

A Reflection from the Classroom: Teaching Students to See from the Perspective of the Player

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I began using performance to teach Shakespeare early in my career. I'm embarrassed to say I wasn't looking to explore early modern staging practices, current theatrical productions, directors' multiple choices, or even dramatic pedagogical strategies.¹ I was young, and I was afraid of boring my students, fearful my teaching performance wouldn't be enough, or Shakespeare wouldn't be enough, and so I thought I needed some diversion to keep my students mentally alert. You find this problem in young directors who fear losing their audience with any speech longer than ten lines and thus insert little bits of business to keep the audience's attention. Despite more than two decades of performance pedagogy, that's probably still the main argument against actors in the classroom: that it's a bit, entertainment, not education.

But what I found while experimenting with performance-based techniques was a way of educating myself—and my students in turn—a way of seeing as perhaps the player sees: first, as an actor, seeing through the eyes of the character, then as a performer, constantly aware of the audience. This dramatic approach seems particularly well suited to students. Many are at a point in their lives when a variety of options (roles, if you will) are open to them. For that reason, I'd like to begin my essay with a teaching anecdote, one about role-playing and students.

My Shakespeare class was studying *Measure for Measure*. I had arranged for two theatre

majors to perform the temptation scene, where Isabella, a young novice, pleads with Chief Justice Angelo to spare her brother's life (a man imprisoned for fornication); and in the process of her chaste pleading, Isabella also arouses Angelo. When my Angelo's car broke down on the way to class, I was left only with my Isabella. And that was fine, as she was a terrific actress, and so we proceeded to analyze Isabella's speech. Tangey² (my student) performed Isabella a variety of ways: first cold and indignant in her plea for mercy; then shy, but warming to her subject; then sexy, warming Angelo's 'subject.' Each time we reevaluated whether that Isabella could fit with other things we knew about her character. And even when it didn't work (as, say, with the sexy Isabella) the performance still yielded something from the language, in this case, the hidden sexual innuendoes in Isabella's speech that made Angelo's response more understandable. Finally, one student, expressing her frustration at Isabella's position, demanded: Couldn't our actress play a stronger Isabella? One that was furious, spitting fire at the chief justice? Tangey said she'd be happy to try it, but she was getting tired of playing to a chair. Could she have a body on which to vent Isabella's anger?

Initially, no one would come forward. Then a student who always sat at the back volunteered: Michael, who was definitely smart, but who liked to style himself as the no-nonsense jock—what you see is what you get. He was willing to participate, but he wasn't willing to act and he wasn't going to let some little girl push him around. This was made obvious as the 6' 4" Michael swaggered down the deeply-tiered classroom, spun the chair around so he could straddle it, and defiantly placed his forearms on the back of the chair. Tangey went after him with everything she had, but Michael refused to respond, refused, really, to play, to step out of being Michael, the student, and into Angelo, the character. Either due to her frustration as

Isabella or, more likely, her frustration as an actress, Tangey, at the climactic point in the speech, reached over to Michael's T-shirt, pinched one of two delicate areas on a man's chest, twisted, and then pulled him up out of the chair. I confess for a split second I saw my career flashing before my eyes, imagining the dean calling my department head to say Michael's mother was offended at the public nipple-twisting of her son. However, I caught my breath a second later when I saw Michael's response. His eyes rolled back, he dropped to his knees, and his face contorted into full comic agony. The class exploded in laughter.

For me, this was more than a light-hearted distraction for my students, but a moment of real theatre in the classroom, both for Michael and the student audience. No, Michael wasn't acting like Angelo, seeing through the character's eyes, but he did finally choose to act like an actor: to stop being a student watching Tangey act and start being a performer participating in the scene—playing, if not Angelo, then at least a part different from the one he had already styled for himself in class. More important, he stepped outside of himself to see with the audience's eyes, see what was needed at that moment for the performance to work, even if it was just to get the laugh. Max Reinhardt reminds us that it is a myth that actors ever forget the audience in front of them.³ The best actors read the audience's response, which changes nightly, in order to perfect their own delivery: they play with, not to, the audience.

