

THE CONCEPT AND PROCESS OF DRAMATIC ADAPTATION,  
DERIVED FROM A STUDY OF MODERN ADAPTATIONS OF  
SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

by

SARAH ANDERSON

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

Shakespeare Institute/  
Department of English,  
Faculty of Arts,  
University of Birmingham,  
1980.

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## Synopsis

The thesis investigates the concepts, processes and purposes involved in adapting one play into another. The study is based on post-1956 adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, and we find that these may be classified into five distinct types on the basis of the adaptive processes used: collages, cultural transpositions, domestications, reorientations and transformations. Despite differences between these types, all have common characteristics which enable us to term them 'adaptations' as opposed to directorial interpretations or new plays. Having established a definition of an adaptation we proceed to broaden its application, showing that any narrative form (e.g. novel, film) using a narrative source (e.g. history, legend) can be subjected to the same processes. The modern Shakespeare adaptations are then placed within their theatrical and political contexts in an attempt to explain their existence and their form. In this way we discover that the period 1959 to 1964 saw changes of dramatic form and of thematic purpose. Finally we consider whether it is valid to adapt plays, and suggest criteria for evaluating such adaptations. These criteria emphasise the significant connections between the adapted play and the adaptation, and so indicate how effectively this particular genre has been exploited.

For John, Kieran and Gavin



## Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge my debt to three people in particular, my husband John, and my two supervisors, Dr T.P.Matheson and Dr R.Wilcher. All three have read each chapter as it became available and offered constructive criticism which has greatly improved the quality of the work.

In addition I would like to thank the writers Cecil P.Taylor, Howard Brenton and David Pownall for making their unpublished scripts available to me.

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## INTRODUCTION

For many centuries, writers, actors, managers and directors have altered existing plays to suit their own purposes. Adaptation, therefore, is not a new practice, and it can be applied to any play, though normally the classics are used. Shakespeare's plays often appear in adapted form, both today and in previous centuries. Shakespeare himself hardly invented a plot but drew heavily on a wide variety of sources, both dramatic and non-dramatic. Geoffrey Bullough has reproduced, in eight volumes, the main narrative and dramatic sources of Shakespeare's plays and he also discusses his conclusions gained from a study of these sources. He comments:<sup>1</sup>

Modern study of Shakespeare sources has been increasingly aware of its twofold obligations: first, to investigate the ambience of story, drama, ideas, beliefs, and current events which affected the dramatist from time to time; second, and even more important, to consider how he used this material as a poet and craftsman in the theatre so as to produce plays which were not only 'for an age' but also 'for all time'.

These two objects of investigation can be summarised as i) the spirit of the age, and ii) Shakespeare's dramatic technique. Similarly, by comparing modern adaptations of Shakespeare's plays with the Shakespearian originals we should gain some ideas about the spirit of the modern age and dramatic techniques used by today's playwrights. More specifically, the process of adaptation raises several interesting questions about

dramatic creation: what is an adaptation? how does one recognise an adaptation? at what point does Shakespeare's play become someone else's adaptation of that play? why does anyone want to adapt Shakespeare's plays (rather than start from scratch)? how are Shakespeare's plays altered? are alterations of one century or period similar to one another and distinct from those of another period? why are adapters drawn to Shakespeare's plays in the first place? how do the adapted plays relate to cultural, social and political conditions prevailing at the time of their creation? how far are the adaptations valid in their own right (without reference to the original)? The aim of this thesis is to answer some of these questions as satisfactorily as possible by studying adaptations of Shakespeare's plays.

Rather than consider adaptations of all periods in detail, I have limited my choice of plays to those written since 1956.<sup>2</sup> I do not want to argue that since 1956 there has been a radically different kind of drama, but it does seem that after Osborne's Look Back In Anger opened in May of that year, the theatrical scene in general became more vital with theatre managements being more prepared to experiment with new plays and playwrights, and with many new theatres being built.<sup>3</sup> The group of adaptations considered therefore contains both very realistic plays in the earlier tradition and plays written in response to the new theatre forms and actor/audience relationships which have become increasingly prevalent during the last two decades.



By limiting the plays studied to one period, a source of bias is introduced, but I hope to minimise this by drawing on the work of other scholars to provide the necessary historical perspective and details. A second limit I have imposed is that of language. I shall consider only those plays written and first produced in the English language because such a study is largely textual and to consider translations and adaptations of Shakespeare in other languages would create unnecessary complications.<sup>4</sup> Finally, I have omitted those adaptations designed primarily to introduce children to the work of Shakespeare, whether they are shortened, edited versions to be either watched or acted by children, or whether they are modern paraphrases of the original texts for the use of examination candidates. Such adaptations raise totally different issues to those under discussion in this thesis.<sup>5</sup> The plays considered here are written as independent dramatic works for a normal adult audience.

During the period 1956-1980 there have been about thirty adaptations satisfying the above criteria of date, language and purpose, not a large number considering the annual output of new plays but nevertheless significant and, by virtue of the attention many of them receive, of more import than the mere statistical evidence suggests.<sup>6</sup>

Let us now consider the concepts of 'adapt' and 'adaptation'. The New English Dictionary gives two definitions of the verb 'adapt':

1. To fit (a person or thing to another, to or for a purpose), to suit, or make suitable.
2. To alter or modify so as to fit for a new use.

These definitions indicate certain necessary conditions for adapting: there must be

- a) an original object;
- b) a new use or purpose;
- c) a way of altering (a) to suit (b).

More specifically in relation to this thesis, dramatic adaptation requires

- a) an original play (for our purposes, a Shakespeare text);
- b) an altered set of cultural, social, political and theatrical conditions;
- c) an adapter who will alter (a) in such a way that it is more relevant, effective and/or comprehensible to people in (b).

This framework forms the basis of the following discussion, and it raises two key questions:

1. What are the new conditions prevailing?
2. How does the adapter change the original plays to suit these new conditions?

We shall make a detailed comparison between Shakespeare's plays and the adaptations, and this will highlight the process of adaptation while at the same time giving some indication of contemporary influences on the adaptations.

Further problems arise when one tries to determine exactly what constitutes an adaptation. Christopher Spencer gives the following definition:<sup>7</sup>

The typical adaptation includes substantial cuts of scenes, speeches, and speech assignments; much alteration of language; and at least one and usually several important (or scene-length) additions. Accompanying these measurable changes are alterations or at least new emphases in tone, in character, and in theme.

Ruby Cohn uses this as the basis of her definition, but broadens the scope by including all 'plays that are relatively faithful to Shakespeare's story, however far they depart from his text.' (pp.3-4)

A stage production of a play can take one of the following three forms:

- a) 'straight' presentation of one of Shakespeare's plays (meaning that it is presented as it was in Shakespeare's time);
- b) adaptation of one of Shakespeare's plays;
- c) entirely separate play.

However, the dividing line between one category and another is very blurred. First, no presentation of a Shakespeare play is ever 'straight' - the director has to make choices for every moment of the production, and as the play can no longer be performed as it was in Shakespeare's lifetime (if only because both audience and performers are twentieth century beings, not Elizabethan) some form of adaptation is inevitable. So, we then ask what changes can be made to a play without us wanting to re-classify it as an adaptation. For instance, if a director presents Julius Caesar on an open stage, using a full text and Elizabethan costume with no glaring incongruities, we would be reluctant to term his play an 'adaptation'; if, on the other hand, he made drastic cuts, added a few sections of pastiche Shakespearian verse to fill in the



narrative gaps, and set the play in Nazi Germany, then we might be tempted to see the production as an adaptation. In fact, throughout the thesis, the text of the relevant Shakespeare play forms the basis for comparison because it constitutes the only tangible evidence we have of Shakespeare's plays - staging techniques, business etc., are all ephemeral, comprising the area which the director must manipulate and control, making his own choices to strengthen his own particular presentation of the play. (There are, of course, precedents and traditions of staging, but none carry the weight of Shakespeare's authority as his text does.<sup>8</sup>) Cohn mentions the group of Shakespearian productions which are changed from the original text only by cutting lines and/or emending words, and maintains that these should be considered as theatre history rather than literary alteration.<sup>9</sup> However, she does not take any account of the effect of such cuts or emendations on the total meaning of the production. Wells, on the other hand, distinguishes three categories:<sup>10</sup>

There are those who believe that the best way to present a Shakespeare play is in conditions which approximate so far as possible to those in which it was originally performed. At the other extreme are those who believe that the plays can make their true effect only when they are rewritten, recostumed, recomposed, restaged, reset, and generally reconstituted. Within these two classes there are many gradations. There is moreover a third class - and one which does not necessarily exclude members of the second and even the first. It is made up of those whose prime concern in staging a play of Shakespeare's is not to put across either the body or the idea of the original ... but rather to construct a theatrical event which will work in its independent way. These are the adapters, even the burlesquers, of Shakespeare.



Here Wells recognises that rewriting (which I take to include cutting) can be just one element of the 'reconstitution' of a Shakespeare play, where the final production is not actually an adaptation. Thus we are interested here in the dividing line between Wells' second and third categories, and may find the answer in the motives for textual alterations. Wells maintains that in some cases the motive is merely greater ease of comprehension while in other cases the aim is to create something essentially new out of the original.<sup>11</sup> This may form the basis for a distinction between interpretation and adaptation.

The discussion above concerns the changes which must be made to a Shakespeare play before it is termed an 'adaptation'. The other problem is that a direct link with Shakespeare's text must be established for a play to constitute an adaptation. One of the tasks of this study is to examine the strength and nature of this link. For example, Julius Caesar presented with the same plot and character relationships as Shakespeare but with modern language and equivalences we would term an adaptation, but would that still be so if Caesar was merely shown in, say, the wars against Pompey? Would we link this play to Shakespeare or rather to history (after all, Shakespeare did not invent the character of Julius Caesar)?

To attempt to resolve these questions, an initial course of action is the identification of variant and invariant features in each of the adapted plays. Thus,

by considering those features of the adapted plays which are variant (i.e. altered from the Shakespearian original) we may discover what must be contributed by the adapter to establish his play as an adaptation, not just a director's interpretation of Shakespeare; by considering invariant features (i.e. those which remain the same as in Shakespeare's plays) we establish the nature of the link between Shakespeare and the adaptation. Such a process can be used only on those plays which intuitively we would wish to term adaptations - having determined what the necessary conditions of an adaptation appear to be, one can apply the rules to more doubtful cases.

Christopher Spencer, in discussing the Restoration adaptations, describes two main approaches to Shakespearian adaptations:<sup>12</sup>

On the one hand the adaptations have been studied clinically as products of the rules and Restoration and eighteenth-century stage conditions and conventions, often with a classification of changes by type.... On the other hand the adaptations are compared critically with the Shakespearean originals as a part of the history of attitudes towards Shakespeare;

By using both approaches one can gain further insight into both the adaptation's link with Shakespeare's plays (compared with the Shakespearian originals) and its own merits and qualities (viewed as a product of the age in which it was created). Spencer very much advocates the approach which regards each adaptation as a new play, to be examined on its own merits.<sup>13</sup> However, during the Restoration, adapters set out to 'improve'

Shakespeare, thus inviting critical comparison (and thereby suffering). No such claim is made by modern adapters. They acknowledge Shakespeare's supremacy in the art of dramatic creation and instead they assert that they merely wish to make Shakespeare's plays 'relevant'. Therefore, critical comparison with the Shakespearian original has little interest for us today. However, Spencer's preference is echoed by Wells who maintains that the more drastic the adaptation the more easily we can accept it in its own right.<sup>14</sup>

Since the sixteenth century, there have been two main periods of Shakespearian adaptation, the Restoration (1660-1700) and the twentieth century. Between these two periods, Shakespeare's plays were presented in adapted versions, but few innovations were made, and towards the end of the eighteenth century there began a move back to the original Shakespearian text.<sup>15</sup> Thus, most analysis of Shakespearian adaptation has been based on the Restoration versions. Allardyce Nicoll and F.W.Kilbourne have both attempted to categorise the alterations, Nicoll being more concerned with the spirit of the age and Kilbourne with dramatic technique. Thus, Nicoll lists the categories into which the changes in the plays naturally divide themselves:<sup>16</sup>

1. There were changes made because of a genuine critical dissatisfaction with Shakespeare's development of a scene or of a character.
2. There were changes due to the desire for making more heroic, elements already instinct with heroism.
3. There were changes made owing to the influence of the classic spirit.
4. There were changes made in comedy through the influence of the new spirit of wit and reckless immorality.
5. There were changes made in order to pander to the prevailing desire for novelty.
6. There were changes made in order to enforce a political parallel between Shakespeare's plot and contemporary conditions.
7. There were changes made for the purpose of simplifying Shakespeare's language.
8. And, finally, there were changes due to a thoughtless and senseless passion for any kind of alteration.

Kilbourne concerns himself more with the form which these changes took. He maintains that the Restoration audiences demanded the following elements in their plays:<sup>17</sup>

- a) spectacle and music (partly a result of the introduction of scenery);
- b) the preservation of the unities of time and space;
- c) poetic justice;
- d) the hero and heroine should not be villains;
- e) tragedy and comedy should not mingle in one play;
- f) an increase in the love interest (a French influence);
- g) tragedy should be that of an estimable monarch.



Consequently, D'Avenant and Dryden's The Enchanted Island<sup>18</sup> condensed Shakespearian passages to make room for more songs, dances, visions and spectacle in general, while Tate's King Lear fulfilled several of the above conditions by having Edgar and Cordelia in love and by allowing all the 'goodies' (including Lear and Cordelia) to live. Kilbourne also suggests that the task of the adapters was to 'refine' Shakespeare's language, and this led to the substitution of modern equivalents and omission of much figurative language. (Such alterations are also typical of modern adaptations, though the motives tend to be clarification rather than refinement.)

The categories distinguished by Nicoll and Kilbourne would not necessarily apply to any period other than the Restoration, but they provide two examples of methods of classification, based loosely on social influences and dramatic changes.

Twentieth century adaptations have taken a rather different form. Early in the century, the influence of Freud led to an interest in Psychological motivation and consistency, and several contemporary plays considered the life of a Shakespearian character either before or after the events depicted by Shakespeare.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in Bottomley's Gruach<sup>20</sup> we see the meeting and wooing of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, while Ervine, in The Lady of Belmont,<sup>21</sup> shows us Antonio, Bassanio, Portia, Shylock and the rest ten years after Antonio's trial in The Merchant of Venice. In these cases the language is

modern verse or prose, bearing no relationship to Shakespeare's language. The adaptations rely rather on a knowledge of Shakespeare's plots and a presentation of his characters. This form of adaptation fails to distinguish between dramatic characters (who have no off-stage existence) and real people, a distinction later explored by Stoppard in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.

When studying adaptations, the usual method of classification has been to examine together all adaptations of the same source play e.g. all adaptations of Hamlet.<sup>22</sup> Such a method takes no account of the various processes by which the source play has been adapted. As it is these processes which are of central concern in this thesis, I have used them to divide the adaptations into five categories:

1. Collage i.e. rearrangement of Shakespeare's words (though passages from other plays, writers or even new writing may also be included).

Charles Marowitz is the chief adapter in this category, though each of his collages uses slightly different techniques.

2. Cultural transposition i.e. the same plot and characters as Shakespeare, but placed in a different cultural situation (usually modern) with modern language. These tend to be political plays, with the emphasis on situation and plot rather than character. John Osborne's A Place Calling Itself Rome is typical.

3. Domestication i.e. again, the plot and characters parallel those of Shakespeare in a modern situation, but political figures are changed into social or domestic figures such as famous writers or scientists; also, the plot is less close to Shakespeare's than in the transpositions for here the interest is more in character than in situation. An example is Mister Lear by Robin Maugham.
4. Reorientation i.e. major events and characters tend to remain the same, but there are changes of emphasis (especially of character) and scope for the introduction of other themes; these plays usually use modern language, though Shakespeare's language is not out of place. Details of plot may be added, but they are consistent with what we already know of Shakespeare's play. The most famous example of this type is Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.
5. Transformation i.e. these plays take major character relationships and a situation from Shakespeare but then transform the material into a totally new play exploring different themes and, particularly, using a greatly altered plot. One example is Lear by Edward Bond.

In the following five chapters we shall investigate each of these categories, and see how far they are distinct and comprehensive.

In Chapter 6 we shall draw together the strands of the previous five chapters in an effort to define an adaptation and distinguish it from an interpretation and from a new play. We shall also examine the special way



in which an adaptation can work theatrically, for there is a double focus (on adapted play and adaptation) which can be exploited.

Shakespeare adaptations are not the only ones, as Robert Brustein points out:<sup>23</sup>

... even scripture, in previous times, was susceptible to interpretation and adaptation. Just as the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were adapted by medieval guilds in the Passion plays, so the Homeric myths - which constituted scripture for the Greeks - have been in a constant state of development and change. The Electra story, for example, was dramatized by Aeschylus, then by Sophocles, and then by Euripides, each treatment a brand-new departure which reflected each writer's own religious, social, and psychological obsessions. Roman drama is little more than a free revision of Greek comedies and tragedies, particularly those of Menander and Euripides, performed in Greek dress, but clearly Latin in tone and temperament. Racine adapted Euripides and Seneca to his own purposes, while Molière Frenchified Terence and Plautus. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, England, and Italy, almost every writer with literary pretensions revised or adapted the Greco-Roman drama; in the nineteenth century, the Germans joined the parade; and in our own day, the tradition of myth drama - which is to say, the updating of classical plays by contemporary hands - reached its peak.

Nobody, for example, dares to produce Greek originals more radically than Cocteau, Anouilh, Giraudoux, T.S.Eliot, and Eugene O'Neill dare to rewrite them. To turn Oedipus into a willful neurotic with a mother fixation, as Cocteau did in La Machine Infernale, or to make Agamemnon into a returning Civil War officer, as O'Neill did in Mourning Becomes Electra, or to bring the Alcestis story into the modern drawing room with Herakles transformed into a spiritual advisor and psychological counselor, as Eliot did in The Cocktail Party, is to wreak havoc on the original intentions of the original authors of these plays.

The aim of Chapter 7 is to see how far the analytical framework derived from modern Shakespeare adaptations can be applied to non-Shakespearian adaptations of various periods, genres and media. Is the same range of adaptive processes used in all cases?



The final chapter places the modern Shakespeare adaptations within their theatrical and political context in an attempt to explain the existence and form of the adaptations. This chapter also examines the basis on which we should judge adaptations, and establishes criteria for evaluating them.

There has been much discussion in recent years about methods of Shakespeare production<sup>24</sup>, and Shakespearian adaptations have often been criticised because commentators have applied the wrong criteria to them, seeing them as interpretations. Hopefully this thesis will enable us to recognise adaptations, become aware of their objectives and methods, and evaluate them accordingly.

Notes

1. Geoffrey Bullough (ed.), Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (8 vols) (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957-1975.) vol.8, p.344.

Bullough goes on to identify the ways in which Shakespeare did alter his sources, and factors which influenced him in his choice of sources. These include the practical pressures of the available company and the need to appeal to a popular audience as well as the more aesthetic choices where themes, characters or situations appealed to his dramatic sense. Bullough shows how Shakespeare took elements from several sources for one play in order to provide parallelism, sub-plots, contrasts, illustration, proliferation of incidents, or even to replace elements in the main source which for some reason (morally or dramatically) were unsatisfactory. He created characters who would be most likely to fit into a given situation, either taking the broad character outline from sources or inventing new characters. Imagery was also often suggested by the sources, either directly or indirectly. Few general statements about how Shakespeare treated his sources are possible for his treatment varied with each play or group of plays, but the above comments indicate the type of information to be gained from a comparative study of Shakespeare's plays and his sources. For more details see Bullough's 'General Conclusion' vol.8 pp.341-405.

For other studies of Shakespeare's sources in relation to his plays, see

- a) Kenneth Muir, Shakespeare's Sources (1): Comedies and Tragedies (Methuen, London, 1957.)
- b) Margaret Brown Ackerman, Directions of Change in Shakespeare's Alteration of his Sources: The Comedies (PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1968.)
- c) John Richard Elliott, Jr., Political Motivation in the Lancastrian Tetralogy: A Critical Study of Shakespeare's Use of Sources (PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1964.)

- 2. My chief concern is with stage plays, but it should be remembered that this process of Shakespearian adaptation has occurred in other media, for example, fiction, poetry, films, television. There have also been many musicals based on Shakespeare's plays but these I do not include because they are governed by different conventions to the straight stage play. See bibliography for a list of these musicals.
- 3. See Introduction to John Russell Taylor, Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama (Methuen, London, 1962.)
- 4. Ruby Cohn, in her Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.) considers adaptations in English, French and German. See also Chapter 7 of this thesis when the problem of translation is discussed.

5. Thomas Clifford Kartak has written his thesis on the problems of adapting Shakespeare's plays for child audiences. See The Adapting of Shakespearean Comedies for Child Audiences with Acting Versions of Four Plays as Examples (PhD thesis, Northwestern University, August 1971.)

For other examples of Shakespearian adaptations for children or students, see

- a) Gertrude Lerner Kerman, Shakespeare for Young Players: From Tens to Teens (Harvey House, New York, 1964.)
- b) Lois Dean, Prospero's Magic Cape (McKay, New York, 1964.)
- c) David Holbrook, Thieves and Angels: Dramatic Pieces for use in Schools (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968.)
- d) Eleanore Patmore Young, Shakespeare for Young Actors (Exposition Press, New York, 1957.)
- e) Elsie M. Katterjohn, Julius Caesar in Modern English Adapted from Shakespeare's Play (Scott, Foresman, Chicago, 1957.)
- f) Esther W. Currie, Macbeth in Modern English: Adapted from Shakespeare's Play (Scott, Foresman, Chicago, 1959.)

6. This figure includes adaptations which have either been published or have had a wide circulation in performance. Detailed comments will be made only on those plays which were seen or could be read by a large number of people (and for which I have been able to acquire the texts). In addition there have been other Shakespearian adaptations during the period,



usually produced in one place for a short time and not published. Those which have come to my notice are listed in the bibliography.

7. Christopher Spencer, Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1965.) Introduction p.7
8. Even the text we have of Shakespeare's plays is known to be corrupt in places, and there are various versions of some plays. However, for the purpose of this thesis I am assuming that the text as we have it is Shakespeare's work. All references to Shakespeare's plays are based on Peter Alexander's text.
9. See Cohn, p.3
10. Stanley Wells, 'Shakespeare's text on the modern stage' (Shakespeare Jahrbuch(Heidelberg), 1967) pp.180-181
11. Wells, p.190
12. Spencer, Introduction p.7
13. Spencer, Introduction p.32
14. Wells, p.191
15. For details of this transition period see R.W.Babcock's article 'The attack of the late eighteenth century upon alterations of Shakespeare's plays' (Modern Language Notes, vol.45, November 1930, pp.446-451.)
16. Allardyce Nicoll, Dryden as an Adapter of Shakespeare (Oxford University Press, London, 1922.) p.10
17. See Frederick W.Kilbourne, Alterations and Adaptations of Shakespeare (Poet Lore Co., Boston, 1906.) Introduction passim.
18. This and other major Restoration adaptations are reprinted in Spencer. Descriptions and analyses of most Restoration adaptations can be found in Kilbourne

and in Shakespeare Improved: The Restoration Versions in Quarto and on the Stage by Hazelton Spencer (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1927.)

19. Compare this with The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines (3 vols) by Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke (Dent, London, 1906; orig. pub. 1850-1852)

Here, Clarke presents a series of short stories depicting the early life of many Shakespearian heroines.

20. Gordon Bottomley, Gruach and Britain's Daughter: Two Plays (Constable and Co., London, 1921.)

21. St. John G. Ervine, The Lady of Belmont: A Play in Five Acts (Allen and Unwin, London, 1923.)

22. Examples are Ruby Cohn's Modern Shakespeare Offshoots and a thesis by Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968.)

23. Robert Brustein, 'No more masterpieces' (Yale/Theatre, vol. I, no. 1, 1968.) pp. 11-12

24. For example, in May 1977 Bernard Levin strongly objected to the textual alterations made by Peter Barnes to Jonson's The Devil is an Ass (see 'The ungentle art of doctoring Jonson', Sunday Times, 8 May 1977.) Various directors (Trevor Nunn, Stuart Burge, Charles Marowitz) replied to Levin's charges (see 'Lambasting Levin', Sunday Times, 15 May 1977.) and they maintain that textual alterations to classics made them more comprehensible, enjoyable and closer to the original intention of the plays. The conflict

led ultimately to a BBC documentary programme, 'Hands off the Classics', first shown on the programme Arena Theatre on 9 November 1977, in which there was an investigation into modern methods of Shakespeare production.

## CHAPTER 1: COLLAGE ADAPTATIONS

Paul Baker Hamlet ESP (1970<sup>1</sup>)

John Barton King John (1974)

The Wars of the Roses (1963)

Ian Davie A Play for Prospero (1964)

Charles Marowitz The Marowitz Hamlet (1965)

A Macbeth (1969)

Measure for Measure (1975)

An Othello (1972)

The Shrew (1973)

Joseph Papp William Shakespeare's 'Naked' Hamlet (1968)

We begin with a consideration of the above group of plays because of all the adaptations they are the ones most obviously based on Shakespeare's plays. The two main tasks of this investigation are the identification and examination of a) invariant and b) variant features of the adaptations. It therefore seems sensible to begin with those plays which (at least, superficially) have the highest proportion of invariant features, thus working from the most familiar plays towards the plays with fewer familiar (invariant) features.

The principal feature which these plays have in common and which allows us to consider them as a group is that they all use a very high proportion of Shakespeare's language - over 50% of each play is in fact Shakespearian. The other 50% of the text may also come from a play of Shakespeare (either from the play being adapted or from



another play in the canon) but this is not necessarily the case; passages may be taken from or based on the texts of other writers (e.g. the sources of Shakespeare's plays), or totally new passages written by the adapter may be included. This technique of taking passages from various contexts and fitting them together to form a new coherent pattern has come to be known as 'collage', mainly used in reference to Marowitz's adaptations but equally applicable to others in the group.

From this overall description of the collage adaptations it can be seen that the actual text, the language, is of prime importance. Therefore any comparison between a Shakespeare play and an adaptation begins with the text. As we consider the Shakespeare play to be the text as we have it, then an adaptation must in some way alter that text, for if the original Shakespearian text were preserved it would be difficult to see in what sense the Shakespeare play had been adapted. Thus, the language of the play is our first clue to the type of play being considered: a high proportion of Shakespearian language indicates a close relationship with a Shakespeare play; the inclusion of non-Shakespearian passages or out-of-context Shakespearian passages indicates some form of adaptation. The collage adaptations have both of these language types (Shakespearian and non-Shakespearian), and the following table shows the constituents of each adapted text:<sup>2</sup>

	A	B	C	D	A+B+C	$\frac{A+B+C}{D} \times 100$
Marowitz:						
Hamlet	1036	-	-	3800	1036	27.26%
Macbeth	1040	-	-	2087	1040	49.83%
Othello	850 55.6%	679 44.4%	-	3251	1529	47.03%
Shrew	755 64.3%	420 35.7%	-	2554	1175	46.01%
Measure	1275 99%	-	13 1%	2673	1288	48.19%
Barton:						
Wars of the Roses	5921 79.8%	1474 19.9%	21 0.3%	12,273	7416	60.43%
(Henry VI)	1867 71.5%	730 27.9%	16 0.6%	4806	2613	54.37%
(Ed. IV)	1755 74.6%	592 25.2%	5 0.2%	3859	2352	60.95%
(Rich. III)	2299 93.8%	152 6.2%	-	3608	2451	67.93%
King John	1383 51.8%	693 26%	594 22.2%	2571	2670	103.85%
Baker:						
Hamlet ESP	3059	-	-	3800	3059	80.5%
Papp:						
'Naked' Hamlet	1213 93.7%	82 6.3%	-	3800	1295	34.08%
Davie:						
Play for Prospero	1369 79.6%	254 14.8%	96 5.6%	-	1719	-

Notes

Column A: number of Shakespeare's lines in the adaptation;

Column B: number of lines written by the adapter  
in the adaptation;

Column C: number of lines from other sources in the  
adaptation;

Column D: number of lines in the original Shakespeare  
play (where applicable);

A+B+C: total number of lines in the adaptation;

$\frac{A+B+C}{D} \times 100$ : length of the adaptation as a percentage of  
the original Shakespeare play.

Figures in columns A, B and C are also given as percentages  
of the total number of lines in each adaptation.

One should not attach too much importance to this  
statistical information because of the difficulties of  
any line-count, but it does reveal two interesting  
features:

1. Perhaps most obvious is the difference in length  
between the Shakespeare play and the adaptation.  
Only Barton's King John exceeds the original length,  
and apart from that only Baker's Hamlet ESP comes  
anywhere near the original (largely because of the  
way the dialogue is set out). Otherwise the collages  
are very much shorter than the originals, showing  
that necessarily much of each original has been omitted.  
Davie's A Play for Prospero is unique within this  
group in that it does not adapt any one play but  
rather takes passages from most of the plays in the  
Shakespeare canon. Thus any comparison of length  
is meaningless.

2. The other main point of interest concerns the various sources of the passages in the collages. At least 50% of each of the collages is Shakespearian, but the other half of each play may come from other sources. Some collages are taken wholly from the one Shakespearian source play e.g. Marowitz's Hamlet and Macbeth, and Baker's Hamlet ESP. In Marowitz's Othello, however, a large proportion of Marowitz's own dialogue is included, and in King John Barton includes not only his own dialogue but also long passages from Shakespeare's sources. The sources of collage passages give some indication of the interests of the adapter - if all the dialogue is Shakespearian, then the adaptation is probably intended primarily to elucidate aspects of the original play; if there are long passages written by the adapter, then he probably wants to inject some new ideas or themes into the original; passages taken from other texts have various purposes, but those taken from Shakespeare's sources may be used to give a wider perspective, to show another side of a protagonist or to provide explanations considered unnecessary by Shakespeare.



In order to make a general discussion of this group of plays meaningful, a brief description of each of the plays follows.

John Barton's Wars of the Roses is a trilogy comprising Henry VI (based on Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI and 2 Henry VI I - IVi), Edward IV (based on 2 Henry VI IVii - V and 3 Henry VI) and Richard III (based on Shakespeare's Richard III). Henry VI opens with the funeral of Henry V and the reading of his will. The will is taken from Hall's Chronicles, not Shakespeare, and is intended to stress 'the political and economic heritage left by Henry V'.<sup>3</sup> The first half of the play is taken up with the battles between England and France, and by the time of the interval, peace has been concluded much to the disgust of York who consequently loses his land in France. He decides to wait a while and then press his claim to the throne. Two other important themes are introduced in this first half of the play: the quarrel between York and Somerset occurs (positioned earlier than in Shakespeare) thus setting the foundation for the Wars of the Roses; also, Gloucester suggests that all decisions of state should be taken democratically by the Council (an addition by Barton). The second half of the play is mainly concerned with the events leading to Gloucester's death - Eleanor's meeting with the witch and the conjuror is used as a pretext for arresting Gloucester who, before coming to trial, is murdered. The Commons believe Suffolk and the Cardinal (Winchester) to be responsible and by the end of the play these two characters too are dead. Other key events in this play are the

marriage between King Henry and Margaret, and the sending of York to Ireland as Regent. Thus the whole of Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI is compressed into half of Barton's Henry VI and Barton uses the second half of his play to change the focus from battles abroad to factional rivalry at home - it is the civil war which interests him most.

