and the fairies 'hail' Bottom thrice (3.1.168-170). In fact, in Simon Forman's account of seeing *Macbeth* in April 1611 he describes the witches as '3 women fairies or nymphs' (perhaps recalling Holinshed, in which the supernatural characters are more fairy than witch).[57]

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[55] Geoffrey Hill, '"The True Conduct of Human Judgment": Some Observations on *Cymbeline*', pp.58-71 in *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Haynes, p.60.

[56] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.162.

[57] Raphael Holinshed, *Shakespeare's Holinshed: The Chronicle and the Historical Plays Compared*, ed. Walter Boswell-Stone (London: Chatto & Windus, 1907), p.124.

At first, Shakespeare emphasises the fairies' benevolence – they are like the Clean Fairy of folklore, tidying up the stage:

> You spotted snakes with double tongue,
> Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen.
> Newts and blindworms, do no wrong,
> Come not near our Fairy Queen.
>   [. . .]
> Weaving spiders, come not here;
> Hence, you longlegged spinners, hence!
> Beetles black, approach not near,
> Worm nor snail, do no offence.

<div align="right">(2.2.9-12, 20-23)</div>

This fairy song is in seven-syllable lines (apart from line 9) but there is little sense of danger. The fairies clear the stage of any witchy familiars. By banishing newts and blindworms they get rid of two ingredients from the witches' cauldron (*Macbeth* 4.1.14-16); by banishing 'Weaving spiders' they fend off the 'creeping, venom'd things' that menace Lady Anne in *Richard III* (1.2.19). Yet by clearing away 'offence', they make room for Oberon to cast the first of the play's morally dubious spells – crucially, in seven-syllable lines (2.2.33-40). In ending the spell 'Wake when some vile thing is near!' Oberon contradicts and counteracts the fairy song that has taken place ten lines earlier. Nor is Oberon's the only ethically suspect spell: Puck's spell on Lysander (2.2.72-89), Oberon's spell on Demetrius (3.2.102-9) and Puck's invocation to lead the mortals 'up and down' (3.2.396-99) are all, with the exception of two lines, conducted in seven syllables. By their metre shall we know them: the fairies are more harmful than they seem.

The supernatural seven-syllable line appears to be Shakespeare's invention. Before 1594/5 there are two flashes of seven-syllable verse spoken by fairies in John Lyly's *Endymion* (c.1588; 4.3.29-32, 42-5), but otherwise nothing; between 1594/5 and 1606 there are no seven-syllable lines in surviving supernatural drama. Slightly later than *Macbeth*, from 1608, other writers found themselves provoked by the seven-syllable line. Ben Jonson's masques are able, moreso than Shakespeare's theatre, to realise the manifold, multiform potential of the seven-syllable line. *The Masque of Queens* (1609) stresses deformity in all its forms – physical, musical, metrical. The masque's witches enter 'with a kind of hollow and infernal music' while 'making a confused noise with strange gestures' (20-21). The court audience would have seen them dance, 'making their

circles backward, to their left hand, with strange phantastic motions of their heads and bodies' (349-351). Such sinister (Latin 'left, or left hand' (*OED*)) action reverses the normal patterns of movement. The dance was accompanied by music 'metrically unstable [. . .] unable to sustain metrical coherence', in which the time signature changes four times in short succession.[58] The rhythmically regular first section of the dance is blared over by two protracted blasts, and the restoration of convention (in the form of a triple metre) is soon shocked by a bombardment of eight notes. The first words spoken by a witch are in uneven seven-syllable lines ('Sisters, stay, we want our Dame; / Call upon her, by her name' (47-8)) and there are bursts of seven-syllable verse, as well as eleven-syllable verse, throughout the witches' speech. In Jonson's presentation copy of the masque (Royal MS. 18.A.XLV), the verse is deeply indented as though the manuscript's format is yielding to the poetry's unorthodox form (or formlessness). Like the music, movement and dance, this is a verse which will 'loose the whole hinge of things' (148). Jonson's masques are the seven-syllable line's *Gesamtkunstwerk* 'in which partial contributions of the related and collaborating arts [dance, movement, music, prosody] blend together, disappear, and, in disappearing, somehow form a new world' for which the seven-syllable line could be thought the prosodic *leitmotif*.[59]

Some of Jonson's masques use the seven-syllable line more consistently than *The Masque of Queens*. *The Masque of Blackness* and *The Haddington Masque* (both 1608) feature moments of seven-syllable verse – in the former the song from the sea (295-300) and a song beginning 'Come away' (283-8) that bears resemblance to *Macbeth*, in the latter the speeches of the Three Graces and Cupid (85-156, 165-182). Jonson's later masques incorporate even more seven-syllable lines. *A Masque of Her Majesties Love Freed From Ignorance and Folly* (1611) features a Sphinx speaking in seven-syllable lines (6-231). *Oberon, The Faery Prince* (also 1611) has satyrs speaking in seven-syllable lines (6-290), with their 'crooked legs' (106) a visual accompaniment to their crooked metrical feet. When the satyrs turn to James, however, they conduct themselves in numerically even lines (300-13), perhaps as a deferential allusion to James's writing about metre in the *Schort Treatise*.

That said, Jonson's witches were perhaps more offensive to James than Shakespeare's. They are the masque's 'political unconscious' to the extent that, at one point, they are called 'Erinyes' (367) – invoking Aeschylus's tragedy of Orestes, pursued by Furies when he has killed his mother.[60] This may be a dim allusion to James's complicity in the execution of his mother

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[58] Amanda Winkler, *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note: Music for Witches, The Melancholic, and the Mad on the Seventeenth Century English Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp.31-32.