More important, the student audience had the pleasure of watching this transition and thus enjoying the scene on two levels: watching Michael in agony and watching Michael acting as if he were in agony, choosing to be both student and player in front of them. The pleasure we receive from drama is largely due to this two layered response: we watch the character, we watch the actor, at the same time.⁴ Both the reality and the illusion are wedded together as equal

partners to create drama. This is what makes theatre unlike any other art form, its ability to dramatize that which makes us unlike any other creature: that is to say, our ability to understand and enjoy something on multiple levels, much as we understand and enjoy metaphor.

Of course, this interchange of reality and illusion, especially when it comes to acting, is all over the Elizabethan/Jacobean map, thus making classroom performance a viable avenue not only to teach students how to imagine the drama they read, but also to locate and identify one of its main topics: the player. Certainly for Shakespeare, acting is a major trope for living: life is *like* theatre. And it makes sense; authors were often players as well as playwrights, their viewpoint shaped by their profession. Shakespeare's Globe playhouse was quite literally his world, filled with fretting, strutting actors, walking shadows, poor players, squeaky boy Cleopatras, counting down the seven ages of man in front of a packed house.⁵ Early modern drama is filled with characters who play a part: Volpone, Vindice, Richard III, Iago, Cleopatra, Falstaff, Faustus, Hieronimo, Hamlet, Hal, and all the comic heroines dressed as men. These characters are afforded an almost godlike power: they control their environment with an easy exchange of roles and manipulate their audience with a profound understanding of human psychology. Again, they see what their audiences see and act accordingly. Like Hamlet's First Player, they can create tears in their own eyes as well as another's. In some small manner, Michael joined those players (both the real actors and the character actors) when he stepped in front of the classroom and saw not only the audience, but how the audience saw him. To dramatize this metaphor, to make our students literally see from the stage, is to highlight their own personal connection to the power of acting.

This idea that acting holds a special power, some magic quality, goes at least as far back

to Greek drama, where players and audience were said to surrender spiritually to Dionysus, transformed by the performance that wed them, even more than the celebratory wine they shared (Grant 154). This magic was further embraced by the Italian Renaissance. In his “Oration on the Dignity of Man,” Pico della Mirandola argues that acting defines human greatness, the dividing line between us and the animals, every creature assigned a role save the human being, who may play any or all parts proffered by the heavens:⁶

“We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that thou mayest feel as thine own, have as thine own, possess as thine own the seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire. A limited nature in other creatures is confined within the laws written down by Us. . . . [T]hou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. . . .”

Who is there that does not wonder at man? . . . [who] fashions, fabricates, transforms himself into the shape of all flesh, into the character of every creature.

(4-6)

Jorge Luis Borges follows suit in his short story “Everything and Nothing” when he equates Shakespeare with God as the ultimate actor: a “whirlwind” of ever-changing roles, “many persons—and none” (249). Max Reinhardt, the flamboyant actor’s director, likewise equates his actor with the charismatic: the player’s transformation on stage is akin to the holy union of the stigmata.⁷ Even Sigmund Freud waxes sentimental when faced with the human power to satisfy an unsatisfying life through the role-playing afforded by playwright, player, and audience.⁸

But in the tradition of early modern drama, acting’s magic is both liberating and

confining, and for this reason it is the perfect theme to trace for college students. Consider Ben Jonson's Volpone: Volpone is the consummate actor, building a fortune on his ability to play sick. The text is filled with theatrical references to costumes, props, Volpone's perfected timing of the death rattle cough. As such he controls his financial future, an illustration of Pico's mini-god. But his greatest performance in the courtroom is followed by the fear that he really is getting sick:

I ne'er was in dislike with my disguise
Till this fled moment.
.....
'Fore God, my left leg 'gan to have the cramp,
And I apprehended, straight, some power had struck me
With a dead palsy. Well, I must be merry
And shake it off. A many of these fears
Would put me into some villainous disease
Should they come thick upon me. . . . (5.1.2-10)⁹

Suddenly Volpone is not the master actor playing to perfection a variety of roles, but an actor trapped in a role he can't escape. The illusion has become real, and literally does when he's punished with imprisonment, "cramped with irons / Till [he] be'st sick and lame indeed" (5-7-123-24).