Edward IV depicts the events leading to Edward's succession and some of the problems he encounters during his reign. York, returning from Ireland with an army, persuades King Henry to name him and his successors as heirs to the throne after Henry's death, but York's sons persuade their father to break his oath to Henry (in which he promised to allow Henry to rule peacefully until his death). There then follows a series of battles where first the Lancastrians then the Yorkists gain supremacy. By the interval, York is dead and his eldest son Edward is preparing for his coronation. However, Edward rules badly, quickly alienating both Warwick and Clarence who join forces with the French King Lewis and the Lancastrians. Another series of battles takes place with power being seized first by one side then the other. When the play ends, Edward is still king, while Henry and his son Prince Edward have been killed by Richard of Gloucester, but Richard is already making his own plans to gain power. In this play power is determined by war and violence, whereas in Henry VI the power-seekers manipulate the law through the Council.

Richard III shows a third method by which power is obtained - the insidious use of underhand scheming and deception. The first half of the play shows Richard's path to the throne, both his public concern for the welfare of the country and his private ambitions and methods of realising them (i.e. the murders of Edward, Clarence, Rivers and Hastings, and the imprisonment of the princes in the Tower). However, once he is crowned he has reached the height of his power, and increasingly we become aware of the strength and support commanded by Henry of Richmond. Barton emphasises more than Shakespeare the importance of Richmond's marriage to Princess Elizabeth (a marriage which would unite the Yorkists and Lancastrians) and by the time we reach the Battle of Bosworth Field there is a certain inevitability about the result. Indeed, Richmond kills Richard and seizes the crown for himself.

Thus, by the end of the trilogy, the red and white roses are united and Henry VII looks forward to establishing peace and prosperity.

Each play is a separate entity, but there are also various factors designed to unite the plays into a single experience. On several occasions, all three plays were presented on the same day, allowing spectators to view the overall movement of the action. Within each play there are references to events which occur in the other plays, thus linking the three more closely. Another uniting factor was the set design of the Royal Shakespeare Company production - the dominant image (inspired by the

armoury of Warwick Castle<sup>4</sup>) was of cold, hard steel which became increasingly worn and tarnished as the long years of war took their toll. John Bury, the designer, comments:<sup>5</sup>

Colour drains and drains from the stage until, among the drying patches of scarlet blood, the black night of England settles on the leather costumes of Richard's thugs.

The setting, illuminated by a harsh bright light, was generally considered to be Brechtian in effect. One of the key images within this setting was the Council table which functioned as a control on the disputing factions as well as allowing attention to be focused on them.

Barton thus adapts four plays into three, largely by omitting scenes and passages. The omissions and compressions fall into various categories:

- a) several scenes conflated, cut, compressed (mainly battle scenes);
- b) whole scenes omitted (often those incorporating the common people; sometimes the events of the omitted scene are referred to instead);
- c) lengthy descriptions reduced;
- d) some plot elements omitted (sometimes replaced by others, or needing new dialogue to provide continuity);
- e) many minor characters omitted.

However, Barton also added passages of pastiche Shakespearian verse (preserving the overall tone), and these give more of an indication of Barton's purpose in the



adaptation. Again, they can be divided into various categories:

- a) purely structural additions needed to provide continuity and conceal inconsistencies caused by omitted passages etc. i.e. connecting sections;
- b) references to past and future events within the trilogy, knitting the three plays together more closely;
- c) explicit accounts of plans, alliances, current situation etc.;
- d) more realistic portrayal of character;
- e) new or expanded themes:
  - i. the origins of power, including the democracy of the Council table, the violence of war and the insidiousness of underhand scheming;
  - ii. emphasis on pragmatic solutions instead of divine retribution;
  - iii. cyclical view of history and the consequent futility of life.

Thus some of the additions provide structural clarity while others alter the meaning of the plays. Gillian Day argues that '... the adaptation's reflection of contemporary concerns with the nature of Man's existence and the futility of life, [reveals] an ideological bias within the adaptation directly opposed to the world order affirmed by Shakespeare in his Henry VI plays.'<sup>6</sup> She maintains that Shakespeare's conception of a Providential design,<sup>7</sup> largely portrayed by his symbolic presentation of character, is totally undermined by both the omissions and the additions in the Barton adaptation, and her conclusions are supported by a detailed textual analysis.

This thematic, ideological change is one of the main arguments for considering the trilogy as an adaptation rather than directorial interpretation. In their introduction to the published version of the trilogy neither Peter Hall nor John Barton suggest that an ideological transformation has occurred - they assert that the ideas in their adaptation are in Shakespeare. Rather, they adapted the plays to make them work theatrically, maintaining that the text we have is just one stage in a continuous process of revision.<sup>8</sup>

This emphasis on theatrical viability was also the impetus for Barton's other adaptation, King John, but the rationale behind the production was rather different. Ronald Bryden explains:<sup>9</sup>

... the aim of presenting a full Shakespeare text and the aim of presenting it alive, in a production which will convey its full force and vitality to an audience, can come into conflict, particularly in the early and textually corrupt plays...

... the plays are bound to change as audiences change. Their whole meaning changes with the knowledge, associations and emotions that audiences bring to them.

Most of us, surely, accept that a director must restore lost meaning wherever he can...

Shakespeare clearly assumed, in his abrupt handling of the plot [of King John], knowledge and assumptions in his audience which made it unnecessary for him to spell out certain things in his texts...

Yet curiously, as John Barton pointed out, the exactly contemporary "Troublesome Reign of King John," generally accepted as Shakespeare's source, explores most fully the areas of the story which "King John" leaves cloudy, and vice versa.

He concludes the argument by suggesting that the 'lost meanings' of King John might be found in the sources of that play as Shakespeare will have assumed that his audience would be familiar with those sources. Thus,

Barton's King John incorporates long passages from The Troublesome Reign of King John and about thirty lines from John Bale's King Johan as well as Barton's own dialogue. Shakespeare's version of the story forms the framework of the adaptation, but many of the original passages are compressed, omitted altogether or replaced by their equivalent passage in The Troublesome Reign. As with The Wars of the Roses, King John opens with a funeral and the reading of the will - this time the dead hero is Richard Cordelion, and John is named as his heir. Most of the first half of the play takes place in France. John's right to the English crown is opposed by France who supports Arthur's claim. The armies of John and the French King Philip fight for supremacy but with little result as both sides are equal. Eventually the Citizen of Angiers suggests a marriage treaty between John's neice Blanche and Philip's son Lewis. The terms are agreed, the only dissenting party being Constance, Arthur's mother, who considers herself betrayed by Philip. However, Pandulph enters and because of John's disrespectful behaviour to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he excommunicates John. Thus, Philip too must be opposed to John if he does not wish to risk excommunication. He therefore reluctantly severs his ties with John and joins Pandulph and Constance in declaring war on England. John triumphs, capturing Arthur in the process, and the English leave for their homeland. John leaves Arthur in Hubert's care, suggesting that Arthur would be less of a threat dead.



The second half of the play takes place in England. Hubert is persuaded by Arthur not to kill him but when Arthur tries to escape he breaks his neck. John and Hubert are blamed by the barons for Arthur's death and they decide to support Lewis who, supported by Pandulph, is pressing his claim (through Blanche) to the English throne. Such opposition is too much for John and he makes a show of contrition before Pandulph who reinstates him in the Church. However, Lewis refuses to be ruled by Pandulph and continues to fight. John leaves the battlefield, sick, and resides at Swinstead Abbey where he is poisoned by a monk and dies. Prince Henry is named as John's successor and he is crowned.

This account of the plot could in fact refer either to Shakespeare's King John or to Barton's. The main plot difference between the two is that by the end of Shakespeare's version, peace between France and England is concluded whereas the fighting still continues in Barton's version. The real differences between the two plays concern emphases and characters. In both plays, Philip Faulconbridge, the bastard son of Richard Cordelion, is always at hand to comment on the action. However, Barton also uses these comments to point out the contemporary relevance of the action, as when the Bastard observes (using Barton's words) that men always have been, and still are, governed by expedience:<sup>10</sup>



Since sweet Commodity first tickled Eve  
 'Twas ever thus; and will be, I conceive.  
 Is it not so e'en now, this latter day -  
 Nay, if I err, I pray you all, to say -  
 What, silent quite? The world doth still assent:  
 Methought your wisdom knew well what I meant.

This emphasis on the contemporary relevance of the play extends to other areas, as when the English lords describe the social and economic conditions prevalent in England. Another change of emphasis relates to the scenes with Pandulph. Shakespeare tends to gloss over these passages, including only what is strictly necessary for the plot. Barton, however, provides far more opportunity for John to rail against the power and wealth of the Church, passages of invective taken from the sources which Shakespeare had obviously deliberately omitted. Linked to this is John's greatly extended contrition before Pandulph where the king undergoes great humiliation before being allowed to regain his crown at the hands of Pandulph. Barton also chose to emphasise man's mortality, with references to rotting corpses, and the consequent futility of life, another typical twentieth century theme. Several of the characters undergo a change. John himself is belittled, becoming a king who is at the mercy of his whims and fancies; the English lords, who return to support John towards the end of the play, do so from expedience, not true repentance as in Shakespeare; Hubert, who loses importance in Shakespeare after Arthur's death, here becomes increasingly important as John's confidante, a role originally assumed by the Bastard who is consequently reduced in significance at the end of the play - he does, however, read out John's will (a Bartonian addition). There are thus various ways in which Barton has expanded

the original Shakespeare play: events originally referred to or assumed are actually shown; ideas, missing from Shakespeare (or only slightly referred to) but prominent in The Troublesome Reign are included; totally new ideas are injected into the framework, often using dialogue specially written for the purpose. The overall effect is that the Bastard's search for a viable moral code, crucial in Shakespeare's version, becomes submerged in the more cynical Bartonian emphasis on expedience and futility.

In both his adaptations, Barton has concerned himself with history - actions and events, wars and alliances - aiming to portray an overall view of the historical pattern and to show how futile any action is. Other adapters have different concerns, often theatrical or psychological. Hamlet is the Shakespeare play which is most often subjected to adaptation, and three different collage versions have been created.

Joseph Papp's 'Naked Hamlet' presents most of the major events of Hamlet in approximately the original order, but the aim of the play is not to present a coherent story or well-constructed plot. Rather, the aim is to force spectators to see lines, speeches, scenes, characters and actions in Hamlet in a totally new light; this should lead them to question their preconceived ideas about the play, and so contribute to the creation of new interpretations. Papp assumes, therefore, a high degree of audience familiarity with Hamlet. In his introduction to the play, Papp states that distraction (Hamlet's 'antic disposition') becomes the norm, and thus psychological

questions become irrelevant. He then goes on to relate this to their particular presentation of the play:<sup>11</sup>

The monumental question of the play, "To be or not to be," needs no investigation in our chosen circumstances. Questions of action or thought are meaningless. The end is always in sight - a poisoned sword, a poisoned cup, and in our text a roulette bullet. All that was required of the director and the company was to invent engaging and interesting devices to sugarcoat the agony of a man living out his short span of life. Why the sugarcoating? Because the truth is unbearable - for the audience as well as for the character and the players. And so we devised burlesque skits, song and dance routines, familiar vaudeville tricks guaranteed to hold the attention of any red-blooded man, woman, or child. Tricks to reveal the truth and the keep the spectator from dozing off, escaping into the syrup of familiar recitations. We found tricks and sketches to reveal the truth in easy doses.

Thus, the overall mode of the play is modern, active, spacious, funny. However, even before a word is spoken, the audience undergoes several changes in its reaction to the play's style. On first entering the auditorium the spectators see a stark, prison-like set with ladders, catwalks, sliding doors and grated windows illuminated by harsh white lights. This is the first clue to the type of production (possibly emphasising Claudius's military dictatorship). The second clue is in the programme with comments by the director about the 'shattered focus' of the play and two strange names in the cast list, Rossencraft and Gilderstone. From these the spectator might deduce that not even the text will remain inviolable, possibly at this stage anticipating 'an intellectual fiasco'.<sup>12</sup> Next, the lights dim and there is a loud burst of rock music. (Is it going to be a musical version?) Just as the



audience has registered this, various actions take place on stage: sliding doors are opened and guards push on the Royal Bed on which Gertrude and Claudius are sleeping; more guards push on a coffin (fitted like a bed) in which Hamlet (wearing only underwear, glasses, a beret and handcuffs) is sitting, reading; other guards carry out surveillance activities, playing flashlights on the audience. Each image now present to the audience suggests a different style: modern-dress, symbolic, spoof and such like. At this stage in the text, Papp clarifies his ideas by 'a word of advice' to the director:<sup>13</sup>

This guessing game is essential to your production and will continue with the audience asking themselves about all the devices and situations you offer them. Keep all your choices specific, never vague. If you have two ideas about something, use them both; make both ideas clear, and let the audience choose. Also, never let one idea or device go on too long or it will wear out and the audience will get ahead of you.

Similar changes of style occur from one scene to the next, and often within a scene. For example, the scene<sup>14</sup> where Claudius and Gertrude welcome Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (in this adaptation, Rossencraft and Gilderstone) and ask them to spy on Hamlet proceeds fairly normally, giving the audience something familiar to cling to, until Gertrude suggests that Rossencraft and Gilderstone should be tipped. She does this by pointedly repeating to Claudius 'As fits a king's remembrance', at which point Claudius admits he has no ready cash; the guards too are unable to provide the necessary, so Ramon pays (Ramon being Hamlet disguised as a Spanish janitor). The scene then finishes with Rossencraft and Gilderstone promising obedience, as in Shakespeare.



Fapp here uses Hamlet as the framework, but includes a few jokes both for their own sake and as a way of indicating that Rossencraft and Gilderstone are being bought; at the same time there is the comic irony of Hamlet providing the money for those who are to spy on him. The whole adaptation is full of these techniques which alter the focus. That focus consequently shifts between an interest in the characters, in Hamlet, in this production of Hamlet, visual and verbal jokes, contemporary comments and the plot. In fact, as in most of these collages, the plot of the original play remains reasonably intact (though Hamlet's father meets his death through lightning not poison). What is more surprising is that, despite the radically altered overall impression, 93.7% of the text is taken from Hamlet - the jokes, additions and altered viewpoints are all created with a minimum of new dialogue and with maximum use of stage business, visual humour, and altered contexts for speeches and scenes (for example, famous soliloquies occur in different contexts with 'star' treatment; the content of the speech is then less important than the fact that a speech is being delivered - the occasion is transformed from a private to a public occasion.) The one more-or-less stable feature of the play is the way in which Hamlet controls all events - he is searching for a way to prove Claudius's guilt, but he does so with more authority and panache than Shakespeare's Hamlet. Thus, his 'antic disposition' provides a rationale for the continually shattered focus.

The second Hamlet collage, Baker's Hamlet ESP, also makes extensive use of theatrical effects. The setting consists of a large ramp, a level platform and a fairground booth with cut-outs of the King, Queen, Polonius and Laertes; there are also two graffiti boards on which the characters write and draw during the play. A rock band provides music, two Mike girls distribute the microphones and a Prop girl distributes the properties. Throughout the play attention is drawn to the devices of theatrical production, with token costume changes, and the distribution and collection of properties taking place in full view of the audience. The play begins with the actors playing with a ball (designed to represent a head) and doing warm-up exercises. The three Hamlets, on seeing that all is ready, signal to the rock band and begin the first speech, 'O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt' punctuated at first by loud musical chords; the different Hamlets take different parts of the speech. Thus the action of the play is set within what amounts to a rehearsal framework, and the atmosphere throughout the play is not unlike the casualness of a relaxed rehearsal. However, despite the overt concern with the play as a play, Baker's main interest is in Hamlet's mind and his view of events. Paul Baker explains:<sup>15</sup>

The main action of the play happens inside Hamlet's mind ... I decided that this adaptation would play out the events as Shakespeare developed them and as Hamlet lives them - through the mind and imagination and actions of Hamlet. In order to accomplish this we cast three men as Hamlet; each of these three Hamlets is a complete Hamlet...

...  
 ... Hamlet re-enacts the bits and pieces of the scenes which have galled him most, or have dug deeply into his memory. While doing this, usually one of the characters remains a Hamlet while the other two take the character of the King or the Queen, or Ophelia, Laertes, or Polonius, and will say the King's lines (or Polonius' lines, or Ophelia's) as Hamlet, with his marvellous sensitivity and insight into human character, felt and saw them when the line had happened in its original sequence.

Thus one of the main variants in this adaptation is the redistribution of lines - many lines originally spoken by other characters are now spoken by one of the Hamlets impersonating the original character. One example is Baker's Scene 9 (pp.72-76) which is equivalent to Shakespeare's II,ii, 170-219, where Polonius meets Hamlet who is reading. Polonius opens the conversation but thereafter, all his remarks addressed to Hamlet are spoken by Hamlet 3 who has acquired Polonius' head cloth from the Prop girl. Hamlet 3 (as Polonius) speaks alternately to Hamlets 1 and 2 (who during the scene acquire books from the Prop girl). Polonius himself speaks those lines which are 'aside' in the original text and not addressed to Hamlet (for, presumably, Hamlet did not hear them and so could not recreate them in his mind), and he also voices his own farewell to finish the scene, while the Hamlets return their props to the Prop girl. The text

itself throughout the play is very close to the original - there is much repetition, but otherwise the sequence of events and the language itself is more or less invariant. There are some omissions, notably Fortinbras and all events after Hamlet's death. However, there are no additions of language, character (other than two more Hamlets) or plot; the element added by Baker is a closer examination of Hamlet's mind, and the technique used seems entirely appropriate.

The same cannot be said for Marowitz's collage Hamlet which also purports to be an examination of Hamlet's state of mind. Marowitz writes:<sup>16</sup>

Hamlet<sup>17</sup> takes place in Hamlet. We see sights because they are reflected through Hamlet's sensibility.

This is similar to Baker's ideas, but Marowitz seems actually to work against his own stated aim. The framework for the adaptation is Hamlet's speech beginning: 'How all occasions do inform against me, And spur my dull revenge.' (IV 4) Marowitz then sets out to show how Hamlet uses any excuse he can find in order to avoid what he knows to be his duty, that duty being to kill Claudius. The Ghost and Fortinbras both strongly urge Hamlet to avenge his father's death, but to little avail. This main theme of Hamlet's essential weakness is established towards the beginning of the play and, using the collage technique of rearranged scenes and interpolated speeches, is re-stated in various ways until the end of the play when Hamlet stabs (ineffectually) the other characters who continue



mocking him even after they have fallen to the ground. Thus, Hamlet is portrayed as weak, ineffectual and the subject of derision - would this be so if we were really seeing the action from Hamlet's point of view or seeing into Hamlet's mind? It might if Hamlet were suffering from a persecution complex, but Marowitz seems to be suggesting that Hamlet really is deserving of scorn. This is a detached, external view of Hamlet's actions, and events are not 'reflected through Hamlet's sensibility'. Marowitz, writing of this experiment to portray the psychological state of his protagonist, posed the following question:<sup>18</sup>

Is it not possible to use the theatre to reflect states of mind more accurately - not simply by removing settings but by implementing the space-of-the-stage so that its visual elements convey psychic moods, not only 'period' environment and physical locations?

He puts this idea into practice by, for example, having Rosencrantz and Guildenstern joined to one another by a rope which is manipulated by Hamlet - a visual symbol of the relationships between the three characters. It is theatrically effective, but such attempts to show Hamlet's attitude are far less frequent than those indicating the attitude of others (including Marowitz) to Hamlet. Baker is much more consistent in his portrayal of Hamlet's psychic state. Marowitz also stated that he wanted to do away with narrative sequence,<sup>19</sup> and admits that in order to do this he has to rely on an audience being familiar with the original play;<sup>20</sup> certainly, given

familiarity with Shakespeare's Hamlet it is possible to follow Marowitz's version. However, the problem is that the collage technique presents several aspects almost simultaneously, and once these are grasped there is little to hold our interest - we already know what happens in Hamlet so we are not interested in character development or the resolution of the action. Instead we look for an interpretation, but this is obvious after the first few scenes, and little is added. The Marowitz Hamlet therefore does have flaws both of structure and of contradict aims; however, it was the first collage of its kind to emerge, and it raises some interesting questions about the use of narrative and the visual representation of psychic states.

Marowitz has followed this first collage adaptation of a Shakespeare play with several others<sup>21</sup>, each of which raises interesting issues. The second adaptation was of Macbeth, and this follows the original sequence of events far more closely than the Hamlet collage (especially in the second half) thus allowing more narrative development throughout the play. Marowitz's aim is to present an interpretation of Macbeth in which all the action is seen to be under the complete control of the witches led by Lady Macbeth. This is established right at the beginning when the witches surround an effigy of Macbeth, and Lady Macbeth intones 'I'll drain him dry as hay ...', obviously a statement about the witches' intentions concerning Macbeth. From that moment we know that Macbeth

is jinxed. The witches appear at all key points in the action, often taking over various roles themselves (e.g. the guests at the banquet), indicating their total control. However, Marowitz falls into the same trap as he did with Hamlet - that of a logical contradiction between the professed viewpoint and the actual interpretation:

1. The professed viewpoint is Macbeth's sensibility:<sup>22</sup>

... what we see on stage is only a reflection of what Macbeth sees, and so all questions of reality have to be referred back to the psychotic protagonist through whose distorted vision we view the play.

2. The actual interpretation, of the witches' total control, is one of which Macbeth himself is supposed to be unaware:<sup>23</sup>

He constantly turns to his wife for reassurance and absolution. He is too simple, too Christian, to suspect her complicity in that design, too unimaginative to realize he has been appropriated for devil's work.

If Macbeth is unaware of the witches, and yet we see the action through his eyes, how is it that we are aware of the witches? Obviously our view of events is more external than Marowitz suggests in his introduction. There are moments, however, when we do see into Macbeth's mind, such as his 'prophetic vision',<sup>24</sup> near the beginning of the play (a scene telescoping all the major events of Macbeth's life) and the visual representation of his increasing paranoia (a circle of characters surround

Macbeth, each delivering warnings or threats, describing his defeats and verbalising his doubts). In both these instances, the collage technique is used with great effect, bringing together in rapid succession key events or speeches, each lasting just long enough to contribute significantly to the overall impression. However, despite these glimpses of Macbeth's mind, we have little interest in Macbeth as a character because he has no choice - we know that he is the victim of the witches and must do as they wish: any internal struggle becomes irrelevant. Thus, as in Marowitz's Hamlet, the protagonist is reduced in stature.

An Othello was Marowitz's next adaptation, but this used a very different technique - for the first time, Marowitz included non-Shakespearian dialogue (44.4% of the text being written by Marowitz). The adaptations of Hamlet and Macbeth aimed to present serious interpretations of the Shakespeare plays; An Othello instead uses the Shakespeare play to express new ideas about race. Marowitz explains:<sup>25</sup>

It was my belief that there was no great relevance in reviving Othello today without accomodating the black revolutionary spirit irrationally lodged in an audience's expectations that made me want to tackle it; and by tackling it, I mean bypassing Shakespeare's original intentions and extracting only what I needed to achieve my own purposes.

Marowitz was disturbed by the fact that Othello is a black man in a white society, conforming to the norms of that society. He felt that this issue of race was of



key interest to a modern audience, and set out to Othello's moral position. In the adaptation, Iago is black too, and he becomes a choric figure, providing commentary on Othello's actions and the attitude of whites to blacks; he is the revolutionary black (Malcolm X's 'field nigger') while Othello is the conformist black (Malcolm X's 'house nigger').<sup>26</sup> Basically, Iago tries to convince Othello that the whites just use him for their own purposes (Othello is, after all, a very good general), and that once his usefulness is ended they will dispense with him. Othello's marriage to Desdemona is outwardly accepted while the rulers need Othello to help fight the Turks, but it counts heavily against him, and finally Lodovico (helped by the Duke and Cassio) is forced to kill Othello, having failed in his attempt to persuade Othello to kill himself. The outline of the political parts of Shakespeare's plot is preserved, and there are several interpolations designed to widen this political theme: Iago's revolutionary comments; the Duke's promotion of Cassio while instilling him with racial prejudice against Othello; Desdemona's explanation of her sexual attraction to the black Othello; Brabantio's monologue showing his racial prejudice; the insidious arguments of the Duke, Lodovico and Brabantio suggesting that Othello kill himself. All these interpolations are written by Marowitz in modern colloquial prose. Marowitz has not, however, totally omitted the jealousy theme. Othello's epileptic fit is brought forward, taking place after his marriage to Desdemona has been revealed and outwardly condoned.



Marowitz uses the fit as the excuse for seeing into Othello's mind and we have a collage scene (similar to those in A Macbeth) in which various images follow one another in rapid succession: Desdemona's unfaithfulness, her pleading for Cassio, Iago's insinuations and Othello's questioning of Desdemona are the main images. In fact, we never know how much of this collage is purely Othello's imagination and how much basis in fact his suspicions have - after this collage scene, it is taken for granted by both Othello and Iago that Desdemona is unfaithful, and they plan accordingly, but the audience is never quite sure. The trouble is that this jealousy theme as a whole, central to Shakespeare's play, is really irrelevant to Marowitz's adaptation as he does not have room to explore it as fully as is necessary. Certainly the Desdemona/Othello relationship is an example of the white/black relationship, but we are not shown enough of the real feelings and attitudes of the characters for this relationship to be meaningful to us - we have to rely on Iago's comments. The play as a whole, therefore, takes on the rather didactic tone typical of most politically-motivated plays, with the characters becoming more stereo-typed.

The next adaptation, The Shrew, also incorporated much newly-written dialogue, but in this case it was not interwoven with the Shakespearian dialogue but confined to specific scenes designed to comment on the manipulation of power in personal relationships by showing a modern



Boy/Girl relationship in its various stages. Thus the Shakespearian scenes portraying the Kate/Petruchio story constitute the framework, into which three modern scenes are inserted at various points. The Shakespearian sequence follows the original very closely, the chief omissions being the Induction and passages involving Bianca and her suitors. The other changes seem to be largely a matter of directorial interpretation and presentation: Petruchio, Grumio and Hortensio conspire to tame Kate by using psychological and physical weapons, especially starvation; Petruchio achieves Kate's obedience, but it is made clear that she obeys only under compulsion, not conviction. The ideas are all present in Shakespeare's play and, though there are some textual changes, these do not add any new idea or theme but rather serve to emphasise the Mafia-like conspiracy against Kate. There would be little point in adapting Shakespeare's play if nothing were added; Marowitz himself writes:<sup>27</sup>

... the director-adaptor has got to have something specific to say; that is, he has to shape his material in such a way that the new pattern, despite the existence of familiar source-material, delivers a quite specific and original message, a message which does not merely duplicate the statements of the UR-text.

As this 'specific and original message' does not occur in the sequence of Shakespearian scenes, we must look to the modern scenes for it. The first of these occurs after Petruchio and Baptista have agreed the marriage arrangements,



Kate's acceptance being forced by violence. The Girl and Boy (Bianca and Hortensio in modern clothes) meet and are obviously mutually attracted, though the Boy states his feelings while the Girl for the most part attempts to remain aloof; their conversation takes the form of a mild verbal duel, each scoring occasional points; they leave separately. The next modern scene takes place after the wedding of Kate and Petruchio, and now the Boy and Girl are engaged: the Boy is constantly seeking reassurance from the Girl that everything is alright, while the Girl is unwilling to be branded as his property; the scene ends amicably, though with the Boy still not totally reassured. The final modern scene comes after we have witnessed Petruchio's torturing of Kate, and shows the Girl being possessive while the Boy wants to retain his independence - he becomes so riled that he slaps the Girl (their first and only resort to physical violence) after which she adopts a tone of calm reason and then leaves; nothing is resolved, and the two seem to have little in common. The Boy and Girl make one more appearance, at the end of the play, this time in their wedding attire. The Shakespearian scenes show Kate being totally overpowered by the physical violence of Petruchio; the modern lovers, however, use verbal rather than physical violence, and this allows the two to remain on an equal footing - the Girl can have as much power as the Boy, and she uses it to humiliate him (as Petruchio humiliates Kate). The modern scenes also constitute a comment on our contemporary lack of violent feelings - there are no



great passions and everything is seen as a duel; on the few occasions when either the Boy or the Girl relents and offers something, it is seen as a weakness, a point scored by the other person. Both types of scene offer views of marriage, the Shakespearian scenes showing the man's imposition of his will on his wife who outwardly submits, and the modern scenes cynically showing marriage as the last hope of a couple who want to salvage the remains of their relationship; both examine the manipulation of various types of power in personal relationships, and so by incorporating the modern scenes, Marowitz has broadened the scope of the investigation of the power struggle in marriage.

In Measure for Measure Marowitz returned to a totally Shakespearian text (apart from 13 lines from Two Noble Kinsmen), but he so rearranged and organised it that Shakespeare's ending was completely reversed in the adaptation. The play begins in a very straightforward way - the position of some scenes is altered, but the scenes themselves remain more-or-less intact with only a few omissions. However, the Duke really does vanish leaving Lucio to look after Isabella. Thus there is no feeling of security as we watch the play - we cannot be certain that things will work out alright in the end as we can with Shakespeare's play. Once the situation is established, Marowitz begins to rearrange the lines far more radically, and it is here that again the logic of his ideas seems to fall down. At one point, the Provost tells Isabella that a pardon for Claudio is unlikely. This is



immediately followed by a scene which is presented in such a way as to suggest it is a fantasy of Isabella's i.e. there is a dream-like quality with quick changes of focus and unrealistic actions. In the scene Isabella and Angelo spar playfully; Isabella confesses, repents and is hurled away by her confessor (the Bishop); Claudio leads her to Angelo's bed where Angelo undresses her; Claudio is killed and Isabella discovers his head. The problem is that the rest of the play suggests that the events of the scene really happened, despite the fantasy treatment - there are no machinations to make it look to Angelo as though the events occurred when in fact they have not (i.e. no Mariana sub-plot and no mention of Barnadine or Ragozine). This is a major alteration tipping the play away from comedy towards potential tragedy. Marowitz says:<sup>28</sup>

... for me, it was necessary that a real sin be committed ... Once Isabella is made to yield - for whatever the reason - she becomes human rather than angelic, and her dilemma is one that connects with human conflicts and demands human solutions.