[59] Carl Maria von Weber, review of *Undine* (1816), in *Source Readings in Music History: The Romantic Era*, trans. and ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: W.W. Norton, 1965), p.63.

[60] Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.138.

Mary Queen of Scots – the kind of dim allusion (or dark conceit) that James noticed, to Spenser's disadvantage, in Book 5 of *The Faerie Queene*. Even here though, amid the offence, Jonson's 'independent image' made him 'a more valuable and attractive dependent': in the space of a few months, he had been imprisoned for part-authorship of *Eastward Ho!* before being commissioned to write his second court masque *Hymenai*.[61]

In 1611, as Jonson worked the seven-syllable lines into *Oberon* and *Ignorance and Folly*, Shakespeare wrote two plays that mitigate it. When Paulina casts her spell at the end of *The Winter's Tale* (1611), she does so in carefully constructed pentameter:

> 'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;
> Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come!
> I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay, come away:
> Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
> Dear life redeems you. You perceive she stirs.

<div align="right">(5.3.99-103)</div>

In 5.3.101 Paulina fills up the grave. Shakespeare also fills up the line. In filling it up, the line becomes busy and vivacious – 'stir, nay, come away' implies a dialogue with someone (Hermione?) refusing to co-operate, of life outside the line. We also see life happening outside the borders of 5.3.102. In order to escape the numbness of 'death' we have to move over the line, enjamb into 'Dear life' and be redeemed. Pauses balance the verse. 5.3.99 is divided almost into its constituent feet: ''Tis time / descend / be stone no more / approach' (in Folio this is done by a profusion of colons). Caesuras fall exactly halfway through 5.3.101 and 5.3.103. It does not seem an accident of punctuation; rather, Paulina's claim to legality and morality in her spellcasting – 'You hear my spell is *lawful*' (104, my emphasis) – is vindicated by her even-syllabled blank verse. Leontes agrees: 'If this be magic, let it be an art / As *lawful* as eating' (110-111, my emphasis).

In *The Tempest* (1611) Prospero's renunciation of magic involves a renunciation of the seven-syllable line, a line Ariel had used to cast spells under Prospero's command.

> Now I want
> Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
> And my ending is despair,

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[61] Robert C. Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), p.61.

Unless I be relieved by prayer,

Which pierces so that it assaults

Mercy itself, and frees all faults.

As you from crimes would pardoned be,

Let your indulgence set me free.

(Epilogue 13-20)

There is a struggle here, most visible in Prospero's 'want': is this 'want' the lack of spirits or the desire for spirits, or both? The epilogue wobbles between the two. The lack of spirits is implied by the catalectic or headless line 14, as though Shakespeare's metrical art cannot make up for Prospero's magical art. 'And my ending is despair' is a seven-syllable line (one in which the trochaic beat distinctly flickers) but there is little risk that Prospero will renege on his renunciation – for 'despair' is relieved by the rhyme with 'prayer' over the line, 'prayer' being the syllable which makes line 16 an even tetrameter (although if 'prayer' is treated as disyllabic, the line could tip into nine syllables). Prospero's appeal to the audience ('As you from crimes would pardoned be / Let your indulgence set me free') is paced iambically across tetrameter lines, with a slight accentual hesitation over whether his imperative ('Let') or the audience's presence ('your') should sport a stress. His final evenness, his refusal to despair and descend to the seven-syllable line, makes Prospero 'most profound in his art and yet not damnable' (*AYLI* 5.2.2301).

The seven-syllable line is never finally absent. Prospero slips into it, as though momentarily yielding to his tyrannical magic, and Ariel's speeches throng with it. Paulina risks it, by perpetrating a 'lawful' spell that must, like all Renaissance spellcasting, be always on the cusp of illegality. Across these plays, the odd-syllabled lines have been run into, or close to, Shakespeare's blank verse; we might think of the midline twists, late caesuras, feminine endings and unpredictable stresses of his later blank verse as working, witch-like, to infect and then dissolve the blank verse line from within. Ultimately, Shakespeare's blanks win out. However, they only do so by becoming more and more like the 'odd' seven-syllable lines which they are supposed to replace; indeed, as the blanks come to possess a feminine ending they turn into an uneven eleven-syllable entity. In these later plays, then, the seven-syllable line is something of a ghost form (or a 'ghost in the shell' of Shakespeare's blank verse).[62] It has become the kind of supernatural entity it was previously spoken by.

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[62] Gavin Alexander, 'On the Reuse of Poetic Form: The Ghost in the Shell', pp.123-143 in Burton and Scott-Baumann, eds., *The Work of Form*.

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The seven-syllable line has a double: the fourteen-syllable line. It has had a diffractory history. No one is quite sure of its origins and the term 'fourteener' would not be coined until 1829 (*OED*). Despite being syllabically even, it niggles with its shape, form, and putative spoliation of form; it is another of those forms of formlessness. Renaissance prosodists disliked it. Ascham calls the fourteener a 'misorderly metre'.[63] Puttenham reports and applauds a common view that any verse lines longer than twelve syllables 'pass the bounds of good proportion'.[64] George Whetstone's printer thought the fourteener 'is driven, both to praise, and blame, with one breath, which in reading will seem hard'.[65] Latterly, C.S. Lewis thought fourteeners 'ugly' and almost 'unendurable'.[66] Robert Lowell found them 'huge', 'looping', 'like some arbitrary and wayward hurdle, rather than the very backbone of what is being said'.[67] They are invertebrate, relying only on a delayed, strained rhyme to give the line support. Modern-day scholars have usually agreed. Martin Butler disparages the line as 'pointedly archaic', 'relentlessly stiff', 'from another, less spacious dramatic world' and thinks Shakespeare must have been engaging in a 'pastiche of mid-Tudor verse' when he gives fourteeners to the ghosts in *Cymbeline*.[68] Ros King adds that the ghosts' fourteeners are 'earnest', 'old-fashioned' and 'populist', 'typical' of 'mid-sixteenth century moral verse'.[69]