To a certain extent, the same holds true for Christopher Marlowe's Faustus, who plays the Vice character with his silly gags and Pope-bopping tricks till he believes he is the Vice character who "can ne'er be pardoned" (5.2.42)¹⁰ despite Christ's blood streaming in the

firmament, nor repent despite his professed wishes to do so: “I do repent, and yet I do despair” (5.1.68). Even Richard III, who boasts himself a better actor than Proteus or the wily Ulysses, finds himself trapped in a role of his own making—only this time, I would argue, it’s the role of the actor himself. On the eve of war with Richmond, the ghosts of all Richard’s victims visit his dreams to curse his success. Richard wakes visibly shakened: “shadows tonight / Hath strook more fear in Richard / Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers” (5.3.216-18). Shadows, of course, might only mean dreams or even ghosts, but for Shakespeare, shadow could also refer to the player. As such, it proves a strange remembrance of what Richard once was: the consummate actor in command of his audience. Now Richard’s an actor without one. In the ‘midnight blue’ speech, he splits into a “thousand several tongues” (5.3. 193), calling for his departure from the stage. His life translates into a series of changing masks with no real living substance beneath—no heart, even to pity himself. Of course, you could argue that it is a guilty conscience that troubles all of these characters, but in psychoanalytic terms, a conscience holds the same free-floating ability as the actor: to see with a double vision, to step outside of yourself, judge yourself from the perspective of an approving or disapproving audience.

The majority of our students are in a perfect position to appreciate both the pleasure and the price of role-playing. Many are fairly young: eighteen to twenty-two. College proves their first real sojourn away from home, and thus they are placed in the position of trying to cross the bridge from the roles they have inherited (from parents’ expectations, peer pressure, or Facebook self-fashioning) to the one role they desire, but have yet to identify. Many will try on a variety of roles before they leave our institution: in class, at work, at the Saturday night rave; and they will have the perfect audience, one that doesn’t know who they were before and therefore must take

their act at face value.

Many of their performances will become real. For there is truth in Hamlet's advice to his mother: "Assume a virtue, if you have it not . . . For use almost can change the stamp of nature" (3.4.167-75). And many of them will become trapped in the roles they play, like Volpone and Faustus and Richard III, for such is the danger of acting. Even our less traditional students, those older, with families, returning to school, can surely connect with the idea of role-playing, as a decision to return to college marks some dissatisfaction with your present part in life.

That students who act in the classroom are in a position to make literary and personal connections to an acting text is perhaps obvious. But students who stay in the realm of the audience make similar connections as they watch their peers take the stage ([see Appendix A](#)). In one of my Shakespeare classes, one student devoted his journal entry to an examination of his own changing perspective as an audience member:

Today's class exercise really got me thinking about both *Hamlet* and life. . . . [When the actors arrived to perform Ophelia and Hamlet], I noticed that the guy [playing Hamlet] was in my history class. As he went through the scene and played a fairly good Hamlet, I needed to assess my impressions of him over the past three months. Throughout the semester, this guy spent a good portion of time talking about history and the particulars of certain events and happenings. Coming out of that class, I considered him a simple student who had no personality save for his inquisitiveness.

When he acted in class I got to see a side of the guy that I had in no way expected. He was lively, and was surging with personality. Granted, he was

acting, but ‘going through the motions’ can only get you so far— there’s got to be something behind the acting that draws it on and encourages it. *That* was what I got to see.

My student goes on to address how his misreading of the student might parallel misreadings of *Hamlet*, both by critics and the other characters in the play who view the protagonist with a preconceived bias and thus see what they want to see. *Hamlet*, of course, is a particularly rich play to teach through the lens of performance, for Hamlet almost seems to identify his main rival as, no, not Laertes, not Fortinbras, not Pyrrhus (all of whom share his obligation to revenge), but instead the First Player, the actor who can cry real tears and thus prompts intense envy from the prince. Note Hamlet’s decision to follow the actor’s plan as opposed to the revenger’s plot, putting on a play “to make mad the guilty and appal the free” (2.2.564). Hamlet also spends a good deal of the play acting mad, an act he surely qualifies every time he tells someone he’s only acting. When you consider that he admits to almost everyone but Claudius (Gertrude, Horatio, Marcellus, Rosencrantz and Guildenstem) that he is not really mad, just acting, we must wonder if Hamlet wants his audience to view him as insane or as an actor ([see Appendix B:1b](#)).