This supports the notion that the events really happened. Why, then, is it given fantasy treatment? By now, Lucio has taken over certain functions of Shakespeare's Duke, and he advises Isabella to air her grievances to the Duke on his return. She takes his advice, but the Duke refuses to believe her, supporting Angelo and sending Isabella to prison. (In Shakespeare's play the Duke begins by apparently supporting Angelo but gradually reveals Angelo's corruption - Marowitz omits this later development.) The last scene too is rather puzzling: we are shown the



Duke, Escalus and Angelo eating, drinking, clowning and mimicking the lower classes - a picture of conviviality. Certainly it shows the rulers sticking together, untroubled by accusations of corruption, but it also suggests a conspiracy between the three of them which is inconsistent with Escalus's attempts to persuade Angelo to be less harsh. In both the original play and the adaptation the Duke absents himself for two reasons, to awaken the law and to test Angelo - Shakespeare is more interested in the testing of Angelo, but Marowitz emphasises the need to awaken the law, despite the hypocrisy of those who administer that law. Marowitz has taken Shakespeare's plot but removed the benevolent deus ex machina in the person of Friar Lodowick/Duke and so all that is threatened actually comes to pass, leaving one at the end with a cynical attitude towards authority.

The final play in this group is Davie's A Play for Prospero which, rather than adapt any one play, incorporates passages from most of Shakespeare's plays in a sort of Shakespearian pageant conjured up by Prospero and Ariel. Therefore the first and last scenes show Prospero and Ariel planning, and commending themselves on, the scenes they have created; in both, Ariel hears Voices which speak of music, harmony, dreams, sleep, love, seasons and such like. Between these two scenes we are shown various Shakespearian strands: Shallow, Silence, Slender and Shakespeare converse in Shallow's orchard; Falstaff is pursued and punished by the Lord Chief Justice; short, self-contained passages from various plays are performed by the players; critics and the anonymous Shakespeare



discuss Shakespeare's purpose in making Prince Hal reject Falstaff at the end of 2 Henry IV. Davie refers to his play as an 'extravaganza'<sup>29</sup> and hopes it communicates 'something of the teeming spontaneity, the astonishing diversity of Shakespeare's worlds'.<sup>30</sup> If this were Davie's only objective then it would be wrong to view this work as a play, a single entity - it would be more in the nature of an entertainment comprising separate passages from Shakespeare's major plays with little connection between them. However, Davie continues:<sup>31</sup>

The play sets out to present the relationship between 'real' and 'imaginary' from both sides of the mirror, as it were - without, however, presuming to account for the nature of that power by virtue of which Shakespeare persuades us that his characters have something more than a stage-life.

The play therefore purports to have a philosophical theme with the elements being arranged in such a way as to illuminate that theme. This may be so up to a point, with certain roles being doubled (Prospero/Shakespeare/Hamlet), different characters controlling different parts of the action (especially Prospero and Shakespeare) and one character (Falstaff) taking on the roles of player, character and spectator. However, the overall impression is one of confusion as there is no clear narrative line - people, players and characters come and go with little point or purpose other than Shakespearian pageant, and though short passages taken on their own seem to be full of significance, their combination lacks meaning. Technically, however, it is the most extreme form of



collage in the group, with some speeches containing lines from three or four different plays, thus linking the similar themes from different plays - the collage of short passages is far more successful in terms of meaning than the play as a whole.

The most obvious feature of this group of plays is the very high proportion of Shakespeare's language which each collage incorporates. Other types of adaptation do use Shakespeare's lines, but not nearly to the same extent as the collages. The presence of the Shakespearian language leads one to ask why it is being used. There are various possible answers, such as the power of the language or the comparative ease of rearranging someone else's words rather than creating one's own. However, the most interesting and likely reason is that Shakespeare's plays, more than most other plays, have a general familiarity. Even people who have not read the plays are likely to have seen them on stage, film or television, or at least will know the story. The adapter can therefore use this familiarity in a number of ways. This will be examined in more detail later in the chapter.

A corollary of the high proportion of Shakespearian language is that major events, protagonists, context and theme are also preserved in the adaptation, though each may undergo alterations or be added to. Thus, Macbeth may experience a personality change but he is still the protagonist who kills Duncan and is consequently killed himself. These stable factors, governed by the language,

are the invariant features, and they form a secure link between the original Shakespeare play and the adaptation.

The next stage is to consider the ways in which the original play is altered for it is the alterations (variants) which allow us to see the adaptations as new plays, not just directorial interpretations. These variants may be considered under the headings of language, plot, character, context and theme.

### Language

We have seen that at least 50% of the text of each of these collage adaptations is Shakespearian, and as there is such a large gap between this percentage and the corresponding figure for other adaptations, it seems reasonable to assume that any adaptation, the text of which comprises about 50% or more Shakespearian language, will be a collage adaptation. However, despite this high figure, there are many ways in which the text of the adaptation may differ from the original text:

- a) lines from the original play may be omitted (process of selection) - this in fact occurs in all the collage adaptations;
- b) the Shakespeare lines used may be presented in a different order e.g. the last few lines of Barton's Henry VI:<sup>32</sup>

MARGARET:	Nay, then this spark will prove a raging fire, If wind and fuel be brought to feed it with: Think therefore on revenge and cease to weep.	2 Henry VI III, i, 302-303
KING:	Come, wife, let's in and learn to govern better: For yet may England curse my wretched reign.	2 Henry VI IV, iv, 3 2 Henry VI IV, ix, 48-49

- c) a line or speech may be given to a different character (redistribution) e.g. in The Marowitz Hamlet the clown coaches Hamlet using the passage beginning 'Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.'<sup>33</sup> originally spoken by Shakespeare's Hamlet in III,ii.
- d) non-Shakespearian additions may be included such as passages from The Troublesome Reign in Barton's King John or newly-written dialogue in Marowitz's Othello or Shrew.

### Plot

Key events of the plot are incorporated into the adaptation because they form the skeleton on which to hang the rest of the play. However, those events can be altered in various ways, and minor events are often omitted altogether. The following alterations to the original plot are possible:

- a) the order of scenes or major passages may be altered, as when the York/Somerset quarrel in The Wars of the Roses is brought forward to emphasise from the start the York/Lancaster conflict, key to the whole cycle (originally II,iv, it now comes after I,ii in Barton's Henry VI);
- b) elements of the plot may be omitted e.g. in Hamlet ESP there is no mention of the war against Norway or of Fortinbras;
- c) the plot may be altered, as in Marowitz's Measure for Measure where Claudio is beheaded, , Isabella sleeps

with Angelo and the Duke provides no restitution or solution at the end. In this case, the subject remains the same but, whereas in Shakespeare these events are narrowly averted, in Marowitz they occur;

- d) there may be additions to the Shakespearian events such as the use of the Council Table in The Wars of the Roses or the incorporation of the modern scenes in Marowitz's The Shrew.

### Characters

Just as the key events of the plot are retained, so the protagonists also remain. Thus Shakespeare's Hamlet remains Hamlet, Prince of Denmark in the adaptations i.e. their status remains the same. On the other hand there are character changes resulting from omission, addition or alteration:

- a) often minor characters are omitted, especially in The Wars of the Roses, but also in every other collage adaptation;
- b) occasionally new characters are introduced; these have various functions:
  1. they are characters referred to by Shakespeare but not shown (e.g. Princess Elizabeth in The Wars of the Roses)
  2. further manifestations of a protagonist (e.g. three Hamlets in Hamlet ESP)
  3. modern characters, sometimes reflecting or paralleling Shakespeare characters (e.g. Girl and Boy in The Shrew)
  4. supernumeraries (e.g. guard in the 'Naked' Hamlet)



- c) the interrelationship of characters may be altered, with some assuming a more dominant role at the expense of others, for example, in Barton's King John Hubert, rather than the Bastard, gradually adopts the position of becoming the King's confidante; similarly, in The Marowitz Hamlet Fortinbras becomes the friend to Hamlet that Marowitz believes Horatio should have been - Horatio is excised altogether;
- d) one character may combine the roles of two or more Shakespearian characters e.g. Marowitz's Clown combines the roles of both Polonius and the gravedigger;
- e) characters may undergo a personal change - they experience the same events as in the original and retain their status, but their viewpoint is altered; thus, in Marowitz's versions, Lady Macbeth becomes one of the witches, Iago is black and Petruchio is a sadist;
- f) finally, specific character traits may be emphasised at the expense of others; there are several reasons for this:
  1. to differentiate between characters (e.g. York's sons in The Wars of the Roses)
  2. to indicate the typicality of the character (e.g. Marowitz's Boy and Girl)
  3. to investigate that character trait (e.g. the weakness of Marowitz's Hamlet)
  4. to use a stereotyped character to examine its effect on the protagonist, there being little interest in the stereotype itself (e.g. the black Iago).

## Context

We have seen that in objective terms the events and characters remain as in the original, and so the Shakespearian context is preserved - references to Shakespearian place-names are retained as is the power structure. However, in addition to this context, two other contexts may be included for some parts of the adaptation:

- a) the psychological world - Baker shows us events as seen through Hamlet's perception; Marowitz shows us Othello's state of mind during his epileptic fit, and Macbeth's increasing paranoia. In these cases the context is psychological - we are no longer viewing objective reality but rather events coloured by the subjective perception of the protagonist;
- b) the modern world - in two of Marowitz's plays we recognise features of the modern world: in An Othello there is the Harlem nigger, with contemporary racial attitudes prevalent; in The Shrew there is a typical boy/girl relationship.

Both of these features are notably different from those which employ the Shakespearian context, and they link the Shakespeare play to the contemporary world (or, in modern jargon, give the adaptations 'contemporary relevance').

## Theme

The theme of the adaptation is perhaps most important in terms of supplying the 'raison d'être' of the adaptation. It is therefore interesting to see what the adapter has taken from Shakespeare and how he has used and altered the Shakespearian theme for his own purposes.

In general there are three types of relationship between the original and the adapted theme:

- a) aspects may be omitted i.e. the focus is narrower.

This can be both advantageous and disadvantageous: the detailed examination of certain aspects can provide greater insight into those aspects of the original; on the other hand, omission may lead to a simplistic analysis which distorts the original by ignoring wider implications, issues and ramifications.

Certainly, Marowitz's examination of Hamlet's character seems to fall into the second category for he sees Hamlet as merely weak; the omission of the war theme in Hamlet ESP provides a clearer focus on Hamlet's state of mind.

- b) new themes may be included, though using something in the original to justify such additions. Thus, Marowitz uses Othello's blackness to justify his examination of racial issues, and Barton uses the recurring cyclical pattern of history to suggest the futility of life;
- c) the third type of thematic relationship is one step removed from the other two for it concerns the play as a play - it takes a detached look at itself. Thus such themes as reality/imagination, subjective perception, role playing as part of life/life as a performance are typical. The play which examines such themes also employs certain related techniques, such as one character acting out another's role, confusion about the nature of a character (fictional,

historical, actor, spectator etc.), references to the play as a play etc.. The 'Naked' Hamlet is the clearest example of this self-regarding theme, but other adaptations employ similar techniques, though to a lesser extent.

These considerations can be seen in terms of variant and invariant features.

#### Invariant

1. Most of the words are Shakespeare's.
2. The protagonists remain the same.
3. Major Shakespearian events are included.
4. The context remains Shakespearian.
5. The Shakespearian theme provides the impetus for the adapter's own ideas.

#### Variant

1. The Shakespearian words are rearranged, with many omissions and sometimes some additions.
2. Characters are omitted, added, combined or changed.
3. Events are added, omitted or altered.
4. New themes or emphases are introduced.

The above analysis indicates the features of the original play which can be altered, and suggests ways in which these alterations can be carried out. Different collages make use of different alterations but, as we have already seen, the key to their similarity is the language. Each collage makes extensive use of the original Shakespearian lines, but also involves widespread use of changed line-order, redistribution, selection and/or additions.



Let us now look more closely at the uses to which this language collage is put. We can distinguish two types of collage, one (type A) which abandons any linear narrative, and one (type B) which preserves linear narrative (though it is usually a changed narrative).

Type A is always used to give a more accurate representation of the state of mind of the protagonist. The events are presented as perceived by the character and the view is therefore totally subjective. We are usually presented with a rapid succession of images referring to various events which the protagonist has related in his own mind. Therefore in his epileptic fit, Othello relates Desdemona's pleading of Cassio's case, Iago's insinuations and his own imagined vision of Desdemona's unfaithfulness - images of these and other similar events are jumbled in Othello's mind and they are presented to us in this jumbled, disorganised fashion. Other instances are Macbeth's prophetic vision and, less obviously, flashbacks in Hamlet ESP as Hamlet remembers events. However, certain problems arise with this use of collage, mainly because we have no way of knowing to what extent the events depicted have an objective reality. For example, we do not know whether or not the events shown in Isabella's fantasy really occur. Similarly, in A Play for Prospero, Ariel hears Voices but again we are uncertain of their status: does Prospero hear them as well as Ariel? does Prospero create them? (In fact, an extension of this concerns the extent to which other parts of the play are 'conjured up' - are the various passages just visions created by Prospero, Ariel or Shakespeare?) A third

example is Desdemona's unfaithfulness - through Othello's mind we see her being gang-banged, but the rest of the play holds no confirmation of her unfaithfulness; however, this fantasy image is very powerful and, true or not, colours the spectator's image of Desdemona. Though this does give an insight into Othello's mind, we cannot judge Othello for we do not know whether his suspicions are justified or not.

Collage technique B maintains a linear narrative, but it is a narrative which differs from the original. There are several motives and techniques for such alterations:

a) compression and clarification of a series of events, providing a coherent, distanced, objective view of those events e.g. Barton's The Wars of the Roses.

Here, omission is much used, with a suggestion of key events instead of detailed exposition; similar events are collated, involving transposition of scenes/passages and the addition of connecting passages; the basic story remains the same.

b) dissatisfaction with Shakespeare's plot leads to alterations in the actual story. Thus in Marowitz's Measure for Measure the text is so manipulated that the ending is totally reversed - the Duke does not make everything alright and injustice prevails; in An Othello, Iago urges Othello not to commit suicide and in the end Lodovico has to murder Othello. In the first case Marowitz uses Shakespeare's text; in the second case, he writes his own dialogue.

- c) interest in the play as a play can lead to famous passages being presented as party pieces and thus foregrounded, as in Papp's 'Naked' Hamlet and The Marowitz Hamlet where the Clown coaches Hamlet in his speech 'Rightly to be great Is not to stir without great argument',<sup>34</sup> This usually involves a famous speech being presented out of context.
- d) new themes often need new material to express them, as in Marowitz's Othello and Shrew. This material is interspersed with the Shakespearian dialogue, altering or adding to the original narrative line.
- e) by altering the sequence of events and passages an adapter can manipulate the irony; in Hamlet ESP there is an ironic counterpoint between Claudius and Laertes planning Hamlet's death on the one hand, and on the other Polonius recounting his 'precepts'.<sup>35</sup> This kind of counterpoint is fairly common, often revealing the distance between aims and achievements.

The collage technique can therefore be used for a variety of purposes, and this group of plays is perhaps the most diverse of the adaptation categories, despite each collage's textual resemblance to the original.

We are now in a position to return to this idea of the familiarity of the original Shakespeare plays and the uses to which this familiarity can be put. One can discern four distinct uses:

1. Where the original Shakespeare play is known, the adaptation can function as a meaningful critical commentary upon that play. Different collages fulfill this function in varying degrees and with different

objects: they may examine character (Hamlet ESP), or the progress of history (Barton's adaptations), or they may consciously set out to examine 'the play' ('Naked' Hamlet). The 'Naked' Hamlet forces us to reconsider our preconceived interpretations, though offers no definitive meanings. In contrast to this, The Marowitz Hamlet forces one narrow interpretation of Hamlet on its audience - everything is presented in such a way as to stress Hamlet's weakness, dismissing his inner conflict as moral cowardice. Even those plays which contain new material often point out the topicality or contemporary relevance of Shakespeare's themes, thus giving us a new way into the original. Another way in which the adaptation can give insight into the original is through its faults - these can serve to illuminate the subtlety and generally superior quality of the original. Smallwood has commented that Barton's King John did at least have that much justification!<sup>36</sup> Robert Hapgood has commented on the way modern adaptations can operate as interpretation:<sup>37</sup>

There is a sense in which a modern adaptation can be regarded as a form of critical interpretation of the original, its emphases and omissions, successes and failures serving to sharpen our awareness of the original and its modern appeal.

As interpretation is meaningful only if the object of that interpretation is known, then the adaptations can function in this way only where the spectator is familiar with the original Shakespeare play.



2. The original Shakespeare play can function as the objective reality with which we contrast the subjective reality portrayed in the adaptations where collage technique A is employed. Marowitz admits that 'one of the prerequisites for Shakespearian collage is the audience's general familiarity with the play.'<sup>38</sup>

This type of collage, which abandons linear narrative, would be virtually impossible to sort out unless one already knew what events occurred and in what order they happened. Thus, knowing Othello, we realise that Othello is associating disconnected events and can compare his view of reality with the more objective view we receive from Shakespeare. On the other hand, if the adaptation is to be viewed without reference to Shakespeare's play, then no judgement of Othello can take place because we do not know what that objective reality is. (i.e. we do not know whether Desdemona is faithful or not; see above for further comments.)

A similar use of Shakespearian familiarity occurs in Hamlet ESP where, in order to follow the narrative line we need first to know it - the interest centres on Hamlet's view of events.

3. By knowing in advance the events which happen and the fate of the protagonists the audience experiences a sense of inevitability. This is particularly noticeable in Marowitz's A Macbeth where Macbeth's inner conflict becomes irrelevant - we know what will happen to him from the beginning, and this knowledge is reinforced by the way the witches totally control Macbeth's every

action. A corollary of this is that Macbeth ceases to be interesting as a character, and our attention focuses instead on demonic forces. Barton uses the notion of inevitability in a slightly different, and more positive, way. The Wars of the Roses charts the rise and fall of a series of politicians and Barton uses this pattern to demonstrate the inevitability of the downfall of any successful person as exemplified by the image of the Wheel of Fortune. In the same way one feels the inevitability of the downfall of the House of Lancaster and the expiation of the curse. In this, Barton can rely not only on familiarity with the Shakespeare plays but also with the historical events themselves.

4. An adapter can use the audience's assumptions about the Shakespeare play by working against their expectations. In Measure for Measure, at first Marowitz remains very close to the original play, lulling the audience into a false sense of security for towards the end he changes the plot - Claudio really is beheaded. The effect of this is far more shocking if we are familiar with the original for we are then expecting his reprieve. However, this is a technique which is only effective once in any play - after that, the audience no longer trusts the adapter. In this case the expectations concern the plot. However, an adaptation can also work against expectations of technique and presentation. Fapp's 'Naked' Hamlet would be meaningless to a spectator with no prior knowledge of Hamlet: the

premise for the adaptation is that Hamlet is so familiar as to be stale, and the task of the adaptation is to force the spectator to look again at the original.

The techniques used depend on the fact that spectators have preconceived notions, traditional ideas and expectations.

We can see that most of these collage adaptations gain at least some of their meaning from a comparison with the original play. However, the degree of dependence on the original varies with each adaptation. For example, any play which tells a coherent story (collage type B) can be understood without reference to its sources (though the level of understanding may be lower). More specifically, Barton's plays are written to replace the original. Passages from the sources of Shakespeare's King John were included to fill in the gaps which a modern audience, unfamiliar with those sources, would discover. Therefore, ostensibly the overall aim was clarity. Hence Barton assumed no knowledge of the original, and his King John stands or falls on its own qualities without reference to Shakespeare's play. Similarly, The Wars of the Roses presents certain ideas (both Shakespeare's and Barton's) using Shakespeare's plays as a basis but not relying on an audience's knowledge of those plays - the cycle forms a coherent, unified whole (though as we have seen, understanding may be deepened by a knowledge of Shakespeare and of history).

Ultimately, each of these collage adaptations should be judged on their own merits. These merits may involve references to the original Shakespeare play, but the adaptation must add something new to our understanding of that play or of life. Given that Shakespeare is accepted by many as the greatest dramatist ever, it is unfair to reject the Shakespeare adaptations because they are not as good as Shakespeare, especially as no other modern play is expected to reach Shakespeare's standard.



## Chapter 1: Summary

In this chapter we have considered ten plays which are all written using the collage technique. The most noticeable factor relating these plays is the very high proportion of Shakespearian language which each text includes; this language, however, is re-ordered, redistributed and subject to selection and addition. The collage adaptations exemplify invariant and variant features of plot, character, context and theme as well as of language, though to some extent these are governed by the extensive use of Shakespeare's language. The collage technique has two main purposes, type A presenting a protagonist's stream-of-consciousness and type B presenting a narrative sequence, which narrative can differ from the original in various respects. The widespread use of Shakespeare's language suggests that adapters in this category are making use of the spectator's familiarity with the original Shakespeare plays, and this can be done in four ways:

1. the original is the object of literary interpretation;
2. the original provides the audience with an objective view of events;
3. knowledge of the original creates a sense of inevitability;
4. the adapter can work against preconceived assumptions.

Despite these uses of prior knowledge, some adaptations can be largely understood with no reference to the original play. Ultimately all the adaptations should be judged by what they contribute to our understanding of life or of the original Shakespeare play, not by their worth as compared with the quality of the original Shakespeare play.

Notes

1. All dates of plays refer to the date of their first performance if this is known. Otherwise they refer to date of publication.
2. In any line-count there is a certain degree of subjectivity. Thus, despite the availability of figures for some of the adaptations, I have conducted my own line-count, ensuring at least a certain degree of consistency so that comparison of figures will be more meaningful. In general I have followed these principles:
  - a) figures refer to the number of lines as set out in the adaptation;
  - b) words inserted by the adapter of less than one line have been counted as a full line if they are particularly significant, and otherwise ignored;
  - c) no distinction is made between verse and prose lines;
  - d) all references to Shakespeare's plays are to the Alexander text.

Points to remember:

- a) in Hamlet ESP, a single Shakespearian line may be divided between several characters; this tends to increase the line-count considerably;
  - b) in the 'Naked' Hamlet, verse is set out as prose and so each line tends to be longer than in Shakespeare, thus reducing the line-count.
3. See Peter Hall and John Barton, The Wars of the Roses (BBC, London, 1970.)  
John Barton, 'The making of the adaptation' p.xxi
  4. Peter Hall, 'Introduction' p.xi, in Hall and Barton
  5. See John Bury's comments on the set in Hall and Barton.



6. Gillian Day, The Hall-Barton "Wars of the Roses": A Textual and Critical Study (M.A.thesis, University of Birmingham (Shakespeare Institute), September 1976.) p.66
7. There has lately been some controversy over whether or not Shakespeare's Henry VI plays do embody a Providential design. However, this is not the place to debate the question and I have assumed the conventional interpretation of the belief in Providence. For a full discussion of the issue see David Riggs, Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and its Literary Tradition (Harvard University Press, 1972.)
8. 'Introduction' and 'The making of the adaptation' in Hall and Barton
9. Ronald Bryden, 'Lost properties' (Sunday Times, 7 April 1974.)
10. John Barton King John (1974 Prompt Book held at The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon.) p.33
11. Joseph Papp, 'Introduction' in William Shakespeare's 'Naked' Hamlet: A Production Handbook (Collier-MacMillan, London, 1969.) pp.25-26
12. For more precise details of this guessing game and the various styles of presentation suggested see the text of the 'Naked' Hamlet pp.39-42.
13. Papp p.42
14. Scene XII
15. Paul Baker, 'Director's Notes' in Hamlet ESP: An Adaptation by Paul Baker of William Shakespeare's Hamlet (Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York, 1971.) pp.5-6

16. Charles Marowitz, 'Introduction' in The Marowitz Hamlet (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968.) p.37
17. Refers to Marowitz's collage version.
18. Marowitz pp.35-36
19. See Marowitz pp.10,13
20. See Marowitz p.15
21. By October 1980 there were five others, Variations on The Merchant of Venice being the only one unpublished.
22. Charles Marowitz, 'Introduction' in A Macbeth (Calder and Boyars, London, 1971.) p.15
23. Marowitz, 'Introduction' in A Macbeth p.11
24. For Marowitz's explanation of this 'prophetic vision' see 'Introduction' in A Macbeth p.12
25. Marowitz, in 'Production Casebook No.8: Charles Marowitz directs An Othello', compiled by John Burgess (Theatre Quarterly, vol.II, no.8, October-December 1972, pp.68-81.) p.74
26. For an explanation of these terms 'field nigger' and 'house nigger' see Marowitz in Burgess's 'Production Casebook' p.70.
27. Charles Marowitz, 'Introduction' in The Shrew (Calder and Boyars, London, 1975.) p.22
28. Charles Marowitz, 'Measures taken: Playtext introduction' (Plays and Players, June 1975, pp.38-39) p.38
29. Ian Davie, A Play for Prospero: A Shakespearean Extravaganza (Collins, London, 1966.)
30. Davie, 'Preface' p.7
31. Davie, 'Preface' p.7
32. Hall and Barton p.79



33. The Marowitz Hamlet p.64

34. The Marowitz Hamlet p.64; Hamlet IV iv

35. Hamlet ESP IV i

36. 'It is above all because the Barton production of King John sends one back to the original with a refreshed awareness and respect that it is worthy of consideration.'

R.L.Smallwood, 'Shakespeare unbalanced: The Royal Shakespeare Company's King John, 1974-5'

(Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Heidelberg), 1976, pp.79-99.)

p.79

37. Robert Hapgood, 'West Side Story and the modern appeal of Romeo and Juliet' (Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Heidelberg), 1972, pp.99-112) p.99

Similar comments have been made specifically about the adaptations of Barton and Marowitz:

a) Barbara Hodgdon

The Wars of the Roses 'represents a form of scholarly and critical commentary on the early history plays.'

'The Wars of the Roses: Scholarship speaks on the stage' (Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Heidelberg), 1972, pp.170-184) p.183

b) Catherine Itzen

'The Marowitz adaptations are, in effect, dramatised interpretive essays (lit crit in dramatic action) in the form of expressionist collages which function as critical light-shedders on the original Shakespeare and original, theatrical, entertaining plays in their own right.'

'Measure for Measure: Open Space' (Plays and Players, July 1975, pp.26-27) p.26

38. Marowitz, 'Introduction' in The Marowitz Hamlet p.15

## CHAPTER 2: CULTURAL TRANSPOSITIONS

John Bowen Heil Caesar! (1974)

Howard Brenton Measure for Measure (1972)

David Edgar Dick Deterred (1974)

Barbara Garson MacBird! (pub. 1966)

Jeremy Geidt and Jonathan Marks Samlet (pub. 1974)

John Osborne A Place Calling Itself Rome (pub. 1973)

The above six plays are grouped together because they all take a Shakespeare play with a political subject and transpose various aspects of the play so that the adaptation depicts another culture, often the world we live in.

The subject of the adaptation remains political. The basic technique therefore is to put the Shakespeare play into a different context and to omit most of the personal detail which individualises the characters. Three of these plays form a distinct group which in this thesis are termed 'simulations'. The plays are MacBird!, Dick Deterred and Samlet; they not only simulate a Shakespeare play, they also bear a close resemblance to actual events in modern politics. The other three plays are less specific in their political application.

John Bowen's Heil Caesar! moves Shakespeare's Julius Caesar from Rome to an imaginary country, and the play opens in a gaming room. All the major characters are present on stage but they are in several different groups. The group formations change as people come and go, and the attention of the audience is drawn first to one group and



then another. We are therefore privy to various conversations, and by the end of the opening scene we know that Cassius is trying to involve Brutus in a plot against Caesar who has just refused the title of Emperor. The play proceeds much as Shakespeare's does, though the language is modern and events are given a modern context. Thus the conspirators meet at Brutus's house to finalise their plans for the assassination. Cassius presents Brutus with a photo-copy of a document containing plans for Caesar to become hereditary Emperor - he alleges this proves Caesar's ambition. In fact, though the document is genuine in that such plans were drawn up, Caesar's initials showing he is aware of the plan are forged. Bowen's Cassius, unlike Shakespeare's, obviously feels the need to present Brutus with concrete evidence. Another alteration of the original plot is that Messala, originally a minor character in the war scenes, is now the head of the army, and is one of the conspirators. This change of role for Messala has far-reaching implications later in the play. The plan is to kill Caesar during a committee meeting, after which the conspirators will broadcast their reasons to the nation via television, with large screens set up in public places. The assassination succeeds but, as in Shakespeare, Brutus the idealist makes the mistake of allowing Antony to speak to the people after giving his own speech. Antony's speech becomes increasingly subversive until the conspirators decide to cut him off. However, Antony has infiltrated his soldiers into the broadcasting

studio, and they are now in control - the conspirators are forced to flee. The rest of the adaptation is less close to the Shakespeare original. Both plays depict the war situation, but Bowen is concerned to show the realities of modern war. In Shakespeare's play, the statesmen can also command armies, but few modern politicians can do this - they leave the fighting to professional soldiers. For this reason Brutus and Cassius need Messala to do their fighting, and consequently Messala is in control. Bowen calls this 'the civilianisation of the politics'.<sup>1</sup> The need for money in war is emphasised - Messala stresses the need to pay the soldiers, and both he and Cassius take it for granted that they use any money they can lay their hands on, legally or illegally. The triumvirs in Rome want all eye-witnesses of Caesar's death to be killed so that they can create a heroic legend about the assassination and carry out policies in Caesar's name. Decius is tortured and reveals all he knows, speaking bitterly about the equal broadcasting time allocated to Antony. Cassius tries to make Brutus face the reality of their situation, pointing out Brutus's mistakes and spelling out what would happen even if they did win:

CASSIUS: If we win, we go back in triumph, supported by the Army. We start again. Messala comes into the Cabinet - well, he'd have to, wouldn't he? - probably as Minister of Defence, unless you think he'd make a good President. After all, that's how Caesar got there - victorious general supporting the legitimate government against Pompey.

BRUTUS: Messala is a good man and an old friend.

CASSIUS: So was Caesar.

BRUTUS: That will do.



CASSIUS: Then there's no Assembly any more. No legally elected democratic government, just a rump of Caesar's supporters. Half our people are dead already, shot without trial; the rest in prison - very few here.

BRUTUS: Elections.

CASSIUS: Yes, we shan't be able to hold them at once. There'll be a lot of killing to do first.

BRUTUS: There'll be no killing.