Sometimes fourteeners haven't seemed like verse lines at all. Ben Jonson wasn't sure whether they were 'long alexandrines' or 'but prose' (though he did think George Chapman's fourteeners were 'well done').[70] Although *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557) is busy with fourteener poems ('Description of an ungodly world', 'A praise of Audley', 'All worldly pleasures fade') its preface distinguishes the work of these 'uncertain authors' from the 'honourable style of the noble Earl of Surrey, and the weightiness of the deepwitted Sir Thomas Wyatt' – that is, the fourteener must be kept away from blank verse.[71] All of these observations attempt to describe the fourteener, but they are also essays at formlessness. In fourteeners, we have a form that is baggy

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[63] Ascham, *The Schole Master*, p.266.
[64] Puttenham, *Art*, p.160.
[65] Anon.?, 'The Printer to the Reader' in George Whetstone, *Promos and Cassandra* (1578), ed. John S. Farmer (London: Tudor Facsimile Texts, 1910), n.p.
[66] Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, p.251.
[67] Robert Lowell, *Kenyon Review*, 17 (1955), p.315.
[68] Martin Butler, ed., *Cymbeline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.14-15, 75.
[69] Ros King, *Cymbeline: Constructions of Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.141.
[70] *Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* (1619), ed. R.F. Patterson (London: Blackie and Son Ltd, 1923), pp.4, 12.
[71] Richard Tottel, *Tottel's Miscellany*, no ed. given (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2010), pp.137, 7.

(Lowell) yet rigid (Butler), archaic (King) yet oddly novel (Jonson), and therefore a form that thrives on its nearness to the formless.

The fourteener has an additional formlessness of association about it, occupying an awkward position between popular and elite. In George Saintsbury's account it 'served as a sort of bridge between literary and popular verse', which sounds pleasantly ecumenical until he disparages 'the ponderous, lolloping doggerel of the early sixteenth-century drama' in which the fourteeners are 'quite clearly makeshifts and stopgaps' dictated 'at the most by an experimentalising tendency, at the least by mere noviceship and the following of others'.[72] Although many now think of *Tottel's Miscellany* as the erudite Trojan horse by which fourteeners were smuggled into English literature, there were broadside ballads composed as early as the 1540s that were rendered predominantly in fourteener lines. This is apt, since the fourteener bears a close metrical relationship to ballad measure: the tetrameter (eight syllable) and trimeter (six syllable) lines of a ballad can add up to one fourteen-syllable line.

Many Elizabethan writers shuttle between the two, regarding the fourteener as not quite a form in itself; rather, as an accumulation of, or predation upon, other structures. While Richard Edwards's *Damon and Pythias* (1564) is mostly written in long lines, many of which are fourteeners, Pythias's servant Stephano speaks in a more or less regular ballad measure – he has, Ros King writes, 'the common people's natural, wary intelligence, and this is the poetry of the people'.[73] Around the same time, in *Apius and Virginia* (S.R. 1567) 'R.B.' has the Prologue to the play speak fourteeners (1-81) before Virginia enters and converts them into a ballad measure (82-102). The same then happens between Judge Apius (who speaks fourteener couplets at 411-449) and Virginius (who speaks ballad measure at 454-470). Fourteeners were often set as ballad measure by their compositors and printers. Of the ten Seneca translations produced by Jasper Heywood, Alexander Neville, Thomas Nuce, John Studley and Thomas Newton in the 1560s, nine use fourteeners in dialogue (Nuce's is the only one not to use fourteeners at all). Yet in quarto these are set as tetrameter and trimeter lines, either to balladise Seneca or to forge a genealogy between these shorter English lines and the Senecan iambic trimeter. Until Martin Butler's edition of *Cymbeline* (2005) the ghosts' fourteeners had always been printed as tetrameters and trimeters, including in Folio.[74] In this case the short lines were probably mandated by space: the Folio's narrow columns could not accommodate the fourteener's girth.

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[72] Saintsbury, *History*, vol. 2, p.61.
[73] Ros King, *The works of Richard Edwards: Politics, Poetry and Performance in Sixteenth Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p.53.
[74] All future *Cymbeline* references will correspond to this edition.

The fourteener is also too broad for any one genre or register. The prologue to *Damon and Pythias* speaks of this breadth, of 'matter mixed with mirth and care' (Prol. 37) which causes the play to be 'termed a 'tragical comedy'' (38). Fourteener dramas like *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) and *Clyomon and Clamydes* (1599) are 'rambling romance[s]', accommodating 'virtue mixed with vice, unlawful desires (if it were possible) quenched with chaste denials'.[75] John Pitcher finds in *Like Will to Like* (1568) a 'mixture of conforming piety and roistering wickedness'.[76] Giles Block finds the fourteeners of Thomas Preston's *Cambyses* (1569) 'outrageously grand and somewhat 'tongue-in-cheek' at the same time'.[77] Classical epic was often translated into fourteeners, as with Thomas Phaer's 1558 *Aeneid* and George Chapman's translations of Homer (published in instalments from 1598 to 1616). Chapman defends his englishing of Homer into fourteeners by aligning the scope of the verse line with the scope of the *Iliad*: 'For this long poem asks this length of verse', not suitable 'our shorter authors to rehearse'.[78] Likewise, Phaer reckoned that fourteeners would be sufficiently and suitably 'compendious' for Virgil.[79]