But I would argue it’s not Hamlet with whom most students identify, but Prince Hal, a character so attractive to all and so hard to pin down that Republicans claimed him as the literary prototype for George W. Bush, while Shakespeare scholars nominated Barack Obama as Hal’s heir apparent.¹¹ Given that Generation Y is often viewed as a deciding factor in American presidential elections, deservedly or not, their kinship with Hal is telling. For the future Henry V is not only the perfect reflection of our students’ position in life (one foot fitted in revelry and

rebellion, the other in responsibility), but also a character who succeeds by acting:

I know you all, and will a while uphold
The unyok'd humor of your idleness,
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wond' red at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So, when this loose behavior I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes,
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offense a skill,

Redeeming time when men think least I will. (*IHA* 1.2.189-211)

Prince Hal is not just a player, he's *the* player, confessing to the audience he has only been playing the part of the young fallen rascal—to father, Falstaff, and friends—in order to create a more dramatic entrance into the political arena. Though this ironic reading at least goes back as far as Harold Goddard's *The Meaning of Shakespeare*,¹² it always seems a revelation to my students, despite any awareness of current politics.

Success is an act. Hal's revelation is not just about inner honor, but acting and its power to get us what we want in life. Perhaps more important, it's about Hal's ability not only to play the madcap prince, but also to see with an audience's eye, to see how he'll be perceived by the Englishmen he'll one day rule. This explains his decision to redirect his past into one of underdog success. Whether this makes him a brilliant strategist, a faithless friend, or just a really good actor, the beauty of the classroom is our audience doesn't have to choose between the manipulative politician or the glorious warrior. They don't have to choose between the countless critics and directors who vehemently argue their vision of Prince Hal, because our audience is in a classroom, with an actor who will play the part as they direct and redirect. As students, they can explore fully all the roles Shakespeare suggested with his multi-layered text. That's something even a real performance can't give them ([see Appendix B:1a](#)).

Despite multiple articles, books, even book series that promote the use of performance in the Shakespeare classroom, some scholars still argue against the dramatic approach, especially when it concerns student actors. In "The Playwright's Voice: Rehearsing through Class Discussion the 'Kill Claudio' Episode," Robert Hapgood quotes Jan Kott as saying "What goes on in front of the classroom should *be professional*" (145), a perspective still held by some in the

academy. Obviously, I don't agree, even though I was lucky enough to have professors whose lectures proved incredible performances, though often delivered to a silent audience. What I hope I've illustrated here, however, is that acting in the classroom not only helps our students connect to Shakespeare's theatrical metaphors for life, but also provides them with a new way of seeing that will lead to success both in and out of the classroom.

I take my cue from Shakespeare. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus welcomes Bottom and his unprofessional troupe of actors. He further directs his audience, who do not want to see the play, to instead see with the players' eyes:

The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worse are no worse, if imagination amend them . . . If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. (5.1.210-14)

This is interesting advice from the one character in the play who seems totally lacking in imagination, but Theseus chooses to imagine the best from the worst. And it works, for the mechanicals' performance is usually the highlight of the production ([see Appendix B:2](#)). More important, dramatic tradition has it that the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* played not just for laughs, but for one crowning moment when one of the players breaks away and achieves a moment of theatrical glory. The vision of success is validated, the illusion now real, for both the characters and the audience.¹³

I hope my students are equally transformed when they either perform Shakespeare's lines on the classroom stage or watch that transformation from the classroom audience, that they learn to create their future in the style of Prince Hal, if not by acting per se, then by making the same careful decisions actors make every day: how to say something, how to take center stage, how to

exit gracefully. Like my former colleague Ralph Alan Cohen, I want our classrooms to be mini-recreations of the Globe stage, for in a flood of natural light, we become aware of not only what we see, but also how we are seen by others.¹⁴ As such, we may learn to see the world through Theseus's eyes: with anticipation and good will.