CASSIUS: Not even you, Mark, could stop the killing; there are scores to be paid. But when it's done, elections might seem a little sick.  
(p.52)

The emphasis is on the political realities of war rather than the physical realities of pain and death. Bowen is trying to explore the implications of revolution, taking the argument further than Shakespeare by showing that real power lies with the military forces, and civilian politicians cannot govern without such power. Bowen's Cassius suggests to Brutus that they take to the mountains and bide their time, his aim being gradually to build up popular support, but Brutus cannot assimilate such an idea and, when he realises they are losing, he persuades Messala to kill him. Messala, being a professional soldier, knows that whoever wins will find a use for him. The end of the play, as in Shakespeare, shows Antony and Octavius in command having tilted the balance in their favour by blackmailing Labienus (a non-Shakespearian character) to fight on their side. However, we also see Cassius, Portia and others taking to the mountains, thus suggesting that perhaps eventually the Republican ideal will become a reality, if Cassius can build up popular support. We are left with an ambivalent

attitude, for while the guerillas suggest hope for the future, they also indicate the continuous process of the rise and fall of governments, accompanied by violence.

Although Bowen is using Shakespeare's plot and characters, he states that his interest is in the modern world:<sup>2</sup>

The history to which I have tried to be true in this play is the history of our own time. My Brutus is a twentieth-century character, and his problems, even though I have lifted them from Julius Caesar are twentieth-century problems.

He admits that though his location is an imaginary country, many people identified it as Britain:<sup>3</sup>

... although it is imaginary and made up of bits, it still seems to have been recognisably close enough to home for many of the journalists who watched Heil, Caesar and wrote about it to have identified it as Britain and even (of all ridiculous comparisons) to suggest that Brutus was meant to be Mr Heath.

This identification of the stage location as that of the audience's country is quite a common feature of these transposed adaptations. Ostensibly, Osborne's A Place Calling Itself Rome is set in Rome, Corioli and Antium, but the whole political tone is very reminiscent of modern Britain. Most of the play is a very close paraphrase of Shakespeare's Coriolanus. This political tone is established in Scene 2 (Shakespeare's II) where the citizens are complaining about Caius Marcius (later named Coriolanus). Menenius, one of the most respected



politicians, tries to calm the crowd and diverts the subject from Caius Marcius to the future of Rome. The whole situation is taken straight from any modern political demonstration with all the current cliches being inserted. The following passage is a short example:

MENENIUS: Rome must be a city worth saving for. Not in the next month. But the years to come.  
 VOICE: What about the meantime!  
 MENENIUS: It will be as mean and ready as you choose to make it.  
 1ST CITIZEN: Easy laugh!  
 MENENIUS: We must have faith, confidence.  
 VOICE: You're all right, mate. What about today?  
 MENENIUS: And I say, what of tomorrow? Be patient -  
 1ST CITIZEN: While you spout?  
 MENENIUS: And what else do you do, my good friend.  
 VOICE: Yes, what does he do!  
 (Act I Scene 2 p.18)

Menenius could well be James Callaghan asking the trade unionists to accept a lower wage settlement so that the economy of the country will improve. The parallels in this adaptation are not actually that specific, but the general tone is easily recognisable by a modern British audience, and we feel that the issues which Osborne raises in this play are relevant to our own lives.

The basic plot is the same as Shakespeare's. Caius Marcius shows great courage and skill in fighting the Volscians, and as a reward he is named Coriolanus (after the Volscian city, Corioli). The senators propose Coriolanus for consul but by tradition he also needs a majority of the votes of the ordinary people. Much against his will, Coriolanus asks for these votes, and receives them, but the tribunes then incite the people to revoke their decision,

arguing that Coriolanus cares nothing for them. Coriolanus, after giving vent to his true opinion of the people, is banished. He seeks out Aufidius, the Volscian leader, and proposes that they join forces against Rome. Aufidius agrees, and they reach the outskirts of Rome meeting little opposition. The Roman people realise that they have brought this upon themselves, and appeals to Coriolanus have no effect. However, eventually Coriolanus's mother, wife and son go to him and Volumnia (his mother) makes him relent by her assertion that for Coriolanus to ravage Rome would be to destroy everything he had won for himself, including fame and a place in history. Coriolanus makes peace with Rome and returns to Aufidius with the terms but Aufidius feels betrayed and he and his men kill Coriolanus.

There are very few omissions from Shakespeare's plot, but Osborne does add a few interesting passages. The most obvious addition is Osborne's first scene which depicts Coriolanus and his wife, Virgilia, at night in their bedroom. Coriolanus is restless and writes his spoken thoughts into his diary. He appears to be on the verge of some kind of breakdown, feeling himself to be alone and over-burdened. Here are his first few thoughts:

Concentration difficult. More so today. Woke suddenly. Foot almost through the sheet. Today more difficult ... sure to. Senate ... people ... crowds. Tribunes and all of that! No chance of waking her again. ... A few more hours. ... And years, not years. Surely. Things in flight on first waking. ... Flying blind. Blind flying. No pilot beside. Just as well. ... Decisions impossible. But forced ones. Elephants of decisions. Over-weighted. Jostled. ... Crowds. ... Hold back. ... But how?  
(Act I Scene 1 p.12)



It is rather difficult to pick up all the references in this scene and to relate them to the following action. In this scene we are shown a man who is alone and set apart, and whose physical and mental condition appears to be deteriorating. The rest of the play shows Coriolanus from an external point of view (as does Shakespeare's play) - never again do we see this inner man. It is therefore difficult to see the purpose of such a scene unless it is to provide a rationale for Coriolanus's aloofness in the rest of the play. Ruby Cohn also mentions this scene but she does not attempt to give a reason for its inclusion beyond saying that it 'exposes a typical Osborne protagonist - able, neurotic, self-absorbed.'<sup>4</sup> She admits, however, that we do not see this view again in the play.

The other major addition occurs just before Aufidius and his men kill Coriolanus and after they have called him a traitor. Osborne inserts a speech in which Coriolanus accuses Aufidius of being ruled by his emotions:

You have wit, genius, eloquence, imagination, affection:  
but you have no understanding and consequently  
no standard of thought or action.

...

You have no system, no abstract ideas. You are  
everything by starts, and nothing long.  
(Act II Scene 10 p.76)

This passage, with echoes from Dryden's 'Absalom and Achitophel',<sup>5</sup> not only provides a criticism of Aufidius but also reflects on Coriolanus himself, suggesting that he does have principles on which all his actions are based.

However, it is not obvious what those principles are: certainly not patriotism, but something more personal - perhaps a refusal to be hypocritical, or the need to have his worth recognised.

This leads on to an interesting change of bias from Shakespeare which in turn leads back to Osborne's political comments. Coriolanus is always aware of the power of language and the misuse of this power. He realises that people are more interested in, and approbatory of, what is said than what is done:

Perhaps now we shall be seen to have some use. But what does it matter. What is said, forecast, commented on is what matters.  
(Act I Scene 2 p.21)

Osborne shows that what matters in modern politics is the outward show - conciliatory words, forms of address, promises. The mob could be appeased by gentle words from Coriolanus, but he cannot go through with it (either from anger or integrity). Another aspect of this is the importance of the label or name. It is the name which proves the reality of something. Thus, Caius Marcius's deeds gain recognition only when he is re-named Coriolanus, and the threat of losing this name persuades him to abandon his attack on Rome. Similarly, the city acquires an identity only through its name, Rome. Hence the title of the play which draws attention to the **name** rather than the place. The politicians continually cite 'Rome'



as the subject of their policies, for example, 'Rome must be a city worth saving for', 'Rome is the place we make of it', 'In a free and civilised Rome'. (pp.18-20) The individual people count less than the idea of 'Rome' itself. Osborne is not necessarily criticising the importance of the outward show, as Coriolanus does, but he reveals the necessity for ritual language. As Volumnia says:

There's no dishonour in bringing the city to just terms  
merely by using the right form of words.  
(Act I Scene 14 p.54)

Certainly it presents a moral dilemma for a politician: either, he can speak the truth and risk harm to himself, his family, friends and country; or he can use language to deceive, thus saving others from hardship and death. Obviously a politician has to choose which course to follow in each separate case - to follow one or other of these courses blindly for all cases would lead ultimately to either war or corruption.

Howard Brenton's Measure for Measure is an unusual combination of Shakespearian and non-Shakespearian material. 14% of the lines are Shakespearian, a much higher figure than for any other transposed play, and most of the characters retain their Shakespearian name and status. However, the context is England, some scenes taking place at Lords Cricket Ground or Hyde Park Corner. The Duke, instead of absenting himself temporarily in order to investigate the underworld and to test Angelo as in Shakespeare, resigns

his position to Angelo, and only begins to meddle because he is bored with retirement after a life of political manoeuvring. He assumes the guise of a Major in the Salvation Army, on the advice of his psychiatrist. Shakespeare's Lucio becomes Jerky Joe, a blue movie maker, and Claudio is the black star of his latest film - this is the cause of Claudio's arrest, for Angelo is determined to exterminate vice and corruption by using on offenders the most harsh laws he can. Jerky goes to Isabella, a Bible Sister (also black) and persuades her to approach Angelo and ask for mercy for her brother. The scene with Angelo proceeds much the same as in Shakespeare, with Angelo agreeing to free Claudio if Isabella will sleep with him (though Brenton conflates Shakespeare's IIii and IIiv). Isabella goes to visit Claudio in prison but he wants her to go through with Angelo's proposal and she leaves. The Duke has overheard their conversation and, on meeting Pompey in the prison, thinks of a plan to free Claudio and to stop Angelo's scheme. He asks Pompey to help him make a blue film for the purposes of blackmail, and learns of Jerky Joe. The Duke arranges details with Jerky Joe, and tells Isabella to phone Angelo and agree to meet him at a given address. Meanwhile, the governor of the prison receives a phone call from Angelo who tells him to execute Claudio immediately and send him (Angelo) the head. The Duke learns of this and on revealing his true identity to the governor persuades him to substitute another head for Claudio's. Isabella and the Duke leave to accomplish their mission, and the governor places



'a vitally important call'. The scene then moves to the blackmail bedroom with Jerky Joe, the Duke and Mrs Overdone preparing for their 'guests'. Isabella and Angelo arrive, and there follows a farcical scene in which Isabella and Mrs Overdone change roles so that the latter is rolling around on the bed with Angelo in the dark while the conspirators contrive to film the proceedings. Eventually the Duke and his accomplices walk into the room revealing the deception, and Angelo realises that the aim has been blackmail. However, he opens his suitcase taking out Claudio's head (the genuine article, not a substitute), and then summons the police, revealing that the prison governor phoned him and warned him of the Duke's meddling. Angelo instructs the police inspector how to dispose of each of the characters, himself remaining indisputably in charge. There is therefore no return to the status quo of the opening of the play, unlike Shakespeare's play. Brenton then tags on a fairy-tale-like ending, perhaps paralleling Shakespeare's ending in which everything comes out alright, while at the same time mocking it. He presents all the sympathetic characters together on board the S.S. Political Utopia bound for Amsterdam, Beirut and Rio De Janeiro. They describe their various escapes from captivity and wave goodbye to England, 'this bleeding country of old men' (p.76) as Angelo pushes the Duke in a wheelchair across the front of the stage. The scene is stylistically different from the rest of the play which has been broadly realistic. Here, for example, even Claudio

is present with his head under his arm. We are thus left with an impression of two sides, 'us' and 'them'. 'We', the common people, like some harmless fun and are basically good-natured; 'they', the politicians, are hypocritical, aloof, old and inflexible. However, no one comes out of the play in a particularly attractive light. The Duke is criticised almost as much as Angelo because he is ineffective if well-meaning. Brenton may also be trying to suggest that a politician who resigns has to accept some moral responsibility for his choice of successor (though certainly in Britain a leader is not chosen by his predecessor). Unlike the adaptations of Bowen and Osborne, this play is actually set in England, suggesting that Brenton sees the British politicians as equally hypocritical and rigid. As Angelo is in power at the end we feel that the political system is self-perpetuating with no possibility of change and reform; thus, corruption can breed. Oleg Kerensky points out that this similarity between criminals and our leaders is one of Brenton's favourite themes:<sup>6</sup>

Brenton is obsessed with the violence lurking beneath the surface of apparently respectable upholders of law and order, and with the way this suppressed violence brings the oppressed and the oppressor, the worker and the criminal, the politician and the policeman, closer together than is generally realized.

Given this obsession, it is not surprising that Brenton should have turned to Measure for Measure.

This play differs slightly from the others in this group in that, unlike the other Shakespeare plays on which these adaptations are based, Measure for Measure is not primarily concerned with a struggle for power. Angelo is given the



power, gratis, and the interest lies in how he uses it; according to both Shakespeare and Brenton, he misuses it. Thus the political theme here concerns corruption within a political administration rather than an attempt to obtain power. In this it is similar to other adaptations to be discussed in this chapter, which suggests a general concern about the moral qualities of our leaders.

The three plays discussed so far have considered political issues and systems which, though undoubtedly related to modern Britain, have no specific parallels. The next three plays, however, do parallel events in the real world of modern American politics as well as the events of the Shakespeare play being adapted.

The key to these plays (or 'simulations') is the concept of 'correspondence'. This means that events in the simulation are, in some sense, parallel to either those in the Shakespeare play and/or those in the real situation. The parallel need not be exact. For example, a murder has two aspects. It is both the removal of the victim and a crime by the murderer. The simulation may use either of these aspects in establishing a correspondence. Thus, one of these simulations (Dick Deterred) uses 'murder as crime' to parallel the murder of the Princes in the Tower (ordered by Richard III) and the Watergate break-in (ordered by Richard Nixon). In both cases, the Richard figure orders a crime to take place, and in the simulation Nixon's crime is depicted in terms taken from the Shakespeare play, that is, as the murder of the princes.

This notion of correspondence is similar to the mathematical concept of 'isomorphism', and the more generally used 'analogy'. The following definitions of these terms, as expressed in the New English Dictionary, may further clarify the concepts involved:

Isomorphism: Math. Identity of form and of operations between two or more groups.

Analogy: Equivalency or likeness of relations; ... a name for the fact, that, the relation borne to any object by some attribute or circumstance, corresponds to the relation existing between another object and some attribute or circumstance pertaining to it.

These definitions make it clear that we are concerned with the overall structure of the simulation, and with the similarity between that structure and the structures of the real events and of the Shakespeare play being adapted. Let us now look at these simulations in more detail.

The first of them to appear was Garson's MacBird!. In the adaptation Garson suggests that the main plot outline of Macbeth is similar to the events surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, with Lyndon B. Johnson cast in the Macbeth role. Thus Macbeth becomes MacBird, and Duncan is re-named John Ken O'Dunc who has two brothers Robert and Ted (paralleling Shakespeare's Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan's sons). After a prologue which parodies the prologue from Henry V, the play opens with the three witches, here transformed to representatives of three different rebellious groups: beatniks, muslims



and workers. The following quotation gives an idea of the tone of the play:

BEATNIK WITCH: When shall we three meet again?  
 MUSLIM WITCH: In riot!  
 WORKER WITCH: Strike!  
 BEATNIK WITCH: Or stopping train?  
 MUSLIM WITCH: When the hurly burly's done,  
 When the race is lost or won.  
 WORKER WITCH: Out on the convention floor.  
 Or in some hotel corridor.  
 BEATNIK WITCH: Where cheering throngs can still be heard,  
 There to meet with ... MacBird!  
 (Act I Scene 1 p.9)

John and Robert decide to ask MacBird to become vice-president, and MacBird accepts (having already been told by the witches that he will eventually become president). MacBird and his Crony (a friend who knows and approves of MacBird's plans) decide that John and Robert will take more notice of them if they become aware of MacBird's popularity in his own state, and John agrees to visit MacBird's ranch after his (John's) coronation. MacBird realises that Robert, named as John's successor, stands in his way. Lady MacBird sees John's imminent visit as their great chance, and plans a grand parade during which John will be shot by someone in the crowd. John Ken O'Dunc arrives at the ranch and we see the grand parade, during which there is a shot and John is dead. MacBird appears, confessing that he has killed the assassin, and announces himself head-of-state; Robert and Ted keep silent, but Ted leaves while Robert stays to carry on the fight against MacBird. At this point certain non-Shakespearian characters are incorporated, characters

who parallel real politicians and who have no Shakespearian equivalent. MacBird realises that his position is precarious and persuades the Earl of Warren (who has no Shakespearian equivalent) to lead an investigation into the assassination, the aim of the enquiry being to 'bury doubt'. MacBird also implies that he would not be unhappy if Robert and Ted were to be removed, and the Crony plans to kill them - during the rest of the play we hear of various accidents which befall Ted. We then see MacBird giving a press conference in which he reveals his vision of the future where America rules the planet; he describes his plans for a Smooth Society, and asserts that the reds in Viet Land should be destroyed. Lady MacBird enters, smelling blood everywhere, and her daughters follow with aerosol cans of air freshener. Meanwhile, Robert is winning support from various political groups, and MacBird, somewhat apprehensive, returns to the three witches. They tell him that he is to fear 'no man with beating heart or human blood' and that he is safe until 'burning wood doth come to Washington'. Reassured, MacBird holds a pre-election victory party at which the witches provide entertainment. Finally, Robert appears on stage looking very like his brother John, and MacBird is terrified. By this time the witches, discontented with MacBird's reign, have set fire to all the trees in Washington; Robert then tells MacBird that his insides are mechanical, and he has no human heart or blood. Before Robert can kill him, MacBird has a heart attack and dies. Robert grieves for MacBird's death and says he will follow in his footsteps.



Throughout the play the context is that of modern America, as shown by the diction of the language and the staging as well as the referents. There are many instances where the references to the Kennedy assassination are accurate. Johnson became Kennedy's Vice-President, and invited the President to his ranch in Texas. During that visit, at a grand parade, Kennedy was assassinated and Johnson became President. Earl Warren was ordered to lead an investigation into the assassination; Robert Kennedy remained Attorney-General, but Edward refused to serve in the new administration. Johnson planned a domestic programme which involved the expansion of the welfare state, and he named this 'The Good Society'; he was also the first to send American troops to Vietnam. Robert gradually gained the support of various political groups. In 1968 the Democratic national convention was held in Chicago, during which there was extreme violence.

These are the facts upon which Garson has based her play. However, several inconsistencies and outright untruths emerge in this attempt to parallel Johnson and Macbeth. One such inconsistency is the confusion between the Presidency of modern America and the monarchy of Shakespeare's Scotland. Garson has not decided which system to follow, and so we have MacBird as Vice-President and Robert as John's heir, thus creating an anomalous situation. Another kind of inconsistency is that several of the events of MacBird! in fact have no application or reference to real life. The chief example is the ending

where Robert assumes power and decides to follow in MacBird's footsteps. The only precedent (in either the American or the Shakespearian worlds) for such an ending appears to be the fact that Johnson, on Kennedy's death, passed all legislation planned by Kennedy. However, if this was in Garson's mind, it is rather confusing to apply it to two other characters as she does. A possible reason for such an ending is that Garson wishes to show that all politicians are tyrannical, and once they have power their promises count for nothing and they all act harshly. Although a valid comment in itself, to use the stories of Johnson and Macbeth to illustrate it seems rather pointless because neither Robert Kennedy nor Malcolm appear as tyrants. However, a more important point is that, given the two sets of events are not identical, how far can each be altered to suit the purposes of the adapter? This is a moral, and possibly a legal, issue as far as the real events are concerned: is the writer at liberty to suggest that one person is responsible for the death of another unless it has been proved in a court of law? This will be considered in more detail later. There is no doubt that this adaptation does suggest that Johnson was responsible for Kennedy's death, and as Gilman points out such a statement is irresponsible.<sup>7</sup>



Mrs Garson is not obliged to give us an alternative vision to the one she has of present politics. But she is under an obligation to make the present vision accurate, to make her play true, to give it true wit, true fantasy, true feeling. And since MacBird! deals with actuality, its whole apparatus of Shakespearean burlesque being designed to get a purchase on contemporary political and social data and the attitudes they give use to, those facts have to be true, too. Yet it is not "true," not established, that Lyndon Johnson killed President Kennedy; Mrs Garson admits that she doesn't believe it, which makes her irresponsibility in presenting it as true that much more contemptible. But what is even more contemptible is the defense she and her admirers have made, its central plank being the proposition that having chosen Macbeth she was consequently stuck with the plot.

Certainly such an exercise as Garson has undertaken is pointless unless the two plots do have very close parallels.

David Edgar chose to attempt a simulation likening Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal to Richard III. This adaptation is far superior to Garson's because the parallels are more accurate and the internal consistency of the adaptation is maintained. As the audience enters the auditorium they are tape recorded, and this recording is played back during the interval; in turn, the reactions to the recording are taped and replayed as the audience leaves at the end. Thus the atmosphere is one appropriate to a play about bugging and surveillance in general. Edgar divides Shakespeare's Edward IV into three characters: Part One (Kennedy), Part Two (Johnson), Part Three (Hubert Humphrey). As the play opens, Part Two resigns and hands over to Part Three who accepts the crown but does not put it on. They leave, and Richard enters revealing his plans to set Clarence (Eugene McCarthy) and the King (Humphrey) against one another to further

his ends. This is a close parody of Shakespeare's 'Now is the winter of our discontent', thus establishing the Shakespearian tone. Richard then sings 'Would you buy a used car from me?' in which he appears deceitful and full of false promises - Richard is thus established as a villain out for profit.

The rest of the play maintains a precarious balance between actuality and Shakespeare, but all events have a referent in actuality, either known or highly likely, though not necessarily in Shakespeare. However, the Shakespeare references are still numerous.

Richard meets Clarence on his way to Chicago, and then Hastings enters with news of the King's sickness - Richard bribes Hastings with a promise of the post of Attorney-General. At the Republican Convention, Anne mourns the death of Eisenhower but, despite her list of accusations against Richard, she decides to support his nomination (his main argument being that according to the opinion polls he will win). Richard arranges for Clarence to be killed, and then Buckingham informs Richard that he has won the Republican nomination. In Chicago, during the Democratic Convention of 1968, Clarence tells Brakenbury of his dream of violence, only to learn it was no dream, and then the murderer enters and stabs Clarence. Elizabeth reveals and mourns the King's death and informs us that Richard is now King - Richard speaks to the nation about his tough line over various events.

The next few scenes are less close to Shakespeare. We see Richard, Buckingham and Hastings making plans for Richard's re-election - they decide to ensure that the democratic candidate is the least attractive member of the



opposition (the Prince of Wales) and thus use sabotage to put the Duke of York out of the race. Buckingham and Hastings, in obvious disguise, appear among the citizens of Florida and, in a melodramatic scene, try to smear the reputation of the Duke of York - they are, however, unsuccessful. Richard and Buckingham, aware of security leaks, decide to set up a group of 'plumbers' to plug those leaks, with Hastings in charge. Hastings realises that he will now be blamed for any leaks, but commissions Tyrrell to bug Watergate. The next scene, the bugging of Watergate by Forrest and Dighton, is equivalent to the murdering of the Princes in the Tower, though Shakespeare does not actually show this scene. The Princes are in bed when Forrest and Dighton enter, unseen by the Princes. A farcical piece of comedy is acted out with the 'buggers' attaching wires and microphones to the Princes while the Princes, aware that something strange is happening, search for the intruders. Eventually the Princes are pulled off-stage by these wires (symbolising their death and political demise), and then Brakenbury enters and arrests Forrest and Dighton.

Edgar now returns to Shakespeare's plot. Tyrrell informs Buckingham and Hastings of the capture of the crooks, and the two politicians begin to plan the cover-up. We next see Richard, Buckingham, Hastings and Ely in conference - it is made apparent that a red light indicates that tapes are running to record the conference, but this is known only to Richard and Buckingham. Throughout the

scene Richard belittles Watergate and disclaims knowledge while the tapes are running; he also speaks ambiguously, as when he asks Ely to fetch some 'strawberries' (really meaning the contents of Tyrrell's safe). Richard and Buckingham leave, and when Ely returns with, as he realises, enough evidence to prove Richard's guilt in the Watergate affair, Hastings wants to conceal the evidence. When the other two re-enter they decide to give the evidence to Gray (the acting head of the FBI) in order to implicate him, and Hastings too is chosen as a scapegoat.

The time then moves on to early 1973 where Catesby helps organise a public relations exercise in which Richard is presented to the public as a peacemaker with an olive branch between Brezhnev and Mao Tse-tung (dressed as nuns). Richard then proceeds to give press statements about his lack of involvement in Watergate (taken verbatim from Nixon's statements), but Catesby and Buckingham feel that they fail to give complete satisfaction. One of these statements mentions Bob Haldeman's resignation and Buckingham (the Haldeman equivalent) is horrified.

At this point, Richmond, chairman of the Watergate Committee, enters the picture, subpoenaing Buckingham and demanding White House tapes. He is Richard's chief enemy. More and more people turn to Richmond with information until the two enemies confront one another in battle: Richard and Richmond occupy tents on opposite sides of the stage, while the centre of the stage (where the battle



takes place) is the Supreme Court. Richard is seen in his tent doctoring tapes and then both combatants sleep to prepare for battle. The ghosts of McCord, Dean and Haldeman appear successively, each in turn cursing Richard and revealing to Richmond that Richard knew what was happening. Soon battle commences and to keep Richmond at bay, Richard throws him small portions of the doctored tapes. However, Richmond rushes at his enemy and kills him. Richmond presents himself as the next leader while Richard is put in a coffin. However, Richard gradually peeks out of the coffin to question this assumption of leadership by Richmond, and the police covering the coffin with their guns turn to cover the audience instead. Blackout.

Appendix 2 shows the character and plot correspondences between Richard III, Dick Deterred and Watergate, as far as can be gleaned from reading the two books by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, All The President's Men and The Final Days. Though there are a few gaps here and there the overall closeness of the two plots (Shakespeare and reality) is overwhelming, and for this reason the political comment made is powerful and valid in a way that Garson's half-truths and plot manipulations are not. However, one of the chief problems with such a topical play is that one cannot fully appreciate it unless one is aware of the referents - much of the enjoyment of the play derives from one's intellectual delight in the way the two plots have been matched, and in the transformations made by Edgar.

One wonders how such a play would be received ten or twenty years after its first performance. However, though the specific political comment would be less relevant, the transformation of Shakespeare's play into modern political terms would still apply, working in the same way as the plays of Bowen, Osborne and Brenton.<sup>8</sup>

The Watergate affair also appealed to the dramatic instincts of Jeremy Geidt and Jonathan Marks, but they chose to use Hamlet as the base play. Compared to the other two simulations this is a very slight play, and the faults of Garson's play are multiplied in Samlet. The names of the characters bear some resemblance to those of Hamlet and to those involved in Watergate (e.g. Ehrlicrantz and Haldenstern), and most of the events of Hamlet are included sketchily in this play.

The plot, briefly, is as follows. Samlet sees the ghost who tells his son to avenge his murder. Laertes III asks to return to France, and Ehrlicrantz and Haldenstern are told to spy on Samlet. Felonius gives Laertes some advice, and then Marphelia reveals to Felonius that Samlet has asked her for spools of tape - Felonius decides to tell the King. Samlet enters and asks Marphelia for the tapes and she denies any knowledge of them - Samlet is angry. Ehrlicrantz and Haldenstern speak to Samlet and try to tape-record him. They are interrupted by first Horatio then Felonius who enter with news of the Players' arrival. The Players enter and Samlet asks them to incorporate a song into the evening's entertainment - Samlet hopes that this song will reveal the guilt of



King Claudickus. The song is duly sung causing Claudickus to call for lights and leave while Samlet and Horatio are convinced of the King's guilt. Claudickus is seen trying to pray, and Samlet decides not to kill him then. Instead, he goes to see his mother Patrude who is altering tapes - Samlet kills Felonius who is spying on them, and then tries to convince Patrude of the King's guilt, but Patrude remains loyal to Claudickus. Marphelia is killed by the King for threatening to reveal all, and Laertes demands revenge. The funeral of Marphelia and Felonius takes place and is followed by a duel between Samlet and Laertes - Samlet loses his spectacles and so does not see the killing going on around him. Eventually everyone but Claudickus is dead and the ghost ends the play with 'Remember me'.

The problem with this adaptation is that it does not hang together. Characters and events are taken from Hamlet but more in a desire to establish it as the base play rather than to present a coherent plot. More importantly, the references to Watergate are also disjointed. Samlet is supposed to be Sam Ervin, the Chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee, and so he tries to determine exactly what corruption has taken place and to punish it. So far the plot fits, but no further. There are vague references to spools of tape and bugging, with Samlet trying to acquire the tapes, but we do not know why the tapes are important (after all, the crime being investigated is murder, and we have no reason to believe that Claudickus has admitted his guilt on tape). Such characters as the

ghost and the Players have no equivalent in the Watergate affair, and are included solely to strengthen the similarities with Hamlet - as such, they are superfluous to the political comment.

From these examples it will be apparent that the technique of simulation is very demanding and highly skilled. Unless it is carried out precisely, the adaptation merely looks slip-shod and strained. However, where the plot fits, as in Dick Deterred, the result can be a very funny and politically astute play.

Let us now begin to look more closely at the particular techniques used by these plays and establish their common features. We begin with an analysis of their invariant and variant features (in relation to the Shakespeare play being adapted), basing the analysis on the five categories of language, plot, character, context and theme.