Chapman makes the most of the fourteener. As Achilles stands over the dead Patroclus, he weeps and 'Then to the centre fell the prince; and, putting in the breast / Of his slain friend his slaughtering hands, began to all the rest / Words to their tears' (23.13-15). Chapman splices the fourteener line with the moral oddities of Achilles' grief. Achilles' collapse from the edge of a mourning throng to its 'centre' and then to his friend's 'breast' – containing his now dead heart – is achieved by the most delicate alertness to space, and that delicacy comes from its place within, in relief from, the fourteener's size. By contrast, the absurdity so central to these lines – Achilles 'putting in the breast / Of his slain friend his slaughtering hands' – is achieved by stringing the movement across a line break, eliciting the surprise of spatial and moral incongruity through the typographical incongruity of the two verse lines. Achilles reaches for the heart of another only for the next line to point out his own heartlessness; the gesture becomes vampiric, as well as wracked with silent regret. 'Of his slain friend his slaughtering hands' takes place within the routine run of the fourteener up to its caesura at the eighth syllable of the line (the division or pause recommended by Gascoigne but later criticised as a cliché by Puttenham).[80] The banality of the caesura initially works against the peculiarity of Chapman's diction and syntax, except that

[75] W.W. Greg, ed., *Clyomon and Clamydes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), p.vi; George Whetstone, dedicatory epistle to William Fleetwood, *Promos and Cassandra*, A2.

[76] John Pitcher, ed., Ulpian Fulwell, *Like Will to Like* in *Two Moral Interludes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.55.

[77] Block, *Speaking the Speech*, pp.215-216.

[78] George Chapman, 'To the Reader' in Shepherd, ed., *The Works of George Chapman*.

[79] Thomas Phaer, 'Master Phaer's Conclusion to his interpretation of the Aeneidos of Virgil' in *The Aeneid of Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne: A Critical Edition*, ed. Steven Lally (New York: Garland Press, 1987), p.296.

[80] Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes*, p.38; Puttenham, *Art*, p.162.

the peculiarity of Chapman's expression derives from its banality: that classical heroes kill and care for each other, and then kill yet more, every day. It is difficult to overstate the accomplishment of these lines – their thick burden of guilt, grief and pain – but important to state the nature of that accomplishment within the lines, as lines, as fourteeners of an exemplary power and of a truthfully dense, cluttered and myriad morality.

Lucy Munro has demonstrated how Shakespeare summons the ghost of Chapman's *Iliad* through the ghosts' fourteeners in *Cymbeline*.[81] It is nevertheless hard to know what to make of these lines, especially in performance. In Peter Hall's 1988 National Theatre production, he told his cast that the speeches 'should be delivered very rhythmically and rapidly to suggest "the pace and cross-cutting of dreams" and to conjure "a world of ancient chivalry"'.[82] Yet Hall confused the rhythmic with the rapid by underscoring the fourteeners with 'a high-lying, scurrying, frantic violin figuration'.[83] Watching and writing about the production, Roger Warren thought this 'made the fourteeners sound more threadbare than they need have done'.[84] Robin Phillips's 1986 production at Stratford, Ontario 'overlapped' the fourteeners so that they weren't heard as individual verse lines but as 'the confused, incoherent babble of a nightmare'.[85]

Rehearsing for Hall's production Michael Bryant 'spoke the fourteeners slowly, steadily, hypnotically, with a simple dignity that did not make them seem at all threadbare' but part of a 'remote antiquity'.[86] Hall was impressed, shouting 'The case for the scene is made!'[87] He was sufficiently influenced by Bryant's reading to give the ghosts' short lines a 'slow, melodious phrasing to underline the pathos'.[88] But in doing this, the fourteeners seemed still more rushed. That is an offence on its own, but it also ignored the way Shakespeare rhythmically links the short with the long lines through rhyme and assonance: 'With marriage wherefore was he mocked, to be exiled, and thro*wn* / From Leonati seat, and cast from her his dearest *one*, / Sweet Inno*gen*?' (5.3.139-141, my emphases). Innogen becomes the aural culmination of the Leonati family's woes, a culmination that metrically (and sarcastically) falls short of their epic fourteener accomplishments.

The caesuras of the *Cymbeline* fourteeners are especially deft. The first two fourteeners are chopped with caesura: 'No more, thou Thunder-master, show thy spite on mortal flies. / With Mars fall out, with Juno chide, that thy adulteries / Rates and revenges' (5.3.124-6). The caesuras

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[81] Munro, *Archaic Style*, p.219.
[82] Roger Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.78.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays*, p.79.
[85] Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays*, p.81.
[86] Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays*, p.79.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays*, p.78.

come early (after 'No more' and 'With Mars fall out'), and then recur quickly (after 'thou Thunder-master' and 'with Juno chide'), so that the ghosts' subclauses almost function as caesura. Even lines with the traditional eight-syllable/six-syllable caesura sound magisterial: 'Hath my poor boy done aught but well, whose face I never saw?' (126). Like Chapman's *Iliad* 23.13-15, say, the fourteener allows room for Shakespeare's tense to change and is long enough to follow Sicilius's movement from affectionate proximity ('my poor boy') to distant grief ('whose face I never saw'). Shakespeare even recognises the structural role played by the fourteener's rhyme and smears it across the line by the assonance or pararhyme between 'aught' and 'saw'.