Appendix A: Between Acts

To aid students in understanding the bridge between page and performance, I founded Between Acts, an ever-evolving group of actors (mostly comprised of James Madison University English and Theatre majors) who perform scenes in JMU English classes. Such a simple pedagogical approach not only enlivens discussion but also places the class in the middle of the performance, where students can see their theoretical readings played out upon the stage and redirect actors to argue for and against competing analyses. As such, students now participate in the process they were once critiquing.

This is not a difficult thing to do, nor does it take much time to organize. Student actors are trained to do cold readings for auditions and eager to ply their craft in a classroom where they can work through potential audition pieces or prepare for scene work. Sometimes these students don't even have time to rehearse with one another before coming to class. I do not require memorization, but ask only that students know the text well enough to move with it and take direction. And while the purpose is for my students to develop into more astute critics, actors in the classroom can also offer an interesting perspective on character motivation and audience interaction, especially when it comes to blocking choices and potential asides.

The scenes you choose needn't be long. In fact, the shorter the scene the better, for the gold to be mined here is in redirection. Even a four-line dialogue can affect meaning and audience perspective when actors change their delivery through inflection, movement, and facial expression. How these characters enter or exit, who leads, who dawdles, who follows whom, who moves downstage center or talks to the audience—all of these choices must be made by an

actor or director, and can change which character will be trusted or liked or despised or applauded by the audience.

Appendix B: Classroom Ideas

Given that this is a journal devoted to pedagogy, I wanted to offer a few of my favorite lesson ideas that link acting in the classroom with acting in the text. They are not particularly original, but they have always proved successful for me as a teacher.

1. Using Outside Actors in the Classroom

As I argued in the essay, Hal and Hamlet hold great fascination for undergraduate students. This makes sense. The historical Hal may have only been sixteen at the battle of Shrewsbury and Hamlet is technically thirty, but both characters read as if they are young college students, transitioning from child to adult: princes, not kings; sons, not fathers; prone to rebellion and resistant to familial expectations. Both characters exist in a no man's land of sorts, unsure of how they fit into the new configurations of their respective courts. Student discussion often revolves around how each character is shaped by parental figures: the usurping King Henry and Vice-friendly Falstaff, Hamlet's vengeful ghost father and murderous father-in-law. As such, many students see an identity crisis, whether it's there or not, in these smart, language-savvy characters, trying to find a way to the person they wish to become.

- a. The play within a play in *Henry IV, Part I* (2.4.394-476) is an obvious scene to perform in class and will get to the heart of the lead character, despite its focus on Falstaff. Students easily identify with the situation: two buddies practicing what one of them will say to his disappointed dad. They'll also love the impromptu role-playing for its plethora of witty insults; but any scene can be played more than one way, and

redirection—especially of Hal’s final rejection of Falstaff, “I do, I will [banish you]” (2.4.476)—always gets the students to rethink Hal’s part in the relationship. Is he really Falstaff’s friend? Is he threatening or warning him? Is Falstaff right to worry that his best friend will “hang a thief” when he takes the throne (1.2.60)? Such a discussion will take you back to Hal’s “I know you all” soliloquy (1.2.189-211). Having your Hal actor perform this speech right after the joy of the play extempore will lead to a discussion of Hal’s ability to ‘act’ in life and to use that act to his best advantage.

Here, too, is a place where you can include your students in the performance. Divide the class into a Globe audience: nobility, middle class, and groundlings. Forcing them to take on a perspective based on early modern status will bring a variety of responses to Hal’s confession that he has a plan to overcome his troubled past and is simply biding time in the tavern world. The assured hoots from his reference to “those base contagious clouds” (1.2.192) will delight the class and may change your student actor’s performance as well. This could further lead to a discussion on timing in both the actor’s performance and Hal’s political plans to redeem “time when men think least [he] will” (1.2.211).