### Language

There is no necessity for any of the original Shakespeare lines to be incorporated into a transposition though in fact most of them do make at least a few precise allusions to the original, and nearly 14% of Brenton's text is Shakespearian. Usually any direct quotation in these plays forms an integral part of the plot and occurs in the scene equivalent to the original Shakespeare scene. Thus, several of Brenton's scenes in Measure for Measure keep quite close to the original. For example, in the first scene of the play where the Duke resigns his office, much of the language from Shakespeare's It is used, interspersed with modern language such as 'So you're the man for the job.' (p.1)



Bowen also occasionally uses direct quotation as part of the plot, an example occuring when the Fortune-Teller bids Caesar 'Beware the Ides of March'.(p.14; Shakespeare Iii,23)

However, given that little of the text consists of Shakespeare's lines, there are still various degrees to which the original Shakespeare lines can be altered:

- a) The overall form of a Shakespearian passage is maintained, using blank verse, but key words and phrases are changed in order to make pointed comments about a contemporary situation. Basically this is parody (though without the usual corollary that Shakespeare's language is the object of ridicule), and the result is usually humorous. Such a language-form is particularly useful when the Shakespearian and the contemporary situations are being paralleled, and much of the delight of parody is the intellectual appreciation of the similarity of ideas and clever manipulation of the language. Thus, David Edgar makes extensive use of parody in his adaptation. For example, Richard's opening speech in Richard III contains this description of himself:

But I - that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,  
 Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass -  
 I - that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty  
 'To strut before a wanton ambling nymph -  
 I - that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,  
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
 Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
 Into this breathing world scarce half made up,  
 And that so lamely and unfashionable  
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them -  
 Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,  
 Have no delight to pass away the time,  
 Unless to spy my shadow in the sun  
 And descant on mine own deformity.  
 (Ii,14-27)

Edgar's Richard uses the same form and overall idea, that is, he feels in a disadvantageous position, but Edgar includes many specific references to actual events which happened to Richard Nixon before he became President, thus establishing a connection between King Richard and President Nixon - the form belongs to Richard III, the content to Nixon:

But I, that am not shaped for aught but tricks,  
 Nor made to court an amorous CBS,  
 I, that am rudely stamped, and want capacity  
 To strut before a wanton East Coast liberal;  
 I, that was spurned by the electorate,  
 Cheated in 1960 by dissembling fortune,  
 Held as a has-been, spent before my time  
 Out of this world before my star was set.  
 And seen so lamely and unfashionable  
 That now they chuckle when I halt by them:  
 Why I, now partner in a Wall Street legal firm,  
 Have no delight in handling Pepsi-Cola  
 And mourn the days I strutted in the sun  
 Before I lost the California governorship  
 And told the gloating press, with quiv'ring jaw,  
 They'd not have Dick to kick around no more.  
 (Scene 1 pp.14-15)

One of the humorous aspects of such parody is the contrast between archaic, poetic language on the one hand and modern colloquialisms on the other. The blank verse form lends itself to an archaic sentence construction, and this is preserved in the parody. There are thus long, formal sentences containing parallel clauses beginning with similar words (e.g. 'But I, that am ... I, that am ... I, that was ...'), and the unusual construction 'lamely and unfashionable' is preserved from the original. Much of the vocabulary is also archaic or poetic, either taken from the original Shakespeare passage ('rudely stamped')



or added by Edgar to preserve the archaic, poetic tone ('aught', 'before my star was set', 'withn quiv'ring jaw'). Within this formal framework, concepts, words and phrases with a strictly twentieth-century tone are placed, examples being 'CBS', 'East Coast liberal', 'electorate', '1960', 'has-been', 'Wall Street legal firm', 'Pepsi-Cola', 'California governorship' and 'press'. It is these modern phrases which precisely pin-point the object of Edgar's parody - the context is seen to be American, post-1960, political; the actual person was a Wall Street lawyer and lost the California governorship - who else but Richard Nixon? Not all parodies are quite as close to the original as the above example, but all preserve a high enough degree of textual similarity for the original Shakespeare passage to be readily recognisable. Garson uses the technique in MacBird! and to a lesser extent, Geidt and Marks do in Samlet.

- b) Another variant on Shakespeare's lines is similar in form and technique to parody, but tends to be used more fleetingly. Parody usually relates to extended passages and forms an integral part of the plot, but sometimes a Shakespeare quotation, entirely out of context, just seems appropriate and the adapter uses it (slightly modified, as in parody). For example, in MacBird!, John Ken O'Dunc is eulogising America and he incorporates two lines from Richard II:

And for this land, this crowned continent,  
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
 This forceful breed of men, this mighty world  
 I see a ... New Frontier beyond her seas.  
 (Act I Scene 1 p.10)

(Compare Shakespeare's lines from II*i* of Richard II:

This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, (41)  
 This happy breed of men, this little world, (45) )

The out-of-context quotation may be from the play being adapted or from any other well-known source. The technique is used mainly by Garson, and by Geidt and Marks, though there are examples in Dick Deterred.

- c) Blank verse is still used, and the content approximates to Shakespeare's plot, but the textual connection between the original Shakespeare passage and the modern verse is slight. The Shakespearian quotations and allusions are used to pin-point the Shakespeare scene on which the adapted scene is based rather than the specific passage. Thus, the scene of the adaptation contains several quotations from the equivalent Shakespeare scene scattered throughout it, but in between these quotations are passages of new writing by the adapter. Samlet uses this technique extensively. The characters return to Shakespeare's lines to preserve the plot line and the superficial appearance of a Shakespeare play, but then continue with newly-written lines. When Shakespeare's Hamlet confronts Gertrude in her closet, the Ghost appears with the following admonition:



Do not forget; this visitation  
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.  
 But look, amazement on thy mother sits.  
 O, step between her and her fighting soul!  
 Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.  
 Speak to her, Hamlet.  
 (IIIiv, 110-115)

In Samlet, where the Ghost appears before Samlet and Patruide, the first two lines are the same as Shakespeare's, but after that they bear no similarity to the original:

Do not forget. This visitation  
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.  
 Whilst you with clownish antics play the fool  
 The tyrant villain still maintains the rule.  
 Get on with it.  
 (p.45)

Patruide's comment to Samlet is then:

Are you done raving, dear? How about a cup of tea, then?  
 (p.45)

The Shakespeare lines are followed by a rhyming couplet which emphasises the purpose of the first two lines of the speech, and a succinct order in a very modern idiom. Patruide's comment is that of a sensible, common-sense, comforting mother, a totally different view to the one presented by Shakespeare. As in parody, the contrast between the archaic and poetic, and the modern and colloquial, contributes to the humorous tone of the language. This language technique is often used by Garson and Edgar as well as by Geidt and

Marks, for it is a very difficult exercise to maintain strict parody for the full length of a play (and attempts to do so would be very obviously strained). Instead, key passages are usually parodied, with this weaker technique being used in between ('weaker' in the sense of being a weaker direct link between Shakespeare and the adaptation).

- d) The closest prose approximation to the original Shakespeare lines is what amounts to a paraphrase of the original. this need not be a complete line-by-line correspondence but in general each line in the adaptation has its Shakespearian verse equivalent in the original. For example, Shakespeare's Coriolanus uses the following language when he rails against the custom which demands that the people give him their voice before he can be Consul:

Better it is to die, better to starve,  
 Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.  
 Why in this wolvisish toge should I stand here  
 To beg of Hob and Dick that do appear  
 Their needless vouches? Custom calls me to't.  
 What custom wills, in all things should we do't,  
 The dust on antique time would lie unswept,  
 And mountainous error be too highly heap'd  
 For truth to o'erpeer. Rather than fool it so,  
 Let the high office and the honour go  
 To one that would do thus.  
 (IIiii, 110-120)

Osborne, on the other hand, while preserving the ideas, expresses them in a form more immediately recognisable to a modern audience:



I'd rather be shot at than go through this knocking on doors for a pair of powerful boots; or scuffling in the streets of Rome. Begging from every Tired Tom and Dozey Dick who wants to put in his few miserable pence. Tradition, the law demands it of us all. Anything can be allowed to happen or rise up if it's only in the name of common tradition. Rather than that, they can stuff their boots up to their elbow and let 'em stay there.

(Act I Scene 11 p.45)

Each sentence in this passage has its corresponding lines in Shakespeare's version. Osborne uses this type of language most consistently though John Bowen also uses the technique.

- e) Often, a scene in an adaptation is based on a scene in the original Shakespeare play in terms of plot, but there is no textual similarity between the scenes. The similarity lies in the fact that by the end of each scene the story has progressed in the same way. As an example let us consider the story of Julius Caesar. After Caesar's death, first Brutus and then Antony speaks to the common people. At the beginning of his speech, Antony is conciliatory but by the end, he and his supporters are in control while Brutus and the other conspirators are forced to flee. This plot outline applies equally to Shakespeare's version and to Bowen's. However, the language styles of the two Antonys bear no relation to one another, and there are no Shakespearian quotations in the Bowen version.

Compare the openings of the two speeches:

i) Shakespeare

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones;  
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus  
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault;  
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.  
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest -  
For Brutus is an honourable man;  
So are they all, all honourable men -  
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.  
(IIIiii,73-84)

ii) Bowen

I'm going to take up very little of your time, and I'm going to speak plainly. Brutus has told you that he's very kindly allowing me to speak for Caesar's friends, and put what he calls 'the Imperialist point of view'. But I don't want to talk about politics, or patriotism, or democracy or the Constitution, or any of those words. I'm not clever enough. I'm a soldier, not a politician. I want to talk about a man, a man you all knew - and he's been killed.  
(p.43)

Unlike the prose paraphrase, there is no line-to-line correspondence. Rather, the correspondence concerns pieces of action, the development of the plot, the overall result of what is said. Both Bowen and Howard Brenton use this technique extensively.

- f) Finally, there are passages which bear no relation at all to the Shakespearian text. There are no correspondences of structure, vocabulary or content. The styles can, of course, vary widely. Thus David Edgar's Richard singing 'Would you buy a used car from me?' (pp.15-18) and Bowen's Cassius urging Brutus to take to the



mountains both fall into this category. Most of the transposed plays contain some passages of completely new material, and as with collage adaptations these passages are good indications of the purposes of the adaptations. For example, Cassius's explanations to Brutus about the probable consequences of their actions show Bowen's concern with the political realities of the war situation.

Several of these language varieties may be found in any one of this group of plays, though each adaptation tends to use either verse or prose predominantly.

### Plot

In general, the plots of the adaptations are the same as those of the Shakespeare plays on which they are based. This is particularly true of the initial situation and its immediate development. Thus, MacBird (or his associates) kills the President and takes his place, just as Macbeth kills Duncan and becomes King; both Richards use devious means to obtain and retain the Presidency or Kingship; Brutus conspires with others to kill Caesar and then is forced to flee; Angelo, left in charge, uses the full weight of law against obscenity in all forms. The plots of Shakespeare's plays are usually political - they concern power, rightful inheritance, leadership, assassination and such issues. As the transposed plays aim to relate the political manoeuvrings of Shakespeare's characters to those of modern politicians, it is inevitable that these political plots will be preserved. Of all the plays in this group, A Place Calling Itself Rome keeps closest to

the original plot - for most of the play there is a scene-by-scene correspondence.

Though usually the overall development of the adaptation parallels that of Shakespeare's play, details of plot are altered, often substituting a more natural piece of action (given the altered context) for Shakespeare's plot. Some adapters also alter Shakespeare's endings in their plays, occasionally entirely reversing Shakespeare's conclusions:

a) Omission

As with all the adaptations, sections of the original plot are omitted. In these transposed plays the omissions tend to be minor details only - all the main events are included in some form in the adaptation.

b) Addition

Additions to the original plot are made for a variety of reasons:

1. In the simulations, a gap sometimes occurs in the Shakespeare play, i.e. an important event actually happened for which there is no Shakespearian parallel. On these occasions, the adapter can either omit the event or invent the extra plot required to maintain the parallelism between adaptation and real events. Often he chooses to invent. For example, the Watergate scandal was largely uncovered by the Washington Post, and Ronald Zeigler (the White House press secretary) accused the paper of 'shabby journalism'.<sup>9</sup> Edgar wanted to include this episode, and as there was no equivalent in Richard III he had to invent it. He therefore creates a scene where Sir Ron Catesby (press secretary) comments on the smear tactics of the Washington Post:



I gave it to these Grub Street shitsters straight  
 That while believing in the First Amendment  
 Respecting absolutely the free press  
 I don't respect the kind of journalism  
 Practised by the Post of Washington.  
 (Act III Scene 3 p.85)

This section then leads into a burlesque of Shakespeare's III/vii where Richard is shown to the press with two nuns (Brezhnev and Mao Tse-tung) and an olive branch. Thus, the added material forms an integral part of the play.

2. Sometimes Shakespeare assumes or describes events without actually showing them. One type of plot addition in the adaptations is to depict such events on stage. An example occurs in Brenton's Measure for Measure. In Shakespeare's play, the substitution of Mariana for Isabella in Angelo's bed is planned, and later the success of the plan is confirmed. However, we do not see the trick carried out. Brenton remedies this omission, using its farcical potential to the full. Thus Isabella arrives at the blackmain bedroom with Angelo and disappears into the bathroom 'to change into a nightdress'. She switches out the lights and Mistress Overdone emerges from the bathroom - she and Angelo indulge their lechery on the bed while the farce is accentuated by the need to replace one of the infra-red camera lights (Jerky replaces the bulb and escapes undetected). Such additions do not alter the overall plot development but rather fill out details of the story.

3. Another kind of elaboration of the basic plot involves the incorporation of new plot material designed to intensify the action as Shakespeare describes it. This is material not described or assumed by Shakespeare. Let us take the Measure for Measure scene described above as an example. The bed-trick is described by Shakespeare and shown by Brenton, Shakespeare's idea being to cheat Angelo of his corrupt pursuits and force him to right the wrong he has done Mariana. Brenton is not interested in the Mariana pre-contract, but he is concerned to 'get' Angelo, and he intensifies this aspect by not only swapping the women (Isabella and Mistress Overdone) but by making the substitute a prostitute and then taking a film of the result for the purposes of blackmail. In Shakespeare's version there is no concrete evidence of Angelo's corruption - this is Brenton's intensification of the plot. A totally different example occurs in Heil Caesar! where, in order to facilitate the outcome of the war, Bowen creates the 'deus ex machina' of Labienus and the Northern Command. Thus, the conspirators lose, not only because of Brutus's lack of military acumen but also and chiefly because Octavius blackmailed Labienus into fighting against the conspirators.

4. The final kind of plot addition is designed to create further insight into a major character. Osborne is the only adapter in this group to incorporate this kind of material for in general the plays are more concerned with actions and events than character analysis. However, his initial scene with Coriolanus writing down his thoughts is obviously a psychological investigation of the character, and Coriolanus's criticism of Aufidius towards the end of the play illuminates aspects of both characters.

c) Equivalent substitution

Each section of a story has some purpose whether it be descriptive, explanatory or an advancement of the action. Any writer has to choose how best to achieve that purpose, in terms of language style, characters, plot and so on. Thus, each part of a Shakespeare play has a purpose and the adapter's task is often to preserve that purpose while using his own means. For example, in Julius Caesar one of the important details of the assassination plot is that Mark Antony should be removed from Caesar. Trebonius sees to this, and when he leaves with Antony the rest of the plan is put into practice. In Heil Caesar! Bowen is faced with the same need - to remove Antony. However, the method used is rather different - Cassius puts laxative pills into Antony's coffee (and locks the nearest toilet doors); as soon as Antony leaves to go to the toilet, the assassination



plan continues. These transposed plays are full of such substitutions: Claudio is imprisoned, not for lechery as in Shakespeare, but for starring in a blue film; MacBird, at his pre-election victory party, is terrified by Robert looking just like his murdered brother (instead of by Banquo's ghost at the banquet); Tyrrell describes the completion of the bugging of Watergate, rather than the murder of the Princes in the Tower. Such substitutions are local and do not affect the overall development of the original Shakespeare plot.

d) Replacement of Shakespeare's ending by a different resolution

The final type of plot change is really the most significant for, unlike the others, it can alter the whole meaning of the play. There are various situations in which the adapter may find Shakespeare's ending unsuitable, and he creates his own ending to replace it:

1. Need to parallel true events

Where the adaptation is a simulation, the Shakespearian ending may be inconveniently inaccurate or inappropriate as a reflection of the true events, and so the adapter creates an ending more suited to his subject. Both MacBird! and Samlet required this kind of plot alteration. Thus in Samlet everyone dies except King Claudickus, the implication being that in the Watergate scandal Nixon got away with it while all his subordinates were punished (a fairly accurate assessment of the true events, though unfaithful to Hamlet where Claudius is killed).

## 2. Exploration of political implications

All these culturally transposed adaptations are concerned with political events, but some, having created the political situation, attempt to investigate its implications as fully as possible. This sometimes requires an alteration of Shakespeare's ending. For example, in Heil Caesar! Cassius confronts Brutus with the reality of their situation, and asks what would happen if they won. He points out that they would always be at the mercy of the professional army because most of their supporters are dead through wrong decisions taken by Brutus. As an alternative he suggests that they take a band of trusted men and women to the mountains:

And there you wait. You build. You don't waste a man or a bullet, because you can't afford it. But, as the prisons get fuller, and the executions more frequent, and freedom and security and an ordinary decent life are just what people remember, not what they have, more and more will come to join you. It takes a long time. It took Mao Tse Tung a long time, Castro a long time. But when you win, it lasts.  
(p.53)

Brutus is unconvinced and persuades someone else to kill him, as in Shakespeare, but Cassius does persuade Portia to keep fighting and the end of the play sees them with a small group of guerillas taking to the hills. Here Bowen has taken the situation as presented by Shakespeare and thought through the possible consequences. Shakespeare presents Cassius as far shrewder than Brutus, and the



plan conceived by Bowen's Cassius is in keeping with that shrewdness. By thinking ahead and realising implications of actions Cassius forces us to consider what the acquisition and retention of power really means in terms of necessary violence, loss of freedom and so on. No one can have absolute power in a democracy - the two concepts are contradictory, and this incompatibility has to be recognised and come to terms with.

There is a similar kind of change in Brenton's Measure for Measure - as Bowen concentrates on the political realities of the conspirators' plight, so Brenton stresses the political reality of giving power to a man like Angelo. For Brenton, the idea that Angelo will be exposed and the original order restored is just absurd.<sup>10</sup> He therefore alters the whole basis of Angelo's power by making the Duke resign, not just hand over temporarily. Given that a man as rigid, cold and efficient as Angelo has the power, it is reasonable to suppose that in some way he enforces the loyalty of his subordinates. Shakespeare's Provost colludes with the Duke against Angelo, but his opposite number in Brenton's play, the Prison Governor, merely appears to accept the Duke's authority while in fact he remains loyal to Angelo (who is, after all, the lawful leader), warning him of the Duke's meddling and carrying out his orders concerning the execution of Claudio.



Thus, as in Marowitz's collage version of the same play, the threat against Claudio becomes reality and Isabella gains no redress - Angelo is not discredited but remains in power. Bowen follows through the logical consequences of the situation in Julius Caesar and Brenton does the same with Measure for Measure, dismissing Shakespeare's ending as unlikely, to say the least. However, Brenton has two endings to his play because having established Angelo's supremacy he adds the final fairy-tale finale. The effect of this scene is to distance the spectators from the rest of the play, providing a final laugh at the expense of the politicians and leaving us wondering whether the political game is worth the effort. After all the manoeuvring, who has really won?

Despite this long catalogue of ways in which the transposed plays change the plot, it should again be emphasised that most changes have little effect on the overall development of what happens to the major characters. In general the aim is to provide the sort of events with which we are familiar so that we can more readily appreciate the political issues under discussion. The exception occurs at the end of some of the adaptations where resolutions may be changed in order to portray more accurately the specific political message being delivered by the adapter.

## Character

When discussing characters we can distinguish five parameters: role, name, status, title and personality.

- a) the role of a character is the function he fills in the play, whether this be 'the head of state who is assassinated' or 'the woman with whom the head of state thinks he is copulating';
- b) the name relates to Christian and surnames of characters, and to what these characters are normally called, e.g. Caesar, Isabella, Tyrell;
- c) the status of a character is the position he holds in society in relation to other characters, e.g. leader, elected representative, general public;
- d) the title of a character describes his or her political status in the particular society depicted, e.g. tribune, senator, bishop;
- e) the personality of a character includes those traits which distinguish him as an individual rather than as a member of society, e.g. shrewd, neurotic, courageous, honest.

In general, the roles and statuses of the major characters remain the same in the transposed plays as in the Shakespeare play. As the general plot development tends to be invariant, so the characters perform the same actions as in the original play. Other aspects of character may remain invariant, e.g. names and titles, but this is not necessarily the case. Personalities do not change so much as become less important; reasons for this will be considered later in this chapter. The characters in A Place Calling Itself Rome are closest to the original Shakespearian characters -



they tend to preserve their roles, names, statuses and titles, though we see more of Coriolanus's personality than Shakespeare shows us.

Of the possible variant parameters (name, title and personality) adapters are more concerned with names and titles than personalities. The emphasis is on political events, their parallels and their consequences, and the individuality of characters is seldom allowed to intrude. The following alterations are made in the transposed plays:

a) Omissions

Most of these adaptations omit minor characters, and these characters often correspond with the minor plot details which have also been left out.<sup>11</sup> Thus in Brenton's Measure for Measure, the Justice, Elbow and Froth have been omitted, as have the scenes involving them.

b) Additions

There are three main types of additional character:

1. Functionaries

These characters are rarely given names but are known solely by their titles. They are included both to contribute to the new context and to perform certain roles, but there is no interest in them as individuals. Most of the transposed plays include these functional characters, a selection being as follows: TV director, newscaster and radio operator in Heil Caesar!; students, trade unionists, journalists, Roman paratrooper and radio signaller in A Place Calling Itself Rome; psychiatrist, agitator, comrade and corrupt constable in Measure for Measure.



## 2. Political equivalents

In the simulations, the correspondences may not always be exact, As with plot details, a character may assume importance in the real events but have no obvious counterpart in the Shakespeare play. In this event, the adapter may create a character who is designed to parallel the politician. This is most obvious in MacBird! where Garson creates three such characters, the Egg of Head (Adlai Stevenson), the Earl of Warren (Earl Warren) and Wayne of Morse (Wayne Morse).

## 3. Shakespearian characters

In some cases, Shakespeare refers to characters without having them appear. Occasionally an adapter chooses to actually present them. For example, Forrest and Dighton, the murderers of the Princes in the Tower, do not appear in Richard III, but they do in Dick Deterred. (This is, of course, related to the decision to show the plot details of the 'murder'/bugging of Watergate scene.)

### c) Name and title changes

There are two motives for these alterations:

#### 1. Shakespeare/real life correspondences

In the simulations the task of the adapter is to create characters who are both recognisably Shakespearian and recognisably specific modern politicians. For example, Richard in Dick Deterred must represent both Richard III and Richard Nixon. One way of achieving this is to play around with the names and titles of the characters. Edgar does this most

cleverly, his plan in general being to use Shakespeare's surnames with Christian names and titles from modern American politics. Thus, in order to link Shakespeare's Lord Hastings and John N. Mitchell (formerly a corporation lawyer, then Attorney-General; later, campaign director of the Committee to Re-elect the President), Edgar creates John, Lord Hastings (a corporation lawyer, later Attorney-General of the U.S.; later director of the Citizens' Committee to Re-elect the President). Similarly, Sir William Catesby/Ronald L. Zeigler become Sir Ron Catesby (press secretary to the President, as Zeigler was). Another way of linking the two personages is by a slight alteration of Shakespeare's name to incorporate that of the real politician. Thus Hamlet/Sam Ervin becomes Samlet; Claudius/Richard becomes Claudickus; Duncan/Kennedy becomes Ken O'Dunc.

## 2. Altered context

In some of these adaptations, Shakespeare's names are preserved, but their titles change in order to indicate that these are (non-specific) modern politicians. Thus, Shakespeare's kings become presidents; Bowen's Brutus is Minister of the Interior; Brenton's Provost is called a Prison Governor while Escalus is Undersecretary. The status of these characters remains constant, but that status is given a different title in the specific context depicted.



## Context

There is little to say about invariant contexts because the main stylistic feature of the transposed plays is that the context changes. If the context is invariant then the adaptation cannot belong to this group of plays.

The following analysis is based on the Shakespeare adaptations described in this chapter, all of which have been transposed to the present or recent past. However, it should be realised that modern society is only one of many possible cultures into which Shakespeare's plots may be transposed. Another possibility (a primitive African tribe) will be shown in Chapter 7.

There are five main headings under which we can discuss the ways in which the context of Shakespeare's play is altered: time, location, contemporary references, modern political procedures and consumer society.

### a) Time

Although all these plays take place in the present or recent past, this need not be the case for all transpositions (as suggested above). It is, however, the easiest way to indicate 'contemporary relevance' for it is the parallels with modern society which the adapter is usually wanting to expose. The simulations, which refer to specific political events such as Watergate, are precisely dated by those events; the plays which are less specific purport to be confronting issues of importance today.



b) Location

Most of these adapters do change the location of the action, though Osborne chooses to keep Shakespeare's location of Rome, Corioli and Antium, and Geidt and Marks transfer the events of Watergate to Elsinore. These transpositions use two other types of location:

1. A modern country (often the adapter's own country or that where the real events occurred)

The writers of simulations often use this type of location because it helps to pin-point the specific events being alluded to. For example, both Watergate and the events of Dick Deterred take place in the United States of America, though Richard III has an English location. However, sometimes the location is changed in order to bring the events nearer home, as when Brenton moves Measure for Measure from Vienna to 'an England', with references to Lords Cricket Ground and Hyde Park Corner. This is an attempt to make the political events appear relevant to the spectators - it prevents the reply 'That couldn't happen here' because what Brenton implies is that it is happening here.

2. An imaginary country

Some adapters are anxious not to implicate any one country in their political portraits, presumably thereby feeling freer to express their beliefs, and so they create imaginary countries. Another reason for using an imaginary country is that there is no modern equivalent to the country or political

structure of Shakespeare's play. Thus Bowen's location is merely 'various parts of an imaginary country'. Using this anonymity as a base, Bowen then proceeds to make fairly specific criticisms about a political system, that of the military dictatorship (the 'Heil' of the title suggesting Hitler and fascism).

These locations are not the only possible ones - any culture of any age can be used.

c) References to contemporary issues and events

Several of these adaptations, particularly those set in specific modern locations, incorporate references and allusions to specific political events that have occurred or to social and political issues of importance in the modern world. These are incidental references and do not form an integral part of the plot. An example occurs in MacBird! where a messenger arrives to tell MacBird of various uprisings:

MESSENGER:	There's news, more news!	
MACBIRD:	Spit out your spiteful news.	
MESSENGER:	Peace paraders marching!	
MACBIRD:		Stop 'em!
MESSENGER:	Beatniks burning draft cards.	
MACBIRD:		Jail 'em!
MESSENGER:	Negroes starting sit-ins.	
MACBIRD:		Gas 'em!
MESSENGER:	Latin rebels rising.	
MACBIRD:		Shoot 'em!
MESSENGER:	Asian peasants arming.	
MACBIRD:		Bomb 'em!
MESSENGER:	Congressmen complaining.	
MACBIRD:		Fuck 'em!

(Act III Scene 1 pp.53-54)



A politically aware audience would recognise each of these rebellions as references to actual disturbances in America. Dick Deterred is also full of such allusions to modern American politics, for example, Elizabeth's comment to Plantagenet:

And know thee that the war itself goes on  
And rumor hath it, it extends to Laos  
All secretly, and also to Cambodia.  
(Act I Scene 3 p.35)

Issues such as racial prejudice and woman's liberation, though not assuming plot or thematic importance, often contribute to the general background of the play. Contemporary references have two main functions: they emphasise the modernity of the plays and, in consequence, they suggest the relevance to the spectators of the political life depicted. The references force the audience to continually relate what is being shown on the stage to the political manipulation in their own country, and usually the way in which the political set-up is portrayed impels criticism of the real-life set-up. However, a further consequence of these specific references is that the adaptations very quickly become dated and largely incomprehensible. Spectators who are too young to have experienced the original political events alluded to will frequently be lost in a mass of references, unable to distinguish between those which concern real past events and those which are invented. If the adaptation is successful, it



should be able to transcend this difficulty by the overall power of its structural development, but where that structure is absent, the play will quickly sink into oblivion, having little to say beyond its personalised remarks.

d) Modern political tools, techniques and procedures

As the aim of most of these adaptations is to expose a political system which bears some relation to modern politics, the political machine is also modernised, and all the plays refer to techniques of political manipulation currently used. Thus the importance of language as a way of manipulating public opinion is dominant in A Place Calling Itself Rome - it is suggested that only the outward form matters, not the politicians' true beliefs, and not their deeds. One obvious modern sophistication is the use of statistical data in assessing support, determining one's image and so on. Thus in MacBird! the following interchange occurs:

JOHN: And now to plan the tone of our campaign.  
Have you the calculations I requested? (sd)

AIDE: Aye, here my liege, the output based upon  
A partial computation of the data.

AIDE holds out IBM output sheets to JOHN but  
MACBIRD gets hold of them. Val

MACBIRD: A powerful mess o' numbers. Pray, what's that?

AIDE: A psycho-sexual index of the symbols  
We use in predetermining his image,  
With variables projected ... If you please!  
The final print-out can't be made till morning.  
(Act I Scene 3 p.17)

Not only does this show the use of computer data but it also indicates MacBird's lack of familiarity with such techniques, suggesting the degree to which he is

an outsider. Similarly, Dick Deterred contains references to opinion polls, press statements and television broadcasts, all ways of creating images and then finding out how successful the creation has been.

Another procedure typical of modern politics is the use of the committee, and it is fitting that in Bowen's version, Caesar is killed in a small committee room rather than before the Capitol. The phrase 'behind closed doors' is often used today to suggest the invidiousness of secret political manoeuvring, and the killing of Caesar is symbolic of such scheming. In a Western democracy such as England or America, party politics forms the basis of the whole political structure - politicians are representatives of parties for that is the way to build mass support. Party politics therefore appears in these plays (for example, references to Democrats and Republicans in Dick Deterred), and brings with it certain corollaries. Particularly in England but also in any democracy, the idea of 'fairness' is essential - all parties must have an equal chance of success. This idea is brought out in Heil Caesar!. In Shakespeare's version, Antony is allowed to speak to the crowd as a favour given by Brutus; Bowen's Antony, however, cites the law to obtain what he wants by right:



ANTONY: You'll give us the right of reply?

BRUTUS: What?

ANTONY: Equal time. It's the law. Written into the Television Act. If any political party makes a television broadcast, the opposition has the right of equal time to reply.  
(p.39)

Brutus, of course, agrees, despite Cassius's scorn, and as in Shakespeare it leads directly to their downfall. By incorporating modern techniques and attitudes, the adapters again create a familiar context giving spectators points of reference which can be related to political stories they read in the newspapers.

e) Products of a commercial and industrial society

Because these adaptations are usually located in modern developed countries there is a welter of 'things' both present on stage and referred to in all of the plays. Thus television and radio are used for broadcasts to the nation; electric and electronic artifacts such as telephones, tape-recorders, microphones and films help characters to maintain surveillance on one another; people travel by aeroplanes, cars and trains; finally, there are many mass-produced objects in use such as aerosol cans, razor blades and sticky tape. Some of these objects are integral parts of the play, such as microphones and tapes in Dick Deterred; others are more supportive in that they merely contribute to the overall familiarity, a picture of every-day life.



In general, the change of context is made in order to create both familiarity and relevance. The modern context gives us, among other things, a political frame of reference, a set-up which we can recognise, and this makes the political ideas presented in the play more relevant - we feel that the adapters are concerned with life today and the way politics as we know it is organised. With so much being obviously true or true-to-life, the adapter can then go one stage further and we will assume that that too is true. For instance, Dick Deterred is full of well-substantiated facts about Nixon, and if Edgar slips in a few details which are unsubstantiated, we are unlikely to doubt them even if we can discern them.