If we compare Chapman's *Iliad* 23.61, when Patroclus's ghost visits Achilles, we find some cause for the *Cymbeline* fourteeners. In 'sad speech' the spirit of Patroclus asks:

> Dost thou sleep? Achilles, am I
>
> Forgotten of thee? Being alive, I found thy memory
>
> Ever respectful, but now, dead, thy dying love abates.
>
> Inter me quickly, enter me in Pluto's iron gates,
>
> For now the souls (the shades) of men, fled from this being, beat
>
> My spirit from rest, and stay my much-deserved receipt
>
> Amongst souls placed beyond the flood. Now every way I err
>
> About the broad-door'd house of Dis

<div align="right">(23.61-8)</div>

Chapman's caesuras, like Shakespeare's, are mobile – we hear a slight stutter in lines 62 and 64, and the use of parenthesis as caesura in the latter. Both writers avoid embedding caesura into any consistent location, and both allow kinds of enjambment (rare in Phaer's translation of Virgil). Chapman even deploys an imperative verb at the end of line 65 ('beat / My spirit from rest') to give the full force of progression and succession to line 66 (albeit counteracted by a metrical end-stop). Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* fourteeners are his attempt to do and outdo Chapman; like Chapman's, they are a deliberate effort to come to terms with, by dictating the terms of, the fourteener line.

Yet in *Cymbeline* 5.3, fourteeners threaten to overwhelm the scene. We expect Jupiter to be at the scene's centre. He is mentioned a dozen times before his spectacular entrance, and Posthumus is proleptically compared to a 'descended god' (1.6.169). Jupiter flies into 5.3 speaking an immensely subtle blank verse, as though wanting to banish the alien fourteeners of

the ghosts: 'No more', he commands, 'you petty spirits of region low, / Offend our hearing' (157-8). His lines are scored with caesuras, 'almost too jagged' for G. Wilson Knight, that form a virtuoso response to the flickering caesuras of the ghosts' fourteeners: 'Whom best I love, I cross; to make my gift, / The more delayed, delighted. Be content' (165-6).[89] Jupiter's blank verse is infiltrated by Shakespeare's fourteeners.

When he speaks to the ghosts, urging them to stop their 'din', he harps on the ghost mother's fourteener rhymes with 'Sweet Innogen' (141): 'This tablet lay upon his breast, where*in* / Our pleasure his full fortune doth conf*in*e, / And so away! No farther with your *din* / Express impatience, lest you stir up m*in*e. / Mount, eagle, to my palace crystall*ine*' (173-7, my emphases). In shuffling from 'Innogen' to 'crystalline', he raises the phonemic pitch of the rhyme far from the ghosts' fourteeners. Yet, as with his preponderance of caesura, the formal principles of the ghosts' fourteeners have become Jupiter's blank verse principles too. Although they speak in blank verse before vanishing (178-186), it is the ghosts (not Jupiter) who leave their metrical mark upon the scene.

It is suggestive that Shakespeare puts his fourteeners into the mouths of ghosts – themselves on the hinterland between form and formlessness, and reminiscent of uncomfortable pasts. Ghosts return '*because they were not properly buried*, i.e., because something went wrong with their obsequies'.[90] The fourteener has unfinished business too. If 'pastiche is the act of a writer expressing his own voice through the model of another, while parody is the act of a writer who has withdrawn his voice from the model of another', then the *Cymbeline* fourteeners are neither total parody nor total pastiche (though they incline toward the latter).[91] In the contest between the ghosts and Jupiter, Shakespeare stages both the historical movement from fourteener to blank verse and the way his own blank verse becomes occupied by the fourteener. He does not attempt to denigrate but, instead, to replicate and develop the rhythms of the fourteener (especially as it appears in Chapman's translations) and to suggest his acquiescence in the fourteeners' prosody, such that he seems to absorb or stomach, as much as be infected or infiltrated by, the fourteener line. Fourteeners are given a place (perhaps their rightful one) in this versified and dramatised literary history, so that Shakespeare finally performs the 'obsequies' on a form that cannot quite die – and which he will not, anyway, attempt to kill but (now) to absorb.

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[89] G. Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays* (London: Methuen, 1947), p.196.
[90] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1991), p.23.
[91] Terry P. Caesar, 'Joycing Parody', *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Winter 1981), pp.227-237, 232.

We might think, too, of the fourteeners in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, the former of which takes much from Arthur Golding's 1567 translation of Ovid into fourteeners. (Although modern editors still resile from printing fourteeners in the Pyramus and Thisbe playlet, there is textual warrant for them to do so: all the early modern texts of the play print one line as a fourteener (5.1.294-6), the Second Quarto prints another (319-20) and the First Quarto avoids printing capitals at the start of some lines to indicate that they might be part of a preceding, longer line (323-6).) When the lioness appears in Golding's version of Pyramus and Thisbe she 'comes besmeared with blood' (4.120), which Shakespeare parodically multiplies into a description of Pyramus's 'bloody, blameful blade' (5.1.145) and the ludicrous line 'He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast' (146). Shakespeare's alliterative parody exposes the crudity with which Golding's verse lines bluster their way to a full fourteen syllables (although Ezra Pound thought Golding's 'possibly the most beautiful book in our language', later dropping the word 'possibly').[92] He carries this parodic function through the scene, stuffing up a fourteener with a repeated monosyllable: 'Tongue, lose thy light; Moon, take thy flight; Now die, die, die, die, die' (5.1.299-301).