b. *Hamlet* is a great play to teach when talking about acting, role-playing, and self-discovery, and one of the obvious reasons is the acting troupe that graces its cast. Close attention to Hamlet’s interaction with the actors helps students not only to understand the troupe’s importance, but also to perfect their close reading skills. Have the First Player’s Pyrrhus/Hecuba speech (2.2.468-497, 505-518) performed side-by-side with Hamlet’s aesthetic and emotional response to the actor’s talent (2.2.549-606). Such a back-to-back

pairing can prompt a rich comparative discussion. You can start by talking about acting styles in early modern England through Hamlet's advice to the actors. His argument for a more natural style against an over-the-top one can easily be applied to these two speeches, with students deciding which First Player works best in the play at this moment. How would the Player's performance show that he is different from the other actors onstage, from Hamlet himself, who also recites a good long speech? Have your students dictate gesture, movement, style, voice, as well as placement on the stage and interaction with the audience. Ditto for Hamlet's following soliloquy: Are Hamlet's eyes dry or glassy? Is he filled with or void of emotion as he berates his lack of action? And what do they make of Hamlet's decision to put on a play as opposed to sweep to his revenge, to take the position of a director as opposed to the position of Pyrrhus, the revenge hero in the speech he has requested? Bring in Heywood's famous *An Apology for Actors* anecdote, where an audience member confesses to murder at a play with a similar crime.¹⁵ This should lead to a fun discussion on the power of drama or, at least, the belief in that power in Shakespeare's time.

2. Having Your Own Students Take the Stage

You don't have to have outside actors to drive home the point that Shakespeare took special care to write his plays for the stage. Embedded stage directions are everywhere, directing the actor on how s/he should perform each scene or directing the audience on how they should imagine the scene's location: hot or cold, morning or evening, wind howling or stars shining, the blessings of nature or omens of ill-fortune, all delivered through language for a stage with little scenery or lighting effects. A fun way to illustrate Shakespeare's brilliance in shaping the

performance of his plays through rhetoric is the mechanicals' production of *Pyramus and Thisbe* (5.1.108-357) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and not just because it allows you to talk about the double-framed audience or romantic parallel plot. The great thing about *Dream's* little play within a play is that it can be performed without any notice at all in your classroom. Prepare a list of cue scripts for the cast, with only the lines of each character and a few words for their cues. Students playing the parts of the mechanicals will obviously have to stand and deliver, but students playing the parts of Theseus's chatty court can stay in their seats (these latter roles are great for students who want to participate but are often too shy to contribute). Remind the students playing the actors that they need not know the lines or even be good actors, for the mechanicals are not professional and merely enthusiastic. Watching the play unfold as students strain to hear their cues, find their exit lines, or deliver their speeches without stumbling through them should bring the requisite laughs from the student audience and possibly even the actors. In fact, if the actor playing the Prologue follows Shakespeare's punctuation cues, s/he will definitely succeed in making no sense, ensuring even more laughs. Of course, if you have a ringer in your class, you might alert that actor s/he will be cast in the part of Thisbe, and that this comic role could develop into a seriously tragic one in the final death lament. This will not only follow an old theatrical tradition of the play, but also potentially stun your students and lead to a discussion on the transformative power of acting.

Notes

¹ Pedagogical studies on using performance in the classroom have flourished for more than twenty years, including multiple articles and themed issues published by various academic journals too numerous to list. A quick look at *Shakespeare Quarterly* would give you a sense of how popular the topic has become. An interested reader should begin with MLA's *Teaching Shakespeare in Performance*, or for a practical hands-on approach, Ralph Alan Cohen's *ShakesFear and How to Cure It: A Handbook for Teaching Shakespeare*. Giles Block's *Speaking the Speech: An Actor's Guide to Shakespeare* might also prove helpful, given its focus on Shakespeare's language as spoken, and how the shifts from prose to rhyming verse to unrhymed verse contribute to understanding the characters as well as the plays.

² Though all students gave permission for me to use their experiences and journal entries, I have changed their names in the essay, with the exception of Tangelia Rouse, who is now pursuing her career as an actress in Hollywood—successfully!