### Theme

The Shakespeare plays used as bases for the transposed adaptations are all themselves highly political, and this political theme remains invariant in the adaptations. Thus both versions of Measure for Measure and of Coriolanus consider the obligations and limitations of leadership; Macbeth and MacBird! are both concerned with assassination and lawful inheritance; Richard III and Dick Deterred depict the misuse of power; the Caesar plays concern the ethics and problems of revolution; Samlet and Hamlet are both about the difficulties of bringing about justice. The subject of the play therefore remains more-or-less constant, but the attitude to that subject changes.

In general, modern adapters are far more cynical than Shakespeare, and this combines with the realities of modern politics to produce plays which are more severe, bitter and disillusioned than Shakespeare's. This disenchantment is evident in various different, though related, areas:

a) Adverse criticism of all politicians

The most general common theme is that all politicians are either corrupt or inept (not unlike Shakespeare's conclusion, in Henry VI, that a good man cannot also be a good king). Thus Bowen's Brutus, Brenton's Duke and Samlet may mean well, but they achieve nothing, and are either finally killed or confined to a wheelchair; Angelo, MacBird and Richard are less sympathetic than in Shakespeare's versions; MacBird!, Dick Deterred and Samlet constitute personalised attacks on Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon. This is symptomatic of the general disillusionment with politicians and world leaders: indicative of this is the fact that on a recent Any Questions programme the panel was asked which living world leaders they considered to be great, and no member of the panel felt able to come up with an answer. When a man wielding as much power as Nixon did and with such an influential position, is shown to have been so corrupt, it is not surprising that people become reluctant to hold with respect the offices in which politicians are employed. The general public, as represented by the adapters, becomes sceptical.



b) The importance of the politician's image

Every politician has at least two identities, the public image and the private person. The two sides may meet at many points, but there will always be some traits cultivated for the benefit of the public, and other traits desperately hidden from them. The modern politician has at his disposal many tools which help him to create the public image closest to the 'ideal politician' of a large section of the public, but the creation of such an image has always been a major task of any politician. One of the most important of these tools, both now and in the past, is a command of language. A politician can use language (and always has done, as we see in Shakespeare's plays) to persuade, cajole, incite to rebellion and so on, and as Osborne points out in his play, it is what the politician says at any one time, rather than what he does, that has the most impact. In one sense the effect of language is greater today because of the prevalence of mass media - a moving speech is now witnessed by millions on television instead of a few hundred at a political meeting. On the other hand, the quality of language is deteriorating as increasingly emphatic terms are required to convince a sceptical electorate, and in this sense language is less effective than it used to be.

Problems arise for the politician when his private traits are discovered and do not accord with the public image. Thus, the greatest threat to a politician is the threat of exposure, especially as the media which



create his image can as thoroughly destroy it.

Consequently the politicians go to extreme lengths to keep the private traits hidden while the public try to discover them. Hence the prevalence of spying, scheming, secrecy and general deceit. Both Dick Deterred and Measure for Measure depict a head of state whose private life is in direct opposition to his stated principles, and if the private behaviour were to become known generally, that head of state would suffer. Richard's behaviour does become known and he is killed for it; Angelo, however, manages to prevent the exposure of his sexual antics and so remains in power.

No system of government, whether it be a democracy or a dictatorship, can survive without the consent of the people. The public (sometimes represented by journalists and judges) is therefore the ultimate judge of a politician, and this is evident in the plays of Bowen and Osborne (using events in the Shakespearian original): Antony's speech incites the people to condemn the conspirators who are forced to flee; the tribunes incite the mob to call for Coriolanus's banishment. However, the ease with which all the politicians are seen to manipulate the public causes the audience ultimately to condemn the masses as fickle, changeable and indiscriminate, a conclusion warranted by Shakespeare's plays as well as the adaptations.

c) The lack of final order

In Shakespeare's plays there is an established order, and peace remains only as long as this natural scheme is maintained. Where the harmony is disturbed then all nature is unruly until order is once again established. Thus, at the end of most of Shakespeare's plays, the natural order reasserts itself. For example, Caesar is killed, but by the end of the play the conspirators are dead and Caesar's heir is in power. However, few of the adaptations allow themselves the luxury of such orderly resolutions. There is often a suggestion that the violence and injustice continues rather than ends. The triumvirate may be in power in Rome by the end of Heil Caesar!, but Cassius and his guerillas are preparing to challenge that power; Angelo, the vicious hypocrite, is still in power in Brenton's play; Robert Ken O'Dunc is preparing to follow in MacBird's bloody footsteps; Samlet fails to kill Claudickus who consequently continues to reign. Such pessimism suggests a lack of faith in the modern political system which allows such hypocrites and power-seekers to attain highly influential positions - not only do the villains reach these positions but also, once there, they are very difficult to dislodge. The adapters seem to feel that democracy and the processes of law are hollow forms rather than real examples of freedom of choice and justice.



We have seen that under each of these headings (language, plot, character, context and theme) there are various possible types of alteration of the original Shakespeare play. However, all the cultural transpositions have the following features in common:

#### Invariant

1. The overall political plot of the Shakespeare play, excluding the resolution, is preserved, i.e. the initial situation and its immediate development remain the same.
2. The relationships between the characters are equivalent to the Shakespearian relationships in terms of alliance, opposition and political status.
3. The main theme of the play is political.

#### Variant

1. The action takes place in a non-Shakespearian culture, usually modern society.
2. Most of the language of each play is modernised.

An adaptation which does not conform to these general rules cannot be considered as a culturally transposed adaptation.

We shall now turn to some of the issues raised by this group of adaptations, beginning with a consideration of the simulations.

First let us consider the appropriateness of the term 'simulation'. In general, these plays are referred to as parodies. To take examples from reviews, Robert Brustein commented that "MacBird! is one of the best and most-needed political parodies of the post-war period",<sup>12</sup> and John Elsom referred to "David Edgar's brilliant parody of Richard the Third, Dick Deterred ...".<sup>13</sup> However, the



New English Dictionary gives the following definition of 'parody':

A composition in prose or verse in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase in an author or class of authors are imitated in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects;

Undoubtedly the plays under consideration do use many of the techniques of parody, as has already been shown in the discussion of language variants. However, one of the key points seems to be that the original author, in this case Shakespeare, should be the subject of ridicule - if so, then the simulations are not parodies for the purpose is not to ridicule Shakespeare's ideas or his language but to criticise the modern politicians. The attitude of the adapters to Shakespeare is in fact far more reverent for they use his plays as a basis for their own to add weight to their own political comments.

What does the writer of a simulation actually do? To begin with he notices certain similarities between a real political situation and the plot of a Shakespeare play, and he then proceeds to write his own play in which he presents these similarities; he does this by fitting the real events around the Shakespeare plot, adding and omitting as necessary. In other words, the adaptation is designed to simulate (i.e. 'to have the external features of, to present a strong resemblance to' N.E.D.) both the Shakespeare play and the real events. Hence the term 'simulation'.

In fact, though all the simulations are comedies in that they make us laugh, the aim is not really ridicule because the subject is too serious. In a play where Johnson is accused of Kennedy's assassination, to ridicule Johnson would be to excuse his actions and it is therefore morally unjustifiable - the comment is more sharply critical; the same applies to Nixon's misdemeanors.

Howard Brenton explains why comedy is such a widespread form today.<sup>14</sup> He maintains that

the only thing that binds us together today is profound unease, and laughter is the language of that unease.

Hence all his plays (including Measure for Measure) make us laugh, though they are about serious topics.

Further issues raised by the simulations concern the problems caused when the correspondence between the Shakespeare play and the real events are not complete. There are two ways this can happen:

1. Some of the events in Shakespeare have no equivalent in the real situation

In this case the adapter has three possible courses:

a) He can omit the events - where possible, this is desirable.

b) He can include the events. However, the only reason for doing this is to preserve the resemblance between the simulation and the Shakespeare play. As there is no reference to actuality, such episodes are purely gratuitous and, as such, superfluous. Thus all events in the simulation should have a true reference



to actuality which is either known or assumed, or which could feasibly have taken place. Gilman describes the weakness of superfluous material in relation to MacBird!:<sup>15</sup>

... there is a persistent straining to keep up with the chosen plot, a backing and filling, a pressure to include long stretches of unpertinent and internally arid material, a continual arriving at the necessity, to quote the key line of Macbeth itself, of "outrunning the pauser, reason," at the center of which latter movement lies the ultimate necessity of including the murder of his leader by the protagonist.

c) The above quotation is also pertinent to this third possible course for the adapter - he can manipulate the real events so that they appear to simulate the Shakespearian events. This is indefensible, for two reasons:

i) The point of any simulation is to comment on real political events. If the adapter alters those events, then he is not commenting on anything but his own fabrication, in which case all the references to actuality are irrelevant and superfluous.

ii) More importantly, by altering the facts the adapter knowingly presents a false version of 'reality', and this is unethical,<sup>16</sup> at least when the people portrayed in the play are still alive.



If the Shakespearian events which have no equivalent in actuality are so crucial to the Shakespeare plot that they need to be included even at the expense of falsifying the simulated reality, then the Shakespeare play chosen is obviously a poor reflection of the real situation, and the simulation should be abandoned as pointless.

2. Key events in the real situation have no equivalents in the Shakespeare play

Again, the adapter could miss out the events. However, as the object of comment is the real situation, the adapter is obliged to portray that situation as accurately as possible. He is therefore at liberty to include extra characters and plot elements in order to achieve this accuracy. However, if such additions are too extensive the similarity with the Shakespeare play will be undermined and the point of the simulation will be lost.

Obviously, the closer the correspondences between Shakespeare and reality, the more powerful the simulation. Where the correspondences are not really close the result is inevitably unsatisfactory, for since much of the delight of these plays is the intellectual appreciation of the Shakespeare/reality equivalence, a straining for equivalence which is not justified is intellectually frustrating. Also, because the simulations take material from both Shakespeare and reality, the resulting adaptation is often internally inconsistent for in some respects the two worlds are contradictory (as in the case of an elected leader versus a monarch).

The simulations are a special case within this group of transposed adaptations, and we will now consider issues raised by the group as a whole. One question we can ask is: Why use a Shakespeare play at all? Given that the objective is to comment on modern politics, there is no necessity to base the play on Shakespeare. However, six different writers have chosen to use Shakespeare, and it is interesting to attempt to discern why this is so. The adapters have two possible starting points, modern politics or the Shakespeare play. Those writing simulations probably<sup>17</sup> begin with modern politics, noticing in the situation similarities with a Shakespeare plot with which they are already familiar. The other adapters, however, probably begin with the Shakespeare play. Bowen is explicit about this for he was commissioned by the BBC<sup>18</sup>

to write a modern version of Julius Caesar which would make the politics and events clear without the distraction of archaic language.

This stated aim is therefore a greater ease of comprehension of the Shakespeare play. The same could be said of the plays of Osborne and Brenton, but in fact all three adapters, not content merely to clarify Shakespeare's politics, add their own political comments which have little or no basis in Shakespeare (for example, Bowen's guerilla tactics). It seems, therefore, that though the Shakespeare play may be the starting point for these adapters, ultimately their interest is not in interpretation and clarification but in



how they can use this starting point to comment on the modern world. They may begin by attempting to make Shakespeare's play relevant, but in fact they go beyond that and incorporate new meanings. Because the emphasis is on the new culture (such as the modern world), these plays, including the simulations, tend to be independent of Shakespeare. They depict a coherent narrative and make their political comments with no reliance on a knowledge of Shakespeare in the spectator. However, this is not to say that a knowledge of the Shakespeare play is not useful - such knowledge can broaden our appreciation of the adaptation in various ways:

1. It allows an intellectual appreciation of correspondences in the simulations (already referred to).
2. It helps to pin-point those aspects of the original changed by the adapter, thus indicating his main interests.
3. It supplies the spectator with a set of ready responses which can be applied to the Shakespearian equivalent (for example, knowledge of Shakespeare's Richard III causes the spectator to immediately condemn Edgar's Richard, and by implication Richard Nixon, as evil)<sup>19</sup> - this provides a short-cut to critical judgement.
4. It creates an awareness of the universality of particular issues and problems confronting leaders and politicians.

More important than a knowledge of Shakespeare is an awareness of current affairs. If we cannot pick up the references to politicians and political events and systems, then the political comment is weakened. This is particularly true of the simulations where the object of criticism is



specific, and for this reason they are less likely to survive than the other transpositions. However, even these other transpositions require their spectators to recognise aspects of the British political system.

One important difference between the modern political systems of Britain and America on the one hand, and the political system of Shakespeare's England on the other, is that today the active political leader is elected whereas during Shakespeare's life the monarch was supreme. The monarch was not elected and came to power merely by virtue of being the next in succession, whether or not he or she had any aptitude for the task. For this reason the personality of the monarch was far more bound up with the business of government than is the case today - in an elected assembly all members have certain traits in common, such as an ability to discourse and persuade others to a point of view, a concern to improve conditions and so on; a monarch, on the other hand, need have no such traits, and in fact he may be totally bored by the whole subject of government, preferring prayer, philosophy, or the good life. This change in the political system has repercussions in the adaptations. Whereas Shakespeare's plays present both personal and political aspects of their characters, the adaptations tend to choose either the personal or the political aspects, and one of the common features of the transpositions is that they concentrate on the political issues, ignoring the psychological aspects of their characters.<sup>20</sup> Thus, even in the simulations where specific politicians are depicted,

the protagonists are criticised for what they do. There is no examination of their inner feelings - any internal conflicts or doubts they may have concerning the way they reach their decisions are irrelevant, for a politician is judged by what he does, either publicly or (if it has any bearing on his public actions) in private. For this reason, the transpositions concentrate on action and events rather than on the individual.

Howard Brenton specifically states his dissatisfaction with psychological presentations of character in any play:<sup>21</sup>

I've always been against psychology in plays. I think that psychology is used like a wet blanket by many playwrights, and as a very easy explanation and I wanted to stop that dead in its tracks ... One of the formal ways of doing that was to emphasize the role, the action. If you fit the two conflicting elements of the action into the same actor, there is no danger, or it lessens the danger, of an actor working out a psychological performance.

This dissatisfaction is fairly widespread among modern political writers, and contributes to the dominance of action and events.

As a final point it should be stressed that the role of the adapter here is less that of a politician than of a commentator on politics. None of these adapters put forward positive ideas about how to govern. Instead, they criticise the way others go about the task, and in particular show up the misuse of power.



## Chapter 2: Summary

In this chapter we have considered six plays which in general preserve Shakespeare's plot, characters and political theme while transposing the language and context to another culture. The aim of a transposition is to present the political events of a Shakespeare play in such a way that we relate them to a (usually) modern political situation - to this end, additions to the Shakespeare plot are often made in order to sharpen the critical comment. Half of these plays (MacBird!, Dick Deterred and Samlet) form a special group, termed 'simulations', which aim to depict correspondences between a Shakespeare plot and a specific series of political events and characters. Where the correspondences are not really close enough for such an exercise, the resulting simulation is strained, full of superfluous material, or inaccurate. The chief obligation of the adapter writing a simulation is to present the real events accurately for only then will the comments be worthwhile. In general, the political comment of the transpositions can be assimilated without reference to Shakespeare, though a knowledge of current affairs is necessary. However, a knowledge of the Shakespeare play broadens our appreciation of the adaptation in various ways. Despite this, the object of the adapter's criticism is modern politics, not the Shakespeare play. As a result, the emphasis is on action and events rather than on individual characters.

Notes

1. John Bowen, 'Introduction' in Heil Caesar!  
(BBC Publications, London, 1974.) p.14
2. Bowen, p.14
3. Bowen, p.10
4. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.) p.23
5. Coriolanus says of Aufidius:  
  
'You are everything by starts, and nothing long.'  
  
Dryden says of Zimri:  
  
'Was everything by starts, and nothing long:' (548)  
  
Dryden was here referring to George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham (1628-1687), who was brilliant but unstable. By using this allusion Osborne shows that he sees Aufidius as similar in character to Buckingham, and wishes the audience to make the same connection in order to gain an understanding of Aufidius' character.
6. Oleg Kerensky, The New British Drama (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1977.) p.207
7. Richard Gilman, 'MacBird! and its audience'  
(New American Review, 1967, no.1, pp.123-134.) p.131
8. The Watergate scandal has also been dramatised in other ways, mainly on film. All the President's Men is a straight documentary dramatisation of the events i.e. the actors take the roles of actual politicians such as Nixon, and of the two journalists who uncovered the scandal, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward.  
  
Behind Closed Doors is ostensibly a dramatisation



of what typically happens in American politics, though in fact it is fairly closely modelled on Watergate; however, characters have fictitious names.

It would be interesting to discover which method of dramatisation was most effective in terms of impressing upon spectators the deficiencies of the political system in operation at the time of Watergate. However, such an enquiry is beyond the scope of this thesis.

9. See Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, All the President's Men (Warner Books, New York, 1975. Orig. pub. 1974) p.208.
10. In this respect Brenton's adaptation is like Marowitz's version of Measure for Measure where, though the Duke returns and again has the power, he refuses to believe Isabella's story, and supports Angelo.
11. It is interesting to note that the epic quality achieved by Shakespeare in his plays by a spread of characters is for the most part undermined by the adapters who omit many of these characters.
12. Source unknown. Quoted on the cover of the published text.
13. John Elsom, 'Theatre: Edgar's goat' (The Listener, vol.91, 7 March 1974, p.316.)
14. Howard Brenton (interview with Catherine Itzen and Simon Trussler), 'Petrol bombs through the proscenium arch' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.V, no.17, 1975, pp.4-20) p.6
15. Gilman, p.128

16. There is a problem here of exactly what constitutes an unethical play. For example, Shakespeare's Richard III presents a view of Richard which modern historians believe to be wrong. (See Paul Murray Kendall, Richard the Third, Allen and Unwin, London, 1955.) They do not believe that Richard planned to gain the throne as early as Edward's accession, and that all his actions were directed to that end. They also dispute that he was greatly deformed. Was Shakespeare deliberately falsifying the facts for his own purposes? If so, is this permissible, even if the result is a good play? Another point to remember is that the Tudor historians presented Richard III as monstrous, and Shakespeare would probably have based his ideas on the views of those historians. Perhaps a historical story may be remoulded, with little regard to fact, once the characters are dead, and not before.
17. One can only give probabilities as we have little concrete evidence about the creative process - these comments are largely speculation based on the type of play which has been written.
18. Bowen, p.8
19. These preconceived ideas can be used by the adapter in ways described in Chapter 1.
20. Osborne's first scene, where Coriolanus writes down his inner thoughts, would appear to contradict this statement. However, the rest of Osborne's play does concentrate on actions and events, bearing little relation to the first scene, and the generalisation appears valid.
21. Brenton, p.8



## CHAPTER 3:: DOMESTICATIONS

Ashley Dukes Return to Danes Hill (pub. 1958)

George Kauffman Hamlet, Incorporated (pub. 1955)<sup>1</sup>

Bernard Kops The Hamlet of Stepney Green (1958)

Robin Maugham Mister Lear (1956)

Elmer Rice Cue For Passion (1958)

The above five plays are similar to the cultural transpositions in that the context is altered. However, whereas the context of the transposed plays remains political, with only the culture changing, that of the domestications is made modern and domestic. Thus instead of political leaders concerned about their empires, we are shown fathers concerned for their children and for their homes, and children trying to come to terms with their world. The scope is no longer epic; it is intensely personal. In consequence, just as the transposed adaptations concentrate on political aspects while ignoring the personal features, so these domesticated adaptations ignore political aspects while concentrating on personalities.

Of the five plays listed above, Kauffman's Hamlet, Incorporated is the odd one out. Though it exhibits some of the features of the other four plays (particularly the modern domestic context), not all the comments made in this chapter will apply to that play. To some extent it is therefore a misfit, but as it is such a slight play it certainly does not warrant a separate category, and it is included here for the sake of completeness.

It is interesting to note that of the five plays, four are adaptations of Hamlet - such concentration on one play occurs in no other group discussed in this thesis, and it is a measure of the fascination which Hamlet's personality has held for writers. The other adaptation is of King Lear, and we will begin with a description of Maugham's play, Mister Lear.

'Mister Lear' is, in fact, Walter Craine, a successful, though fading, writer. He has three daughters, Rose (married to Alan who has political ambitions), Enid (a spinster who makes pots which unfortunately leak) and Jane (the youngest and Walter's favourite); he also has a secretary (Peter) and a butler (Harold Kent, a friend of long-standing).

The play traces Walter's discoveries about the true nature of his three daughters in much the same way as King Lear does, the crucial difference being that Walter acquires no self-knowledge. His two eldest daughters want Walter to make them a financial settlement, and he is persuaded to do so by learning that his literary rival has been offered a knighthood - Walter resolves to pay no more tax to the government, and makes the settlement to avoid death duties. The Cordelia-figure, Jane, is omitted from the arrangement because her fiancé, Luke (alias L.T.G.Finch, the socialist son of a wealthy viscount) refuses to retract a damning review he has written about Walter's latest book, and Jane walks out with Luke. Like Lear, then, at the outset Walter is an unsympathetic character - pompous, and full of his own importance.



Act II takes place about eight months later. As in Shakespeare's play, the ungrateful daughters have totally taken over their premature inheritance, in this case relegating Walter to a dark basement flat. Walter has been in America where he has lost a lot of money by backing an unsuccessful musical. Jane joins her sisters to welcome their father, saying that she bears no grudge for being disinherited. Luke, now Lord Atherton (owing to his father's death) also arrives, but Jane breaks their engagement when she realises that he has forgotten his earlier socialist principles and has decided instead to use his title and become a company director. She accuses him of dishonesty. However, after this 'contretemps', she leaves and so is not present to greet her father. When Walter arrives, he is warmly welcomed by Rose and Enid, and he complains about Jane's disloyalty and ingratitude, thus causing spectators to remain unsympathetic despite their knowledge of the shock about to befall him. Walter looks around him, commenting on various changes made, but only gradually does he realise that his daughters have no intention of restoring the house to normal now he is back. What is more, they have the legal right to do as they like with the house, and as his financial speculation in America has left him almost bankrupt, indeed, in immediate need of £12,000, he is totally dependent on Rose and Enid. The two women refuse to give him any money, Rose actually saying 'This house and its contents belong to us. And the sooner you get out the better.' (II,1,p.50) Walter replies with some Lear-like epithets ('You treacherous tricoteuse! You scheming harpies! You unnatural hags!' (II,1,p.50)) and storms out into the foggy night. Such an exit contributes

to his pomposity and self-aggrandisement.

We are not shown any of Walter's benighted wanderings, only his return with Harold and Peter, the three having spent most of the evening in the Rose and Garter public house. Their return interrupts the dinner party being given by Rose and Alan for Violet Danefield, the Minister of Food. While in the pub, Walter and his friends have obviously devised a scheme to make Walter's life easier, and Peter puts this into action by relating a story about a man who made over his money to his two sons and died three years later: the sons (who had spent the money) could not pay the death duties (five years having to elapse before death duties can be avoided) and so were made bankrupt. Harold and Peter then make remarks about Walter's weakness and failing health, warning Rose, Alan and Enid that great care must be taken of him. At this point Violet takes Walter's side, realising that this man is Walter Craine whose books she greatly enjoys. She castigates her hosts in no uncertain terms:

I can see that you won't go very far in politics. I've never dined with a more unpleasant trio. You try to humiliate your distinguished father in his own house. You deny him drink and insult his oldest friends. I consider your behaviour beyond the pale.  
(II,2,p.62)

Walter tells Violet that she will always be welcome, and the scene ends. By now we are beginning to feel some warmth for Walter because he has indubitably been wronged (though



the original division was largely a result of greed - the desire to avoid taxes) and, more importantly, other characters in the play support him (i.e. Peter, Harold, Violet).

By the beginning of Act III, then, Walter has discovered who his friends and enemies are, with the exception of Jane: he still has to discover her loyalty and also to extricate himself from his financial predicament. The illusion of Walter's weakness is maintained until Rose and Enid reveal that, with the help of a bit of bribery, they have contrived to insure Walter's life for £12,000. Meanwhile, Jane has returned. Walter is moved by her matter-of-fact statement 'You were in trouble and I wanted to see you.' (III, p. 67), and admits that he missed her. They then discuss (unsuccessfully) how to raise the £12,000 needed to pay his creditors, and at this point learn about the insurance. Walter is furious and leaves. Peter now begins to assume more importance in the play. Throughout he has been portrayed as honest, loyal and reliable, and Rose and Enid begin competing for his affections (as Goneril and Regan compete over Edmund). Peter, however, wants nothing to do with them, and turns to Jane to protect him. Rose and Enid are insulted; Jane agrees to marry Peter. The play ends with a series of events relating to Walter's finances. One solution is proposed by Violet who offers to marry Walter and pay his debts (she needs a husband for political reasons). Before a decision is made, another solution presents itself. Luke arrives with his glamorous fiancée Julia and offers to buy Walter's rights

in the unsuccessful musical (Julia being one of the cast) and Walter accepts. The ending shows Walter in rather a bad light for, thinking Violet is absent, he insults her:

Harold, do you appreciate what a narrow escape I've had. Fifteen minutes ago I nearly became the consort of the Minstress of Fodder. Only fifteen minutes ago! What an escape! Behave myself in a manner befitting the husband of a Cabinet Minister, indeed! What impudence! The blatant conceit of the woman astounds me.  
(III, p.83)

Considering that Violet has supported him so outspokenly and offered to pay his debts, Walter here is being just as ungrateful as his own daughters have been - he has achieved no self-awareness and is mainly concerned with his own comfort, as always. Violet, in fact, has heard the last part of Walter's speech and, being upset, removes her spectacles. Walter then realises that she is an attractive woman, and when they both agree that (apart from literature) good food is the most important thing in life, we realise that the wedding will still take place.

Basically Maugham has adopted the idea of the divided kingdom followed by the daughters' ingratitude, but he makes little of it beyond showing that people are no more grateful today than in Shakespeare's time. All Shakespeare's ideas and actions are toned down so that there are no extremes (and certainly no deaths), and the Lear-figure, despite experiencing the foggy night, acquires no insights. From beginning to end he is concerned only about himself.



By the end of the play three marriages are in the offing, Walter is solvent and no one much cares what happens to Rose, Alan and Enid.

Ruby Cohn dismisses the whole play as trivial,<sup>2</sup> but Gros Louis gives the play more attention and suggests that the situation presented in the play has tragicomic potential. This potential is not realised because Maugham chooses a somewhat artificial light comedy ending. Gros Louis describes the transformation as follows:<sup>3</sup>

Walter Craine is a comic character, not a tragic hero, but his situation is by no means laughable. During the first two acts money matters less to him than people do, and accordingly he suffers emotionally. Increasingly, however, he worries about money rather than human relationships; this modern Lear comes to view his misfortunes as merely a financial dilemma. Since his problem is monetary, it is remediable and therefore neither tragicomic nor tragic. This modern alteration does much more than replace a King with a Mister, or turn a tragedy into a comedy; it changes a spiritual man into an economic being.

Certainly Walter's situation is not laughable, but it is a result of his own greed and vanity. Possibly people do matter more to him than money but this is because he has money whereas people (for example the reviewer L.T.G.Finch) are beginning to criticise him, and his main interest in people is their approbation. Money only becomes important when he loses it. Thus, Gros Louis' comment gives rather an idealised picture of Walter - he has no tragic potential because he has no redeeming features of personality. He may be temporarily moved by Jane's return, but he soon passes on to more pressing matters. On the other hand, 'the other side', that is, Rose, Alan and Enid, is even

more obnoxious and obviously money-grabbing. Compared with them, Walter does show up in a better light for he at least has some life in him. He obviously inspires others (Violet through his books, Harold during the war) and though his best deeds are in the past he deserves some respect for them.

Though no one would describe this play as particularly good, it does attempt to depict a possible situation in the modern world where Lear's actions and feelings would not be out of place. The trouble with the play is that it has little of significance to say except, perhaps, to show that if you cheat the government of its taxes you will get your comeuppance!

Bernard Kops' The Hamlet of Stepney Green is very different and follows the Shakespearian plot less obviously. It is set in the house and garden of Sam and Bessie Levy in Stepney Green, a Jewish area of London's East End.

Basically the play deals with the attempts of Sam Levy, a man who feels he has not made the best of his life, to teach his son David how to seize his opportunities. We first see this advisory situation when the play opens. Sam is convinced that he is about to die, and he tries to persuade David to settle down to a good job (preferably taking over Sam's herring stall) and a steady Jewish girl who will share his interests. David, however, wants to be a singer, and though there is a steady Jewish girl available (Hava), David hardly notices her. Towards the end of



Act I, believing himself to be alone, Sam speaks metaphorically of having been poisoned by his wife and his life:

My heart is jumping, all the bitterness of years I  
can taste in my throat. I've been poisoned by someone  
or something. What's the odds? By my life or my  
wife. But my wife was my life; so my life poisoned  
me, so my wife poisoned me.  
(I, p.124)

In fact David overhears these words and interprets them literally. Sam then dies and David is convinced that he has been murdered.

Act II takes place just after Sam's funeral. David thinks he is alone, but gradually realises that Sam's ghost is also present. Sam manages to convince David that he is not mad, and states:

Davey, don't you see - I live only in your mind and  
heart. No one else will see me; nobody else will  
want to.  
(II,1,p.130)

Sam has returned in order to help David to settle down. David, however, is convinced that Sam really wants him to avenge Sam's murder. This merely exasperates Sam who wants no such thing:

Murder? Oh, what's he on about now? Oh, well - listen -  
even if I was killed, I don't want revenge for that,  
whether I was poisoned, gassed, burned, or struck by  
lightening. I want revenge for the way I lived -  
for the self-deception, the petty lies and silly  
quarrels.  
(II,1,p.130)

David will not listen and, determined to gain revenge, he models himself on Hamlet:

I must become a crazy prince to the bitter end. I can hardly wait for all that murder and chaos at the end.  
(II,1,p.135)

Sam decides that his best course is to humour his son in this delusion. Our sympathies here are with Sam for we too feel that David has totally missed the point. The other mourners now enter and, as David continues holding conversations with Sam (who no one else can perceive), they become increasingly exasperated with him, even accusing him of madness. One of the mourners, Solly Segal (who is also Hava's father and a close friend of Sam's) becomes increasingly friendly with David's mother, Bessie, much to David's disgust:

If you must carry on like that with my mother - at least wait until my father is cold.  
(II,2,p.143)

This drives David to do just what Sam wanted him to do - take over the herring stall:

The herring stall is the kingdom I've inherited. I am THE PRINCE OF HERRINGS. I'm starting work there next Monday.  
(II,2,p.144)

Sam tries to show David that Hamlet is unimportant but to no avail. However, Sam devises a scheme which will lead to



everyone's happiness: he tells David that it would be a good idea for Bessie and Solly to marry for this would prove that the couple wanted Sam out of the way. To this end, when the mourners have a seance, Sam moves the letters to spell out:

This is - Sam - Levy ... I forgive you, Mr Segal -  
take care of - my Bessie ...  
(II,2,p.155)

So ends Act II.