However, Shakespeare may have found Golding's caesuras (as well as Chapman's) a longstanding inspiration for the fluid, mutable pauses of the *Cymbeline* fourteeners. Golding's is the only Ovid translation to use the word 'cranny', and he does so when his verse exhibits its own crannies through the cracks of caesura. 'In stead of talk', Golding translates, 'they used signs. The closelier they suppressed / The fire of love, the fiercer still it raged in their breast' (4.81-2). The fourteeners smoke the caesuras out of their usual positions. As a result we see the cranny in a line-break, as a visual utterance in Golding's verse: 'The wall that parted house from house had riven therein a cranny / Which shrunk at making of the wall' (83-4). Golding figures the line break as a crack in his wall of verse. It is an effect, along with that in the preceding lines, that seems to have lodged in Shakespeare's prosodic memory for over fifteen years.

Even Shakespeare's mockery is 'disedged' (*Cymbeline* 3.4.92), though not made blunt, by the onstage audience that watches Pyramus and Thisbe. Hippolyta exclaims 'This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard' (208), exactly what those parodic fourteeners suggested we think. But Theseus, of all people, responds with a wise, humane defence of the stage: 'The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them' (209-11). Even good drama is counterfeit, and this one can be ameliorated (or at least amended) by the forgiving imagination of its audience. This is the same Theseus who conflates the lunatic and the poet, but

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[92] Ezra Pound, 'Notes on Elizabethan Classicists' (1916), pp.227-248 in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (New York: New Directions Books, 1968), p.232; Pound, *ABC of Reading*, pp.58, 127; Ezra Pound and Marcella Spann, eds., *Confucius to Cummings: An Anthology of Poetry* (New York: New Directions, 1964), p.58.

he now does so with feeling for lunatic and poet alike. Contrastingly, Hippolyta might earn Holofernes's rebuke to the courtiers who mock his pageant in *Love's Labour's Lost*: 'This is not generous, not gentle, not humble' (5.2.622).

In that play, written not long after *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, fourteeners are again an object of mockery. Nathaniel's fourteeners awkwardly spreadeagle rhyme across four syllables, for example ('commander' / 'Alisander' – 5.2.560-65). As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the mockery emanates from a set of spectating courtiers, and the play justly revenges an irony upon them. When the King of Navarre announces the pageant, his own lines swell until they are only a syllable or two short of a full fourteener: 'And if these four Worthies in their first show thrive, / These four will change habits, and present the other five' (533-4). If Marcadé's entrance and the Princess's response are grouped together as a shared line (which most modern editions allow or welcome) then they speak in something like a fourteener, and the last words of the play can be set as a fourteener too. Once again, the distinction between crude lowly fourteeners and godly or elite pentameters is exploded in plays that will simultaneously minister to, and sometimes endorse, that distinction.

What are the uses of these equivocal parodies? Given that the fourteeners come in plays (-within-plays), they allow Shakespeare's 'art to be curious about itself' – testing prosodic possibilities without the accountability of Shakespeare's authorial, authoritative voice.[93] They allow Shakespeare to yield to an influence without embarrassment or failure, and indeed with the possibility to disown embarrassment or failure through meta-dramatic cleverness (though in writing of Shakespeare possessed with the 'soul' of Ovid, who 'lives in' him and his writing, Francis Meres seems to have seen through Shakespeare's attempts to keep his influences simultaneously at hand and at arm's length).[94] Shakespeare is able to try pastiche in a context that prevents it becoming 'blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humour'.[95] In fact, we find Shakespeare parodying pastiche in the Pyramus and Thisbe playlet – laughing at and with one author's (Peter Quince's) assumption of another author's (Arthur Golding's) style. Even amid rank parody, there is a tribute to 'a tradition whose procedures have become (or have the potential to become) mechanical' but might, in the hands of mechanicals no less, be refreshed and revived (as they are throughout *Cymbeline*).[96]

[93] Caesar, 'Joycing Parody', p.227.
[94] Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, p.282.
[95] Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', pp.111-125 in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), p.114.
[96] Michele Hannoosh, 'The Reflexive Function of Parody', *Comparative Literature*, vol. 41, no. 2 (Spring 1989), pp.113-127, 116.

If 'Pyramus and Thisbe' and the *Love's Labour's Lost* pageant are parodies – and 'the most significant mark of a parody is the doubt it induces as to whether it is a parody or not' – then they take on the parodic qualities of Hegel's *aufheben* or 'sublation'.[97] 'When you sublate something', Harry Berger Jnr explains, '1) you transcend or negate it, pass it by, render it obsolete, 2) you recognise that you have transcended it, therefore, 3) you sustain it, hold it up so it does not vanish, for you give it a new life in your life, you assign it historical significance and bestow on it a career going beyond itself which it could not have had without you'.[98] *Cymbeline* keeps fourteeners alive by staging the history of their absorption by (but not disappearance into) Shakespeare's blank verse.

In the hands of a Chapman or a Shakespeare, the fourteener can be ghost-like or invoke ghosts. It is therefore appropriate that fourteeners should, like ghosts, be simultaneously present and absent (like seven-syllable lines in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*). There are no fourteeners in *Measure for Measure* (1604), for example, though its blank verse is steeped in prosodic memory of a fourteener drama: George Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra*. In Whetstone's play, Promos assumes the Angelo-role and Cassandra the Isabella-role. When Cassandra pleads with Promos to save her brother's life (2.3) she speaks in fourteener couplets against his cross-rhyming pentameters. However, by the end of the scene Promos is speaking in fourteener couplets too (in the next scene, speaking only to his servant, he reverts to pentameter). When Cassandra returns to speak to Promos she decides to match his speech, as he had matched hers, by talking to him in cross-rhymed pentameters. Lustily infused by the rhythms of her voice, he speaks in fourteener couplets. This may all be an accident of composition (or of a compositor's setting) – in Act 1, Lamia speaks in a mixture of fourteeners, alexandrines and pentameters without obvious rationale for any of them – but it might have suggested to Shakespeare the seedy commingling of speech that characterises Angelo and Isabella's meetings in *Measure for Measure*.