³ Max Reinhardt argues in "The Actor" that it is "a fairy story that [the actor] can ever forget the audience. Even in the moment of highest excitement the consciousness obtrudes itself upon him that thousands are following him with breathless, tremulous suspense through the last doors opening to his inmost self" (excerpt in *Actors on Acting* 297).

⁴ I witnessed a dramatic example of this idea at an NEH Conference on Renaissance and Shakespearean Staging at James Madison University, Summer 1995. One of the American Shakespeare Center's actors read a speech as if she was just getting her hands on the text for the first time. She began haltingly, as the lines were new to her, but as she continued, she warmed so quickly and naturally to the role, it became obvious that she had practiced it earlier. The pleasure of the audience was two-fold: we watched an actor plying her craft as well as being seemingly taken over by the role and thus disappearing before our eyes. (At the time, the acting troupe was called Shenandoah Shakespeare.)

⁵ These are obviously just some of the many references Shakespeare makes to the person/player analogy, the first three from *Macbeth* (5.5.24-25), the fourth from *Antony and Cleopatra* (5.2.220), and the last from *As You Like It* (2.7.138-65). These and all quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from David Bevington's *Complete Works of Shakespeare* (NY: Pearson, 2009).

⁶ Alvin Kernan makes this connection between Pico della Mirandola and Volpone and Mosca in his introduction to the Yale Ben Jonson edition of *Volpone*; see pages 14-15.

⁷ In "The Actor," Reinhardt waxes lyrical on the divinity of the actor: "The actor's power of self-suggestion is so great that he can bring about in his body not only inner and psychological but even outer and physical changes. And when one ponders on the miracle of Konnersreuth, whereby a simple peasant girl experiences every Friday the Passion of Christ, with so strong an imaginative power that her

hands and feet show wounds and she actually weeps tears of blood, one may judge to what wonders through a mysterious world the art of acting may lead; for it is assuredly by the process that the player, in Shakespeare's words, changes **utterly** his accustomed visage, his aspect and carriage, his whole being, and can weep for Hecuba and make others weep. Every night the actor bears the stigmata, which his imagination inflicts upon him, and bleeds from a thousand wounds" (299).

⁸ The main gist of this argument may be found in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*; for a quick summary see pages 509-510 in the Peter Gay anthology *The Freud Reader*. Though "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" does not deal specifically with drama, Freud also offers in this essay a connection to the writer and his audience, one where aesthetic pleasure blends with our inner reality; see in particular pages 440-43 in *The Freud Reader*, where the essay is also anthologized.

⁹ All quotations from *Volpone* are taken from Jonas Barish's edition of the play (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1958).

¹⁰ All quotations from *Doctor Faustus* are taken from Sylvan Barnet's edition of the play (NY: Penguin, 1969).

¹¹ There were multiple positive allusions made to George W. Bush as Prince Hal during his campaigns for president, focusing on his delinquent past then sudden turn to religion, honor, and patriotism. During the Democratic primary debates of 2008, a Harrisonburg, Virginia newspaper ran a piece where early modern scholars cast the Democratic candidates as Shakespeare characters. The then presidential candidate Barack Obama claimed the role of the future Henry V for his political

savviness and articulate nature. See “Shakespeare Center Casts Presidential Candidates,” *Daily News-Record*, Harrisonburg, Virginia: January 10, 2008, B3.

¹² Though Goddard’s point does not focus on acting, he still makes a connection between Hal and college students through their mutual transition from revelry to responsibility: “To recognize that here is the truth we need make no dusty study of history. The story of Prince Hal is the usual one. It is as contemporary as this morning’s sun. It can be duplicated in its essential features in an American university, college, or private school” (“*Henry IV*,” *Meaning of Shakespeare*, 212).

¹³ Michael Hoffman’s 1999 movie version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* offers a triumphant and seriously tear-provoking close to the *Pyramus and Thisbe* production.

¹⁴ See Cohen’s essay “Original Staging and the Shakespeare Classroom” in *Teaching Shakespeare through Performance*, where the author examines how lighting an audience dramatically changes that audience’s experience of the performance.

¹⁵ For a more extensive look at this idea, see Bart Van Es’s *Shakespeare in Company*, p. 208 (Oxford UP, 2013).

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