Act III begins just after Bessie's marriage to Solly Segal. David seems to have forgotten about his revenge, and it is Sam who urges him on by giving him a list of ingredients for a poisonous potion. When the wedding party enters, David mixes the potion and everyone has some except himself and Hava. Immediately everyone is very happy (the potion not being poisonous at all) and David notices Hava for the first time. David and Hava decide to marry while David will sell herrings AND sing. Sam tells David that he is now revenged and everything ends happily - Sam has guided David to the steady job and nice girl, and has engineered the happiness of his wife and friend.

Throughout the play there are references to Jewish customs, and three characters (Mr White, Mr Black and Mr Green) keep appearing and disappearing - they sell tombstones or insurance. By the end of the play David has lost interest in the revenge and is glad that he can feel his duty done - he is now more interested in the realities of life, namely Hava and the herring stall. Kops seems to be suggesting that dreams and wishful thinking are not to be discouraged provided they do not supplant reality.

He continually emphasises, in both dialogue and songs, the joy of life, and Sam's main task is to show David how to enjoy life, not to miss the best things. Thus the purpose of the play seems clear enough - it is designed to encourage us to work within the social framework (marriage, employment) for those things which give our lives significance and joy. Sam returns after his death to bring about such harmony (unlike Hamlet's father who returns to destroy the order which has established itself since his death).

However, the method Sam chooses seems rather unclear. It is totally fortuitous that David suddenly notices Hava (for he drinks none of the potion); until that moment there are no signs that David has even listened to Sam's advice about living, and the conversion is as implausible as it is sudden. The final realisation by David that it is possible to sell herrings and sing seems so trivially true as to be laughable, and so we feel the development of the story to be rather anti-climactic. There seems to be no reason for David's change of attitude, and this makes the play unsatisfactory, especially as the emphasis is on character. John Russell Taylor comments that the play is sentimental and naive, but commends it for being unashamed of this lack of sophistication.<sup>4</sup> Certainly if meaningful development of character is sophisticated, then he is right about this play being unsophisticated, but that is no recommendation. Such a primitive approach can really only work in a play where the emphasis is on action and stark symbols (as in, for example, the plays of Brecht or Arden). A living-room drama such as Kops' play requires



more attention to convincing psychological development. Ruby Cohn classifies it as a musical melodrama, with the typical happy-ever-after ending, which exploits ethnic charm and comedy.<sup>5</sup> She is right to liken it to melodrama (Taylor's 'lack of sophistication') in that David's attitude to his father's death is melodramatic. However, the characters are not clear-cut enough to acquire the symbolic status of the characters of melodrama, while David in particular is not presented in enough detail to enable us to understand his actions. Thus the play falls between two extremes, the parable play and psychological drama. Rather than 'exploiting' ethnic charm and comedy, it seems to rely on them.

To some extent this play is autobiographical:<sup>6</sup> Kops' father was always nagging him to settle down with a good job and a nice Yiddisher girl when really he just wanted to write; many people thought he was mad; finally Kops met a nice Yiddisher girl and married her. Kops was also very close to his mother and was very upset when she died; in the play he seems to have transferred this closeness to his father, possibly in order to emphasise the similarity with Hamlet.

Return to Danes Hill is set in 'a room at Danes Hill, a country house in the West of England, named after a Danish fort in Saxon times.' The connection with Denmark is therefore extremely tenuous, but the title of the play does put one in mind of Hamlet at the outset. The Hamlet-figure is Andrew, a famous scientist who, at the beginning of the play, is about to return from an Arctic

expedition. His father (Sir Andrew) has recently died and Gertrude, his mother, has remarried, her new husband being Claude, Andrew's uncle.

The play is mainly concerned with Andrew, and the conflict between scientific investigation and personal feelings which he embodies - ultimately he pursues the former at the expense of the latter. Before Andrew arrives we learn something of the personal life of Gertrude for she has a conversation with the Archdeacon (the Polonius-figure). The Archdeacon and Gertrude were lovers in their youth, and this gives him the prerogative to speak intimately to her about her behaviour. He asserts that he encouraged Andrew to seduce Olivia (the Archdeacon's daughter), and that Sir Andrew knew of the intimacy between Claude and Gertrude, which knowledge killed his spirit. Gertrude acknowledges the truth of the Archdeacon's accusations and so by the time Andrew returns she has already accepted the guilt for her actions. When Andrew does return (accompanied by Horace) he has private conversations first with Olivia and then with Gertrude. Olivia and Andrew speak of their former intimacy, but have no plans to renew it - the conversation thus concludes that particular personal entanglement for Andrew. (Gradually Olivia and Horace become intimate.) The conversation with Gertrude is mainly concerned with the circumstances surrounding Sir Andrew's death. Andrew reveals that at the moment of his father's death he underwent a para-normal experience:



The Pumpkin, as everybody called it, was made ready at breakfast time. After coffee and biscuits I went aboard alone and gave the diving signal. We dropped slowly and surely as usual. The overhead light faded. I began reading the instruments which were flawless. All a matter of routine; for instance, the thermometer was normal. I remember that because of vaguely wondering if it were not particularly cold outside.

... Suddenly this cold seemed to penetrate me inwardly.

... It held me rigid for a moment. Then for no reason I was possessed by the idea that my lifeline had been severed.

... Ridiculous of course, for science and machinery were behaving themselves to perfection. The variation had been something in myself. Unpredictable, disquieting. I wanted to assure myself that all was well. The chill increased. There was an interval, as it were, out of time, during which the chronometer seemed to stand still. But that again was my doing, not the instrument's.  
(I,2,pp.32-33)

Andrew relates how he gave the surfacing signal and, on emerging, his sudden realisation:

And then I knew, with a sense of quiet as well as certainty, that during the descent my father had died.  
(I,2,p.34)

Later this knowledge was verified. Andrew then describes similar experiences he has had since then, particularly at the time of his mother's remarriage but also

the sound or thought of a falling tree, in place of the cracking and rending of ice.

... The image of a dust-sheet over shelves, where there was only the canvas of a frozen tent.  
(I,2,p.38)

Andrew's task now is to verify these images, and during the scene with his mother it is obvious that his interest is scientific, not personal.

Act II provides the verification. Trees have obviously been felled on the estate, and Horace, being a collector of books himself, realises that Claude has been stealing Sir Andrew's most valuable books. Claude himself admits to Gertrude that in order to reduce the death duties on Sir Andrew's estate he removed the most valuable books from the library and later sold them. Gertrude is displeased.

Meanwhile, Andrew is holding a press conference where the main interest is in his description of para-normal perception and the proofs he has established. When he returns he visits the library, which is when he discovers the truth about the books. When Gertrude realises this, she faints.

In Act III Andrew is confronted with the scientific/personal incompatibility. Andrew feels that such phenomena as he has experienced should be made public in the interests of science, but the subsequent interest by the press is damaging to both Gertrude and Claude. Gertrude feels burdened with guilt (though it is never made really clear why this is so) and Claude's parliamentary ambitions are dashed by the revelations made in the evening newspapers. (We assume, though we are not told, that Andrew revealed derogatory facts about Claude and Gertrude in order to provide proofs.) Andrew apologises for his 'inhuman blunders' but explains that he treats 'any experience,



however personal and sacred, as the raw material of knowledge'. (III,p.79) By the end of the play Claude is repentant and offers to leave Danes Hill, but Andrew tells him to stay there with Gertrude while he will leave to take up a senior research post. We feel that domestic life at Danes Hill will not be particularly blissful, but perhaps that is their punishment. Finally, Horace predicts that Andrew will always sacrifice his personal life to the scientific pursuit of knowledge.

Though Andrew is the Hamlet-figure in this play, the differences between the two are more interesting than their similarities. Hamlet is always forcing himself to see the personal aspect of situations, urging himself to revenge; Andrew, on the other hand, totally ignores the personal aspect, using the truth only as evidence of the new phenomenon, para-normal perception. Thus when Hamlet is given information by the ghost he tries to verify it so that he can act on it; when Andrew gains information through para-normal perception, he tries to verify it so that the phenomenon can be proved to exist. On the other hand, Gros Louis makes the interesting point that 'Today's physicist resembles Shakespeare's prince in professional and political importance; Andrew has a central role internationally as well as domestically.'<sup>7</sup> This takes up the point discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis - the personal side of today's politicians is less important than in Elizabethan times where the hereditary monarch was the chief political figure. Gros Louis's

suggestion implies that with modern scientists, the personal side is as important as the intellectual ability because scientists are in positions of extreme power, and they have to take decisions about which areas of research to pursue. These decisions often involve moral judgements concerned with the use to which findings may be put, and so it is of extreme importance that we know what kind of man is making such decisions. Unlike modern politicians, scientists are not controlled by a fickle electorate. Gros Louis points out the importance of this theme in the modern world, but feels that Dukes has failed to make good use of it:<sup>8</sup>

But Dukes' thesis - that the contemporary Hamlet-figure might be the scientist whose ideals are shattered by the world's realities and who can never be sure his actions are ultimately just - is not adequately dramatized.

She feels that 'The play is poorly focused;<sup>9</sup> and that 'The characters, with the exception of Andrew, are simply not very interesting.'<sup>10</sup> Such faults are partly the result of the context of the play. Dukes has set out to dramatise the conflict between scientific investigation and personal feelings, but most of the interesting action takes place off-stage. We are not shown the para-normal experience and Andrew's reaction; nor are we shown the press conference - both are described at some length. There is no dramatic moment of conflict, only a gradual realisation by all concerned that Andrew will reveal all and this will have undesirable personal effects which will just have to be endured. Indeed, Gertrude's faint on Andrew's emergence



from the library seems, within the context of the rest of the play, unnecessarily dramatic and rather ridiculous. The whole tone of the play is calm, restrained, reasonable. Andrew himself, though he has certain regrets, has no doubts about the course of action he must follow, and we do not feel that he is grappling with ethical problems about the purposes to which his discoveries may be put. Thus one suspects that the play is more interesting to read than to watch (and, indeed, as far as I know there has never been a production of the play).

The next adaptation, Elmer Rice's Cue For Passion, was inspired by the psychologically-orientated criticism of Hamlet by Ernest Jones.<sup>11</sup> The following series of quotations from Jones' book Hamlet and Oedipus<sup>12</sup> gives an outline of his argument:

1. No dramatic criticism of the personae in a play is possible except under the pretence that they are living people, and surely one is well aware of this pretence. (p.18)
2. ... Hamlet's hesitancy was due to some special cause of repugnance for his task and ... he was unaware of the nature of this repugnance. (p.49)
3. ... it is the various psycho-sexual trends that are most often "repressed" by the individual. (p.59)
4. Whereas the murder of his father evokes in him indignation and a plain recognition of his obvious duty to avenge it, his mother's guilty conduct awakes in him the intensest horror. (p.61)
5. The long "repressed" desire to take his father's place in his mother's affection is stimulated to unconscious activity by the sight of someone usurping this place exactly as he himself had once longed to do. More, this someone was a member of the same family, so that the actual usurpation further resembled the imaginary one in being incestuous. (p.82)

6. In reality his uncle incorporates the deepest and most buried parts of his own personality, so that he cannot kill him without also killing himself. (p.88)
7. ... we might summarize the internal conflict of which he is the victim as consisting in a struggle of the "repressed" mental processes to become conscious. ... It is his moral duty, to which his father exhorts him, to put an end to the incestuous activities of his mother (by killing Claudius), but his unconscious does not want to put an end to them (he being identified with Claudius in the situation), and so he cannot. ... By refusing to abandon his own incestuous wishes he perpetrates the sin and so must endure the stings of torturing conscience. And yet killing his mother's husband would be equivalent to committing the original sin himself, which would if anything be even more guilty. So of the two impossible alternatives he adopts the passive solution of letting the incest continue vicariously, but at the same time provoking destruction at the King's hand. (pp.90-91)

Rice was obviously impressed by this argument and wrote a modern version of Hamlet in which the protagonist gradually arrives at a conscious awareness of his motives and feelings.

As the play opens, Tony Burgess has been away from home for some time (since before his father's death) and when he returns in the first scene and realises that his mother Grace has already married his father's best friend Carl, he becomes bitter and adopts a facetious attitude to his immediate associates. These include Lucy Gessler with whom Tony had had a close relationship, but who now has an ambivalent attitude to Tony.

In scene 2, Tony asks Carl for the details of his father's death, and learns that the instrument of death was a bust of Tony modelled in bronze by Carl. Carl describes what happened:



He and I were sitting here, late at night, playing chess over there by the fireplace. There was a tremor, such as I've described. It knocked some pieces off the board. We both rose to pick them up. And as he stooped, there was a second tremor, more severe this time - severe enough to dislodge the bronze. It fell from the mantel, struck him full force on the head, fracturing his skull. A strange and terrible accident. (Scene 2, p.30)

Carl says that though Doctor Gessler (Lucy's father) was called, he could do nothing.

Lloyd Hilton is a friend of the family, and he arrives at the house. Tony immediately guesses (correctly) that Grace and Carl sent for Lloyd in order that he should discover the cause of Tony's strange behaviour. (Lloyd is knowledgeable about psychology, at present working in a prison in order to advance his work on criminology.) Despite this, Tony is pleased to see Lloyd and, to some extent, confides in him.

Tony is gradually becoming convinced that his father was murdered, and when Dr Gessler arrives Tony questions him closely about his father's injury. All he learns, however, is that the doctor's examination consisted of one quick look.

At this point Mattie Haines, a family servant of long-standing, is questioned by Lloyd, and she reveals that Tony never liked his father. However, she will not give her own diagnosis of Tony's condition.

The central scene of the play, Scene 3, opens with Lloyd and Tony playing chess, giving obvious opportunities for a recreation of the 'murder'. Tony learns from Lloyd that his father was cremated, and this increases his suspicions.

As Tony becomes increasingly drunk, he quarrels with Lloyd (who tells him to either come to terms with the situation or clear out), and left alone he does try to recreate his father's death. Mattie, when asked, refuses to topple the bronze bust at the appropriate moment, but she suggests to Tony that things would have been better if he had thought more about his father when he was alive. The scene ends with a drunken monologue by Tony, directed first at the bust and then at a vision of his father, during which he is convinced that Carl killed Burgess with a poker.

In Scene 4 we learn that Tony has been shopping for cartridges, and Lucy fears that he will commit suicide. In a conversation with Grace, Tony admits that he left home after having seen Grace come from Carl's bedroom once while his father was away from home. Grace gives a (possibly true) explanation of the incident (basically maintaining that Carl was not in the room at the time), and goes on to accuse Tony's father of neglect, unfaithfulness and drunkenness. Tony reveals to Grace his suspicions about Carl:

That's all part of your technique, isn't it? Trying to make me doubt my own sanity. But there's nothing you can say or do that will shake my conviction that Carl murdered my father.  
(Scene 4, p.103)

Grace retaliates by accusing Tony of jealousy:



GRACE: You're so blinded by jealousy, that you're utterly incapable of seeing anything straight.  
 TONY: Jealousy? What do you mean by that? Of what am I jealous, of who?  
 GRACE: You really don't know? Then I'd better tell you. Of Carl. Of your father, of any man who ever came between you and me.  
 (Scene 4, pp.103-104)

Tony seizes Grace and kisses her passionately (tacitly admitting the truth of her accusations) but he then sees the silhouette of a man watching and, assuming it to be Carl, shoots him: it is Gessler.

The final scene depicts Tony's conscious realisation of his attitudes towards his mother, father and Carl. Gessler is not seriously wounded and will not prefer charges; Carl, on the other hand, knowing the bullet was intended for him, wants Tony locked up. Mattie, however, realises that Tony could not help himself.

In a conversation with Lloyd, Tony says that when he arrived home he became certain that Carl had killed his father, 'as certain as if I'd done it myself.' (Scene 5, p.116) Lloyd picks up the simile and asks Tony if he had wanted to kill his father. Tony admits that Carl had done what he (Tony) had always dreamed of doing: 'killed my father and married my mother' (Scene 5, p.117). He therefore identified himself with Carl and when shooting, did not aim to kill. This also suggests that he does not really want to commit suicide.

The play ends much as <sup>Carl</sup> Dukes' play. Tony leaves the house, while Grace (who believes in Carl's guilt) and Carl are left to find some way of living together amicably, though they will no longer sleep in the same room.

Rice has created a Hamlet-figure with an Oedipus complex, but Tony acknowledges this explanation of his actions too easily. In the conversation between Tony and Lloyd towards the end of the play, the two men work out what has happened in much the same way as characters discuss the sequence of events at the end of a detective story:

- TONY: ... when I discovered that Carl had actually done what I'd always dreamed of doing - killed my father and married my mother, I felt even more agonized.
- LLOYD: Yes, you identified yourself with him, vicariously participated in his murderous act.
- TONY: So that's why I couldn't go through with it. When I saw that silhouette against the curtain and thought he was snooping, I was swept by blind rage. So I pulled the trigger, yes - but I missed intentionally.
- LLOYD: In other words you were unable to shoot yourself as personified by Carl. Which means that you really didn't want to commit suicide after all.
- TONY: Seems so, doesn't it?  
(Scene 5, p.117)

This is a very clinical examination of Tony's problems, with no sense of personal involvement. Given that Tony repressed his feelings for Grace for so long, it seems rather unlikely that the exposure of those feelings (and the consequent attitude to Carl and to himself) would be taken so calmly and rationally. The passage quoted above also shows Rice dotting the i's and crossing the t's in his psychological portrayal of a Hamlet-figure. There are several phrases based on Jones' writings quoted above, and the explanation of Tony's behaviour appears too pat. Gros Louis also points out this explicit denouement as a flaw in the play,<sup>13</sup> but feels that at least in the previous four scenes the play proves 'that an Oedipal Hamlet is a dramatic possibility',<sup>14</sup> though she adds that this Hamlet is not Shakespeare's



Hamlet for the character is greatly reduced in complexity. What is surprising is that Rice changes the relationship between Tony and Carl - no longer is Carl Tony's uncle, and this means that the theme of incest is no longer relevant. Jones, however, does find the incest theme significant (see quotation 5 above) and one would expect Rice to at least maintain the relationship, even if he did not explore it very fully. On the other hand it is possible that he found the theme of incest to be an added complication which was not necessary to his exploration of the Oedipus complex, and so chose to omit it.

In fact, Tony is portrayed as rather a spoilt boy, concerned for no one else's position and convinced that he has the answers. He is interested in his own psychological state, but has no idea that his mother, for example, has her own personal problems and particular motives for her behaviour. He is convinced that Carl murdered his father, and though he manages to persuade Grace that this is the case, the audience does not know what the truth of the matter is, and this uncertainty distances us from Tony. (In this, Rice's play is similar to Kops', though in the latter case we know that Solly did not kill Sam.) Given our antipathy to Tony, his pursuit of the answers to his behaviour seems rather self-indulgent, and just another opportunity to make himself the centre of attention. It is difficult to know whether this is part of Rice's intention (i.e. to make the Hamlet-figure appear totally selfish) or whether it is just an inevitable

consequence of the close examination of one person's behaviour and motivation. If the latter, perhaps the overall message is that, if investigated in enough depth, we all do things primarily for our own ends. What Rice does show is that modern man, armed with a knowledge of psychology, 'would handle the Hamlet situation in a more intelligent, more civilised manner.'<sup>15</sup> In addition to this, the play is an interesting experiment in the interrelationship between literary criticism and drama.

The final play to be discussed here really falls between the cultural transpositions and the domestications. Like the domesticated adaptations discussed above, Hamlet, Incorporated takes place in a modern domestic context: Denmark becomes a U.S. paper-house with 'forests of trees, fleets of ships, mills ...' (Scene 1, p.2) and this is owned by Claudius. On the other hand, the plot of the play follows Hamlet quite closely. There are some equivalent substitutions, as when Hamlet takes LSD as a way of contacting his father instead of wandering about on the battlements of the castle, but little is added or, in terms of main events, omitted. The names are the same as in Shakespeare.

The basic outline of the play is as follows. Hamlet returns from university bitter about the hasty marriage between Claudius and Gertrude. Horatio tells Hamlet that while he was on an LSD trip he saw Hamlet's father, and suggests that Hamlet try it. Laertes, leaving for Paris, advises Ophelia against Hamlet, and Polonius adds his

weight by forbidding her to see Hamlet who Polonius believes is mad. Hamlet takes the LSD and his father appears; he tells Hamlet that he was murdered by Claudius, and asks Hamlet to avenge this murder. Polonius tells Claudius and Gertrude that Hamlet is mad because of his love for Ophelia. They overhear a conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia which focuses on love and seduction. Hamlet later invites the family to watch slides of his holiday (in fact, the same place as where his father was murdered) - Claudius calls for lights and leaves. Hamlet is summoned to Gertrude's room. He goes, and tells his mother that she is sleeping with her husband's murderer. Polonius, overhearing this conversation, coughs, and Hamlet shoots him. On learning of this, Claudius warns Hamlet that he is sending for Laertes. Ophelia is then given a death speech unlike in Shakespeare's play; she speaks, alone, as if to Hamlet, about love and death, and then steps out of her apartment window, committing suicide. Laertes learns of the deaths of his father and sister, and wants to kill Hamlet. Hamlet tells Laertes that Claudius killed his (Hamlet's ) father. Police sirens are heard and there is a general shoot-out, at the end of which Gertrude, Claudius, Laertes and Hamlet are all dead. Police enter and Horatio identifies each person, referring to Hamlet as 'Jesus'.

Hamlet finds significance in everything and speaks in phrases which appear to be highly meaningful but which on closer examination mean very little. For example:



My love exhausts itself on epitaphs.  
 I am cuckolded by telestars and dropped lines.  
 I suffer from weather reports and oil-changes.  
 I eat too many mobiles.  
 I confess in phone-booths and embezzle subway systems.  
 I cause governments.  
 I expose earthquakes.  
 (Scene 4, p.17)

Such language is surrealistic and so contributes to the modernity of the play. However, within the context of the whole play it seems rather pretentious. The play as a whole is slight with little overall purpose (except, perhaps, to show Hamlet up as a very poor philosopher).

From the above descriptions it can be seen that (apart from Kauffman's play) these adaptations are far more loosely based on the Shakespeare plays than the other adaptations already discussed. We will now examine the particular techniques of adaptation employed here in more detail, using our five categories of language, plot, character, context and theme.

### Language

These plays vary considerably in the degree of Shakespearian language incorporated into the text, though none use it to any great degree, the dialogue mainly being modern colloquial prose. In Rice's Cue For Passion, the title is the only textual allusion to Hamlet, and Hamlet, Incorporated contains no direct quotations, just one or two echoes: for example, Shakespeare's 'Thrift, thrift, Horatio!' (I, 2, 180) becomes 'Efficiency, Horatio - efficiency!' (Scene 1, p.5). In Maughan's Mister Lear,

Walter Craine describes his daughters in phrases very reminiscent of Shakespeare's Lear, for example: '!You heartless fiend! You ungrateful wretch! ... You marble-hearted monster!' (II,1,p.48) In both Return to Danes Hill and The Hamlet of Stepney Green there is an awareness of the existence of Hamlet as a separate play, and characters, conscious of a similarity between their own situation and Hamlet's situation, quote from the Shakespeare play to comment on their own situation. There are two examples in Dukes' play:

1. When Olivia tells Horace that she and Andrew have ended any close relationship, Horace comments:

I hope he didn't actually say "Get thee to a nunnery"?

to which Olivia replies:

No, but he's capable of meaning it.  
(II,p.61)

2. Andrew, wondering why he compared man to animals, comments:

The Prince of Denmark called man many things, and one was the paragon of animals.  
(II,p.66)

In Kops' play, David far more obviously models himself on Hamlet and when, towards the end of the play, he feels free to shed this role, Sam comments thankfully to David:

Hamlet is dead and may flights of angels sing him down  
the stairs.  
(III,p.163)

This is a slightly closer identification between David and Hamlet than in Dukes' play, but the consciousness of Hamlet as a character in a Shakespeare play is still present. Throughout all these plays there is only one extended passage based on Shakespeare's language, and this occurs in The Hamlet of Stepney Green. It is a Jewish travesty of part of Hamlet's speech beginning 'To be or not to be'. David is becoming bitter towards his mother and at the same time adopting more seriously his role as Hamlet, the avenging son. Combined with his basic desire to perform, this results in the following, theatrically-delivered speech:

To be or not to bloody well be, believe me, that is the question! Whether it is besser to ne a bisle meshuga -

...  
Or to take alms for the love of Allah. To kick the bucket or to take forty winks.

...  
To take forty vinks no more and by Ali Abracadabra to end the sourous and the hire purchase, please God by you.

...  
These are the consumer goods for the frum yids. To kick the bucket, to take a nap at the race-track - ah! there's the snag, for on that slip of paper what names were written - blown away by the wind - blown away, etcetera, you should live so long.  
(II,2,p.143)

Such conscious quotation from Hamlet is an interesting phenomenon because it seems to have two contradictory purposes. On the one hand it makes us aware of certain similarities between the Shakespeare play and the adaptation, ensuring that the Shakespeare play is brought to our conscious awareness so that we are more ready to pick up any similarities which do exist. On the other hand,



by referring to Hamlet as a separate play, a distance is created between the adaptation and the Shakespeare play, preventing the assumption that the adaptation is the Shakespeare play reworked.<sup>16</sup> The adaptation therefore retains its identity as a separate play, even denying that it is an adaptation. However, the discussion of other categories below shows that these plays are adaptations.

We have shown how these writers use or fail to use Shakespeare's language, and though the degree of use varies, none of these adaptations contain much of the original Shakespeare text. Most of the dialogue in the adaptations is modern colloquial prose. Kops' play also incorporates Jewish words and phrases, and several songs, while Kauffman's Hamlet speaks epigrammatically, attempting to find significance in everything. One example has already been given (see p.176). Another follows:

I play chess.  
My opponent is me.  
Checkmate!  
(Scene 3, p.11)

Such comments have little depth and are irrelevant beyond conveying the fact that Hamlet attempts to be a philosopher.

It is interesting that all these plays were written in the late 1950s,<sup>17</sup> and they are all part of the domestic, realistic tradition where characters are ordinary people with ordinary feelings who consequently speak the ordinary language familiar to, and used by, members of the audience.

It is possible that the intention of these adapters is to expose the poverty of the modern language by juxtaposing it with Shakespeare's language, but if this is the case it is not really successful for, apart from the Kops travesty, there is no extended Shakespearian passage, and the Shakespearian language therefore has little impact. The Shakespeare plot and characters are used far more than the language.

### Plot

In general, the protagonists of the Shakespeare play experience certain events and emotions which, in some sense, their equivalents in the adaptations also experience. However, this is so on a much cruder level than in the transpositions where even minor plot details are quite often transferred from the Shakespeare play to the adaptation - the domestications rely more on obvious plot details to carry the Shakespeare story. On the other hand they are quite similar to the transpositions in the techniques employed to alter Shakespeare's plot.

#### a) Omissions

Several of the omissions are political, for example, none of the Hamlet adaptations incorporates a war. Plots are kept fairly straightforward with few elaborations, so Shakespeare's sub-plots are omitted (e.g. the Gloucester sub-plot does not appear in Mister Lear). Dukes' play exhibits another type of omission because, although we are not shown the ghost or the ghostly experience, it does take place and we hear of it later. This is therefore not strictly a plot omission - the playwright has merely chosen not to depict it.

b) Additions

1. One kind of addition is the elaboration of the basic Shakespeare plot by including factors which intensify the action (cf. Chapter 2: plot additions (3)).  
Thus Walter Craine's financial problems are increased; Andrew has more attempts to verify his para-normal experiences than Hamlet does, and he uses objective evidence.
2. As these plays concentrate on individual personalities, it is not surprising that much additional material is devoted to explanations of motivation governing behaviour. We are therefore given a rational reason for the division of Walter's estate - the avoidance of death duties; Mattie explains Tony's behaviour in terms of his feelings for his parents; even Kauffman's Ophelia is given a death soliloquy to show her state of mind before she commits suicide.
3. Another fairly predictable type of addition, given that these plays are comedies, is the increased love interest. For instance, in Maughan's play Jane is engaged first to Luke and then to Peter, while even the Lear-figure, Walter, has marriage prospects at the end of the play. Dukes depicts a steadily growing romance between Horace and Olivia, and indicates that the Archdeacon and Gertrude used to be lovers, while at the end of Kops' play, David and Hava are set for marriage.



c) Equivalent substitution (cf. Chapter 2: plot (c))

As with the transpositions, these domestications use plot details which serve the same purpose as Shakespeare's plot, but which are not identical. Thus Shakespeare's ghost becomes a para-normal experience to be subject to scientific investigation; the division of Lear's kingdom becomes the division of Walter Craine's house and money; Hamlet's Denmark becomes Sam Levy's herring stall. In general, the substitutions are smaller, less epic, than Shakespeare's versions.

d) Replacement of Shakespeare's ending by a different resolution (cf. Chapter 2: plot (d))

With these plays the endings are generally happy (Kauffman excluded), and there are few deaths. The potential tragedy of some of these situations is averted (sometimes rather artificially) and marriages are instantly planned. Three marriages are planned by the end of Mister Lear, and Walter's financial problems are solved; David and Hava are in love by the end of Kops' play, Sam's mission is fulfilled and any revenge which is going to occur has occurred, with no tragic consequences; in the plays of both Dukes and Rice, the Hamlet-figure leaves while the Claudius and Gertrude-figures remain - in each case, the relationship between Claudius and Gertrude is very strained as a result of events in the play. Such resolutions tend to be more civilised than Shakespeare's endings, and so, given the drawing-room atmosphere, may be more acceptable from the point of view of a middle-class audience.

## Character

The parameters of character described in Chapter 2 (role, name, status, title, personality) provide a useful framework for assessing character changes in the domesticated adaptations.

### a) Role

'Role' concerns the actions and dramatic function of each character and is therefore related to plot.

Thus, the role of a character changes to the extent that the plot, as it affects that character, changes. As an example, part of Hamlet's role is to kill Claudius, but David, Andrew and Tony do not kill their respective Claudius-figures and so their roles have changed in that respect. However, in general the roles of the characters do remain more-or-less as Shakespeare created them, particularly in the first half of each play.

A slight variation is brought about by the practice of combining the roles of two or more characters. Thus in Rice's play, Lloyd combines the roles of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (who were sent for) and of Horatio (Hamlet's true friend), though Lloyd is more positively helpful than any of these Shakespearian characters.

Another example occurs in Mr. Lear where Peter and Harold between them share out the roles of Kent, Edgar and the Fool who keep Lear company in the storm.