In Shakespeare's play, Angelo initially completes Isabella's verse lines (in Whetstone, it is the more precocious Cassandra). However, Isabella soon does the same to Angelo's. They are prosodically and personally suited to each other: the masochism of the Votary of St Clare, in which 'The impression of keen whips' can be worn as 'rubies' and where Isabella can 'strip [herself] to death as to a bed / That longing have been sick for' (2.4.101-3), matches Angelo's kinky grotesquery. He is right to find fifty shades of red in Isabella's randy ascetism, manifest as the 'prolixious blushes / That banish what they sue for' (162-3). Yet when Isabella takes charge

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[97] Mark Jones, 'Parody and its Containments: The Case of Wordsworth', *Representations*, no. 54 (Spring 1996), pp.57-79, 71; Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Michigan: Doubleday, 1966), p.144.

[98] Harry Berger Jnr., 'Archaism and Revision in Virgil and Dante', *Pacific Coast Philology*, vol. 1 (April 1966), pp.12-19, 12.

of the scene – something Whetstone's Cassandra never aspires to or manages – she begins to complete her own verse lines. Angelo notices this in a preposition that suggests her verse mounts and surmounts the potential for his replies: 'Why do you put these sayings *upon* me?' (2.2.137, my emphasis).

After this, on the rare occasions when Angelo and Isabella share a line Angelo's contribution comes in a surreptitious aside. Isabella implores Angelo 'Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue / Against my brother's life' (2.2.144-5). Angelo completes her line in aside: 'She speaks, and 'tis / Such sense that my sense breeds with it' (144-5). Angelo's 'grim play' on the word 'sense' – as 'meaning, import' and as 'sensuality' – suggests that Isabella gives sexual rise to his verse, generating his lines (as well as his sinful thoughts) as though by pregnancy or ejaculation.[99] Unaware of Angelo's intrusion into her verse line, Isabella completes the pentameter with an overdue 'Gentle, my lord, turn back' (146/7). There is nothing 'Gentle' about Angelo's furtive penetration of her verse line. He secretly completes Isabella's line again at the end of the scene. Isabella leaves, bidding Angelo to 'Save your honour' (168). He finishes her verse line with the soliloquy in which he 'Corrupt[s] with virtuous season' (173), with that 'season' partly the seasoning of her verse lines that he sprinkles upon the rotting 'carrion' (172) of his. And should we think, with Ann Pasternak Slater, that 'the Duke's offer [at the end of the play] is open and honourable in precisely the way Angelo's was not', we must still notice that the Duke proposes marriage in a line too long for Isabella to share.[100]

If Isabella is mostly an unwitting participant in Angelo's verse lines, she nevertheless rhymes with him. She asks of Claudio 'Must he needs die?' (2.2.47). Angelo replies that there is 'no remedy' (49). Rather than discontinuing the rhyme, Isabella first delays it (worrying over whether to rhyme) and then yields to it: 'Yes, I do think that you might pardon him, / And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy' (50-1), albeit with her rhyme word 'mercy' working as a theological prophylactic upon Angelo's desires. Later Isabella urges Angelo to 'think on' her plea, 'And mercy then will breathe within your lips / Like man new made' (79-81). His rhyme slides away from her religious invocations of mercy, leaning as they do on *2 Corinthians* 5:17 and *Ephesians* 4:22-4: 'Be you content, fair maid' (82). Man 'new made' can only, Angelo suggestively suggests, come out of a 'maid' deflowered into sexual maturity. Even when Isabella and Angelo don't rhyme, they speak each other's words: Angelo says 'tomorrow' and Isabella immediately says 'Tomorrow', then Angelo ends a sentence with 'him' for Isabella to end a sentence (and a line) with 'him' (84-5). These null-rhymes come to fruition when Isabella exits and Angelo speaks

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[99] N.W. Bawcutt, ed., *Measure for Measure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.130.
[100] Ann Pasternak Slater, *Shakespeare the Director* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p.131.

(again in soliloquy) a rhyme that is almost sneaky in its winking neatness, touching as it does Isabella's previous rhymes: 'Ever till now / When men were fond, I smiled and wondered how' (191-2). If Isabella won't rhyme with him, Angelo will do so with himself – in an acoustic masturbation to the sounds of her voice.

While there are no fourteeners here, the prosody of Whetstone's drama leaches into Shakespeare's. Shakespeare makes the scene more excruciating in its subtlety: there is no unambiguous union or transposition of styles (as in Whetstone; or in William Davenant's *The Law against Lovers* (1662), which features a third interview between Angelo and Isabella made up of rather twee couplets). In its place there is a rhythmic fumbling at the folds of Isabella and Angelo's dialogue. There are also lines in 2.2 that could just about be rearranged into fourteeners: Angelo's 'Be satisfied. / Your brother dies tomorrow. Be content' (106-7) is shaped by the gasping caesuras of Shakespeare's other fourteener lines, and adds up to a total of fourteen syllables. *Measure for Measure* shows how Shakespeare's lines can change shape but retain form, and demonstrates how deeply (sometimes foully) the fourteener line lingered in his mind. Once again, we see and hear the fourteener fretting at the edges of Shakespeare's blank verse – such that the word 'blanks' comes to seem descriptive of an essential absence not a structured or structural presence.

Gavin Alexander has written of Renaissance poems that 'took form from a previous poem and put new words in it'.[101] For Shakespeare, the fourteener was often like that; it was almost an old container for new matter, new things, new stuff – *almost*, however, because it was about the most formless container available. It is typical of Shakespeare to yield to a metrical cliché (the verse line as a 'container') only when it least suited him to do so and when it was most difficult for him to sustain. Like his swivelled, eccentric blanks, Shakespeare's fourteeners are forever chomping at form's bit, while remaining (just) within form's purview, because able to imagine what form might, in its fullest comprehension, be.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

This thesis began with the words of Sir Philip Sidney in his 1595 *Defence of Poetry*. It might also have begun with the words of Percy Bysshe Shelley in his 1840 *Defence of Poetry*. To Shelley, poetry 'in a general sense, may be defined to be "the expression of the imagination"'.[102] While 'there is a certain order or rhythm' which 'exist[s] to excess in poets', he twice asserts that 'The

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[101] Alexander, 'On the Reuse of Poetic Form: The Ghost in the Shell', p.143.
[102] P.B. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* in *Peacock's Four Ages of Poetry, Shelley's Defence of Poetry, Browning's Essay on Shelley*, ed. H.F.B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1937), p.23.

distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error' and that 'the popular division into prose and verse is inadmissible in accurate philosophy'.[103] He acclaims Plato and Francis Bacon as poets, despite their writing or speaking in prose, and delights in how 'all the great historians, Herodotus, Plutarch, Livy, were poets […] by filling all the interstices of their subjects with living images'.[104] Verse (or 'metrical language', as he calls it) is only poetry 'in a more restricted sense' of the word.[105] If poetry is 'a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it', verse is one of those scabbards.[106]

Sidney's distinction between poetry and verse had cast a long shadow. By the twentieth century, the distinction had become something of a contrast. Eliot wondered 'whether Kipling's verse really is poetry', and Donald Davie could 'not help feeling that verse is somehow less important and splendid than poetry, just as diction is less splendid than language'.[107] Verse was increasingly attributed not to poets but to 'versifiers' (those poetasters inaugurated in the sixteenth century). It clung 'to the form of poetry as a prelate clings to a mistress'.[108] We hear in these phrases not only the 'afterlives' of Sidney but the radioactive half-lives of his more polemical contemporaries: the venom of some *vers librists* is already dripping through Pierre de Ronsard's jibe about there being 'as much difference between a poet and a versifier as there is between a plough-horse and a noble Neapolitan courser'.[109] In tandem, the prose poem gradually emerged as a recognisable form (or form of formlessness) with its formal 'constant' set as much by 'tradition' as anything like a prosody.[110] For Charles Baudelaire, one of its most capable proponents and practitioners, the prose poem promised 'a poetic prose, musical without rhyme or rhythm, supple and jerky enough to adapt to the lyric movements of the soul, to the undulations of reverie, to the somersaults of conscience'.[111] Baudelaire revels in the strange, amphibious, even oxymoronic quality of this writing; it is, in W.V. Quine's terms, a sort of 'antinomy' – that is, it gives us 'a surprise that can be accommodated by nothing less than a

[103] Shelley, *Defence*, pp.25, 28-29.
[104] Shelley, *Defence*, pp.29, 31.
[105] Shelley, *Defence*, p.27.
[106] Shelley, *Defence*, p.38.
[107] T.S. Eliot, 'Rudyard Kipling' (1941), pp.228-252 in *On Poetry and Poets*, p.228; Donald Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p.6.
[108] Calvin Bedient, *Eight Contemporary Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.30.
[109] Pierre Ronsard, *Les Oeuvres de Pierre Ronsard, Texte de 1587*, 6 vols, ed. Isidore Silver (Chicago: Librarie Marcel Didier, 1966-70), vol. 4, pp.15-16. Trans by Timothy Steele in *Missing Measures*, p.135.
[110] Hermine Riffaterre, 'Reading Constants', pp.98-155 in *The Prose Poem in France: Theory and Practice*, ed. Mary Ann Caws and Hermine Riffaterre (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.115.
[111] Charles Baudelaire, 'À Arsène Houssaye', *Petits Poèmes en prose* (Paris: Garnier, 1962), p7 [Fr. *une prose poétique, musicale sans rhythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience*]

repudiation of part of our conceptual heritage', in this case the notion that poetry and prose are different or opposite states.[112]

The title of this thesis supposes that Shakespeare furnished a defence of verse, and we have seen the many ways in which that is true (as well as false). Most often in the English Renaissance, verse needed a defence from other types of verse. Shakespeare defended both classical and vernacular verse traditions, usually from each other, and made those defences the basis of his own, more incorporated prosody. By spurning the absolute claims of one metrical tradition or another, and preferring instead their anxious combination, Shakespeare's versification became a defence of verse *as verse* – continually suggesting to us the variety of things that verse can contribute, create or concatenate ('gratifying the mind with endless diversity', in Doctor Johnson's almost weary phrase).[113] Yet in fashioning his great instrument for verse's resistance – those idiosyncratic, wheeling blanks – he supplied a defence which increasingly swung toward dissolution, albeit a dissolution thrilled with the possibilities of *poesis*. To refer to this as *vers libre* is inadequate, not because Shakespeare somehow restrained himself from free verse or gingerly retreated from it, but because his verse was too contentious for anything as straightforward as freedom. It is rampant, seething, refractory, and the opposite of all that too; 'So musical a discord', Hippolyta says, 'such sweet thunder' (4.1.117). In writing like this, Shakespeare made free verse possible and unnecessary all at once. He did so with the same contrarious impulse that made his verse so formlessly formed, and that made its defence also its undoing. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.

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[112] Quine, *The Ways of Paradox*, p.11.
[113] Johnson, 'Preface', p.454.

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