In Kops' play, Solly presents aspects of both Claudius and Polonius. Another aspect of role concerns the form of employment undertaken by the characters, and this too changes. Instead of kings and princes, we have

writers, scientists, herring vendors, and so on. This has little effect on the dramatic functions of the characters, but provides a non-political equivalent for Shakespeare's characters' actions.

#### b) Name

Most of these writers change the names of their characters so that they sound more like ordinary people. Marston is the exception for he keeps his characters' names, and this is another factor which sets him apart from the other writers in this group while making him more comparable to writers of the transpositions. Occasionally the other writers keep a Shakespearian name, for example, Indran's mother is called Gertrude. The precise name changes can be seen in the diagrams following the discussion of status (pp. 187-188).

#### c) Status

The concept of 'status' is essentially relative i.e. it involves the relationship between the character and others. Status is relevant to the domestications on two levels:

##### 1. Social context

If we consider the society as a whole, then Shakespeare's aristocratic characters have been reduced in status. No longer are we shown kings and queens, but rather commoners, some successful and others not. It may be argued that a top scientist is today equivalent in status to a prince, but this ignores the point that princes are born to the job, while scientists may appear from any section of society.



Most of the characters are middle-class, as shown by their homes and their educated speech. Those that refer to Hamlet also show their literacy - they are aware of the Hamlet stereotypes and react to them when confronted with a comparable situation.

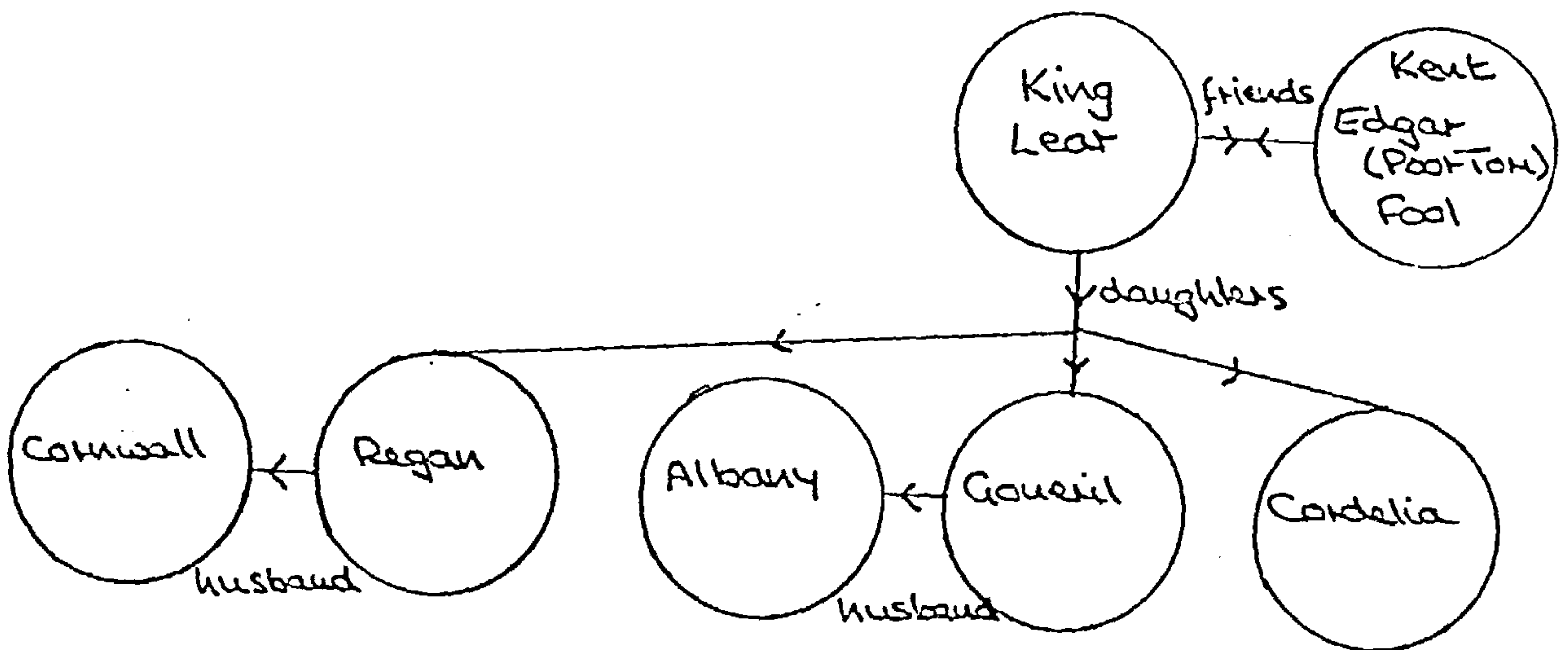
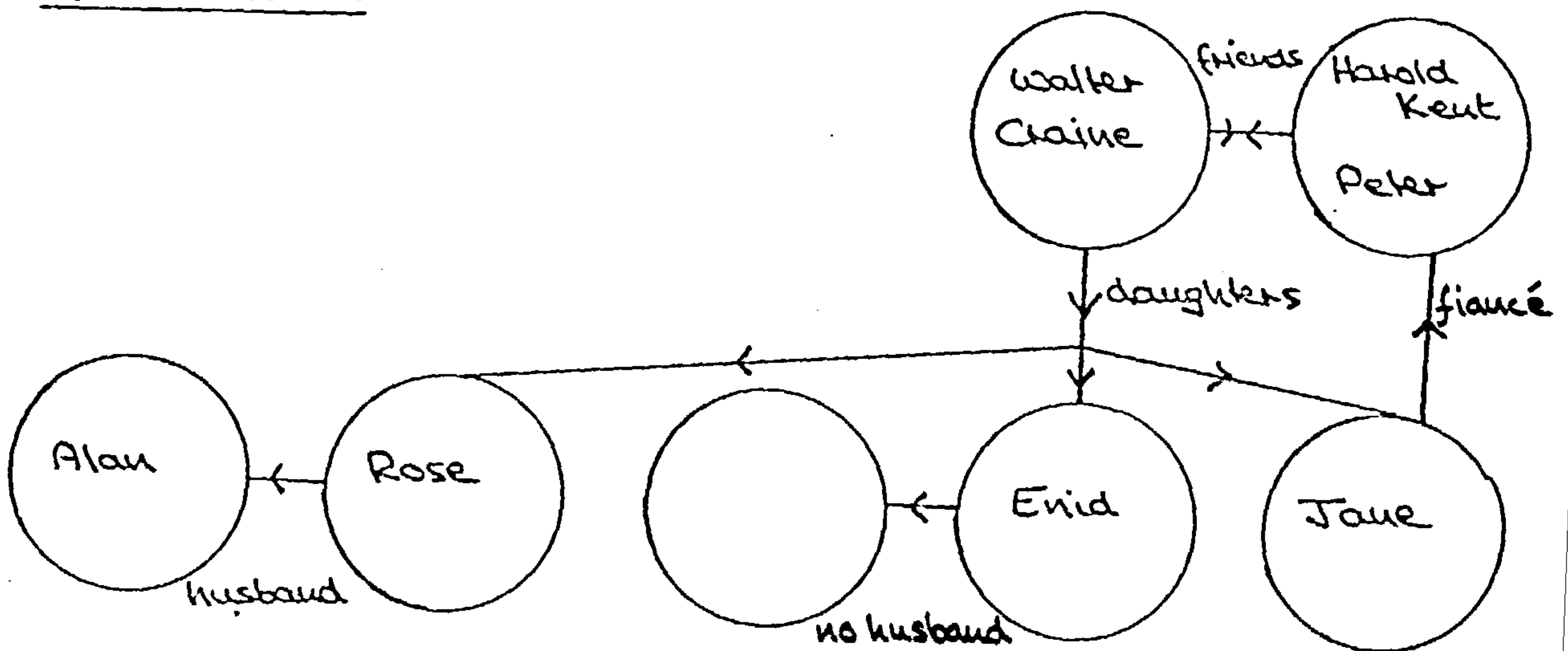
## 2. Family context

If we consider the relationships on a more personal, individual level, then the similarities between the Shakespeare plays and the adaptations are more marked. In general, the Hamlet-figure has a mother, step-father, dead father and rejected lover; Walter, like Lear, has three daughters (two callous and one concerned for his welfare) and a staunch friend.

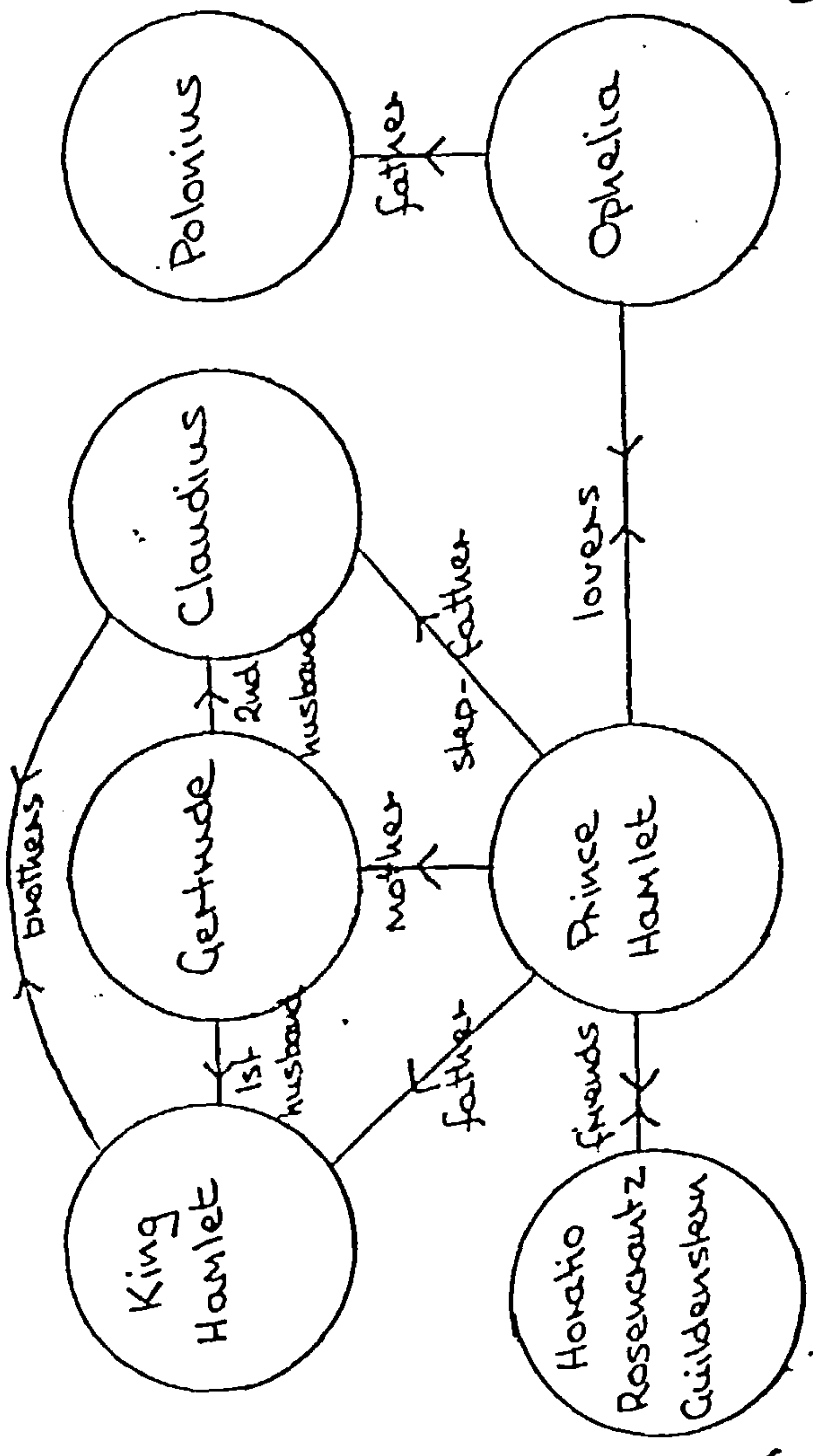
There are some changes made by the adapters. In the plays of both Rice and Kops, the Claudius-figure is not the Hamlet-figure's uncle, but rather a close friend of the dead father. This dispenses with the theme of incest. Dukes' Claude is Andrew's uncle, but the Archdeacon is far more intimate with Gertrude than Polonius ever was - Dukes indicates that the Archdeacon and Gertrude were formally lovers, and she has a respect for him which her Shakespearian counterpart does not have for Polonius. Consequently his advice carries more weight. Much of this information about the status of the characters within the family can be made clear in relationship diagrams, and by drawing a different diagram for each play as well as for the Shakespeare play, the similarities and changes at once become obvious.

Notes on the diagrams

1. Each Shakespeare play and its adaptations is depicted by the same basic diagram.
2. All relationships which are the same as in Shakespeare's play are written in black ink.
3. All changes in relationship are shown in red ink.
4. The relationships are named in the following way:  
if the arrow points from A to B, then the relationship given is B's relationship to A.

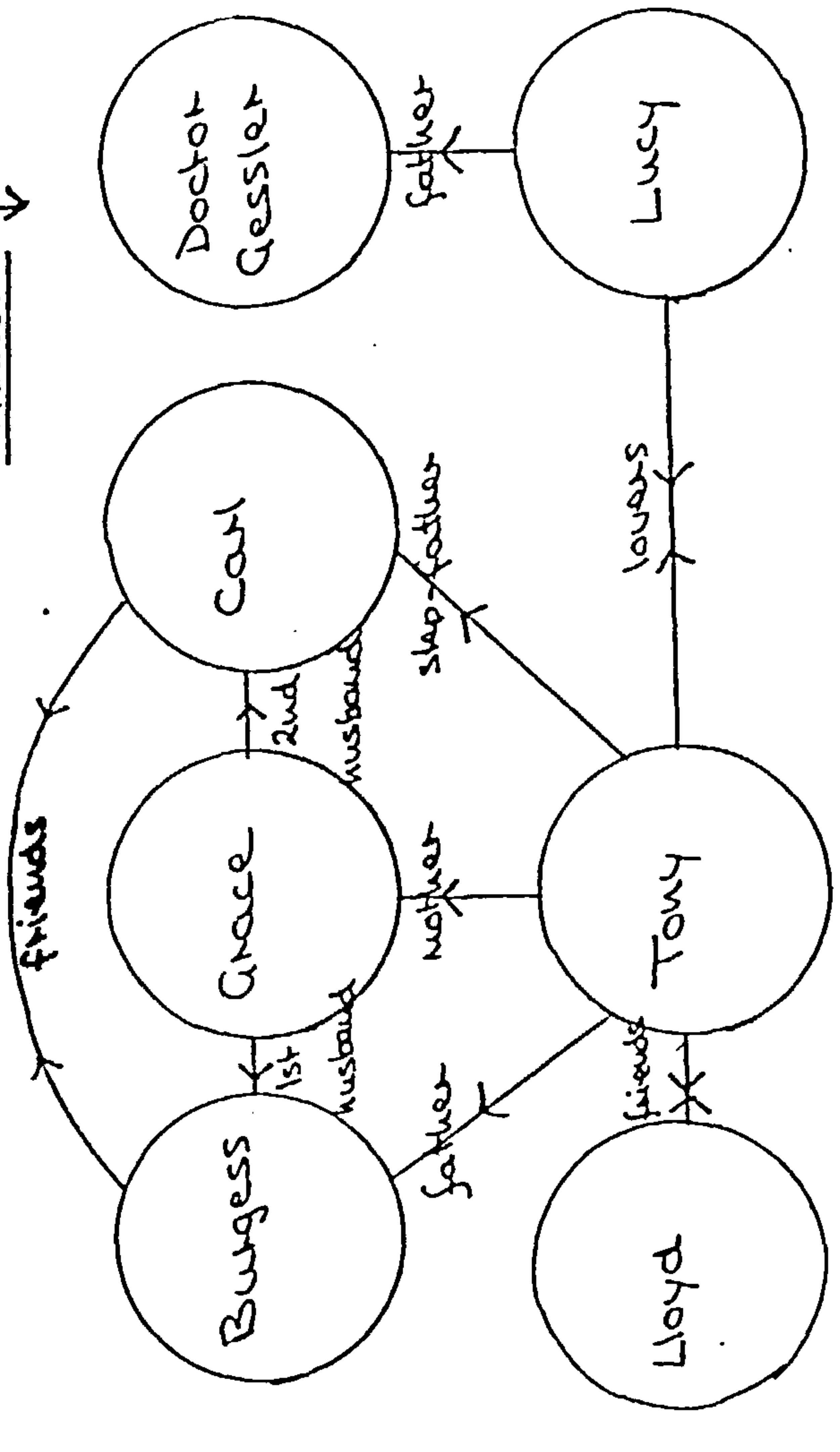
KING LEARMISTER LEAR



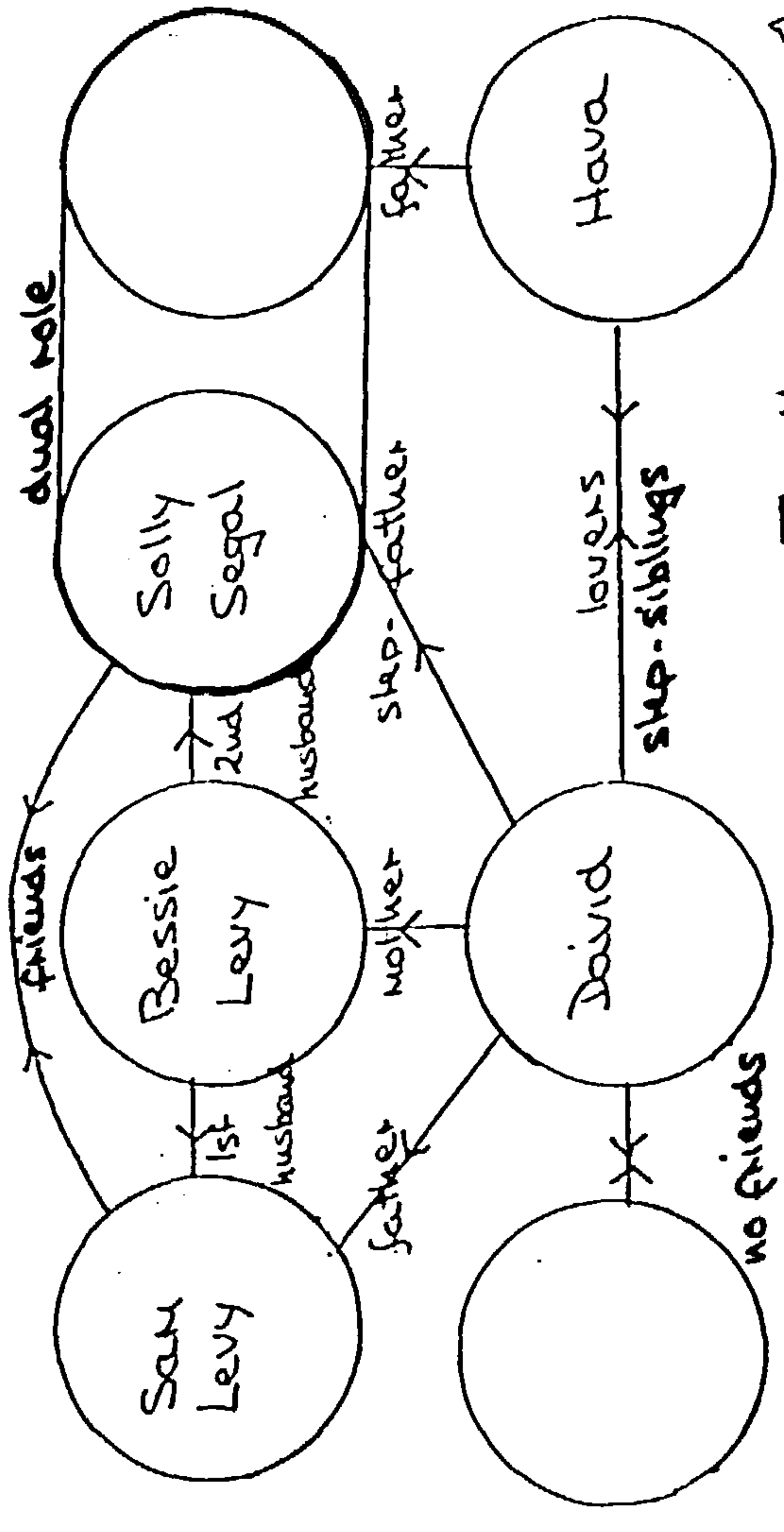


HAMLET

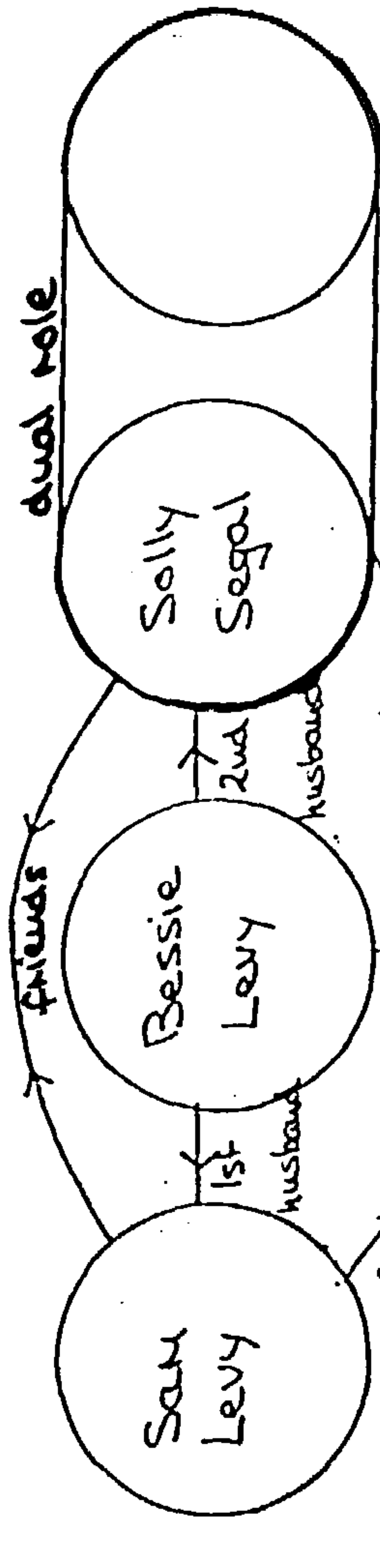
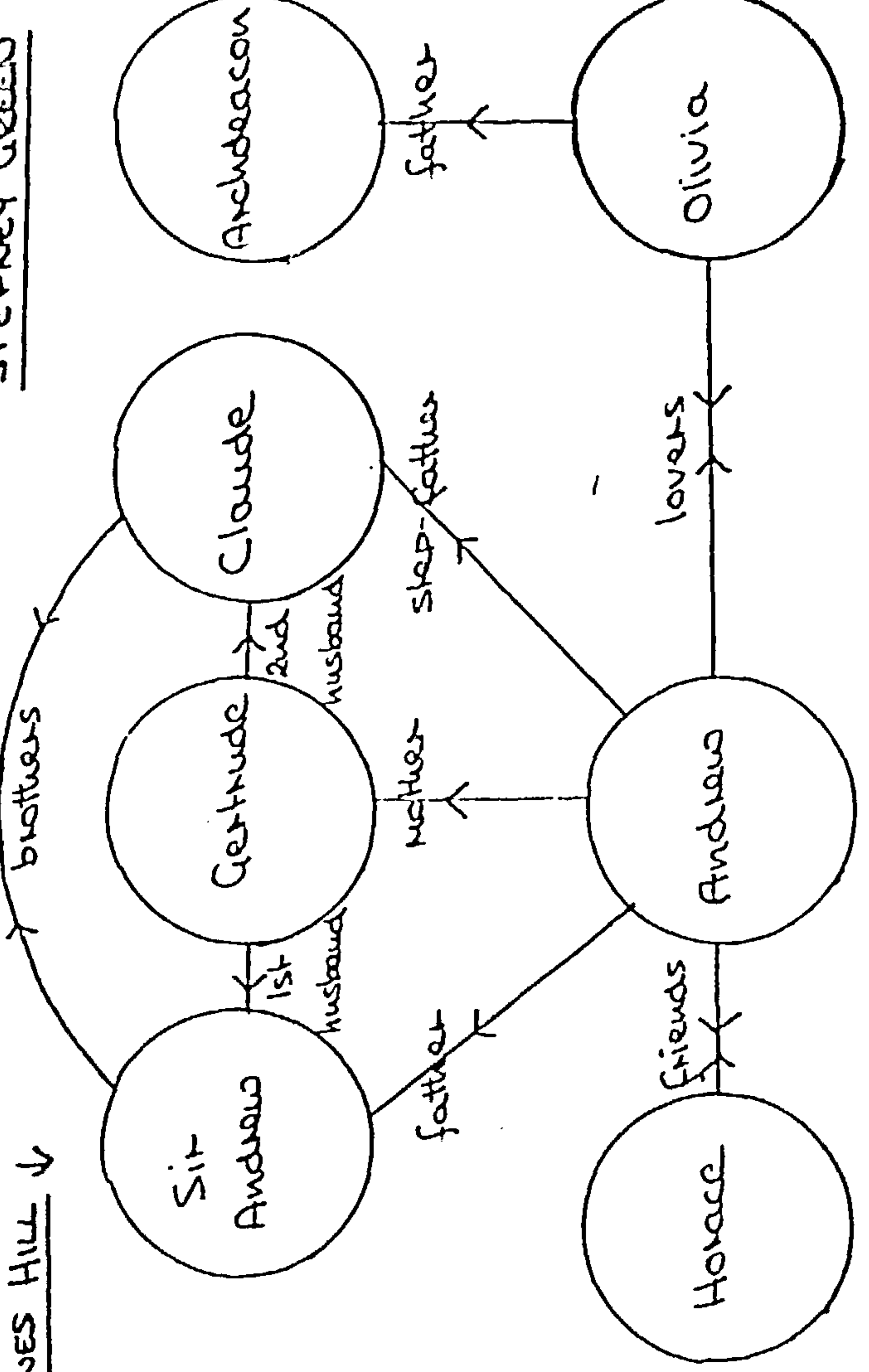
CUE FOR  
PASSION ↓



THE HAMLET OF  
STEEPNEY GREEN ↑



RETURN TO  
DANES HILL ↓



dual role

d) Title

In the transpositions, titles are important to show exactly what political status the character enjoys. In the domestications, titles become fairly insignificant beyond the fact that people are Mr, Mrs or Miss. That is, they are ordinary, unprivileged people. Hence the title of Maugham's play, Mister Lear.

e) Personality

The personality of certain characters in the adaptations is of great importance because it is the personal aspects of character which interest these writers. Basic traits are taken from Shakespeare's characters, and the adapters investigate them in psychological terms with the emphasis on motivation. Though the protagonists do not have the complexity of Shakespeare's equivalents, they do acquire a certain interest as they attempt to sort out their problems. The more peripheral characters are portrayed less fully and they are interesting mainly in terms of what they contribute to our understanding of the main character.

Finally let us take a brief look at the character omissions and additions in these plays.

a) Omissions

In general, only the most immediate family and friends are included in the cast, and all peripheral characters are omitted. If a Shakespearian character bears no specific personal relationship to the protagonist, then he is omitted.

## b) Additions

There seem to be two main functions of the additional characters:

### 1. Commentary

Some characters are added to provide detached comments on the plight of the protagonist. Rice's Mattie is able to explain Tony's behaviour by having observed his hatred of his father; Maugham's Violet chides Rose and Enid for their callous treatment of their father; Kops includes quite a chorus of characters (Messers Green, White and Black, and Mr and Mrs Stone) who observe and comment on what is taking place.

### 2. Plot resolution

Particularly in Maugham's play, characters are introduced in order to facilitate a happy ending. Thus Julia appears as a kind of 'deus ex machina' to facilitate Walter's solvency and provide a marriage partner for Luke, both desirable in a comedy.

## Context

Just as the governing stylistic feature of the transpositions is the change of context, so the same is true of the domestications, but each type of adaptation changes its context in very different ways. In order to ascertain how the domestications change context we shall consider the parameters of time, location, typical events and material objects.



a) Time

Like most of the transpositions, all these plays take place in the present or recent past, though again there is no reason why another time should not be used.

The 'present' referred to here is, of course, the time at which the play was written - today (1980) these plays already seem dated.

b) Location

All these plays change the location of the action from remote, austere palaces to familiar, comfortable living-rooms. Each of these five writers stipulates the setting:

Maughan: 'The action of the play takes place in Walter Craine's drawing-room [sic] in Belgravia.'

Dukes: 'The scene is a room at Danes Hill, a country home in the West of England, named after a Danish fort in Saxon times.'

Rice: 'The setting represents the living room of a country house in Southern California.'

Kops: 'The action of the play is centred around the house of Mr and Mrs Levy.  
Time: The present.  
Place: Stepney Green in the East End of London.'

Kauffman: 'Afternoon in a picture-window penthouse in the city.'  
(Also sub-titled 'A San Francisco Version in One Act')

Kops' play is the only one which moves out of the room into the garden. Thus, basically, the plays preserve the unity of place. The modern house replaces Shakespeare's kingdoms - Denmark (Hamlet's rightful inheritance) becomes Danes Hill, or Burgess's house, or just a herring stall. The issue of inheritance thus becomes one with which the spectator can identify. It should also be noted that the house represented is situated in the writer's own country; any notion of distance between audience and action works against the purpose of these plays.

c) Typical events

Unlike the transpositions, there are no references to a world outside the play, and no allusions to actual people and events. However, the plays do incorporate typical events from modern life which would be totally anachronistic in Shakespeare's plays. For example, Dukes' Andrew holds a press conference; Maugham's Walter Craine backs a Hollywood film; Kops' David tries to be a pop singer; Rice's Lloyd is working on criminology. Such events and situations help to preserve the modern context by presenting familiar perspectives on what is happening.

d) Material objects

Unlike the transpositions, the settings for the domestications are realistic, and the writers quite often give lengthy and specific stage directions. Here is a passage from the opening stage directions of Cue For Passion:

The prevailing architectural tone is neo-Spanish, the furnishings mostly modern - both done with a light touch. A large, comfortable sofa, with a long coffee-table before it, occupies the center of the room. At the right of the sofa is a small end-table; to the left, a square ottoman. In front of the fireplace is a round table, flanked by two handsome chairs. Below the fireplace, against the right wall, is a celiarette, well-stocked with bottles and glasses; over it, a wall lamp is suspended. To the left of the entrance-way, is a small console-table upon which are a lamp and the bronze portrait-bust of a boy of twelve. Against the left wall is an elaborate chest, topped by an Oriental lamp. Small handsome rugs are scattered about the tiled floor.

(p.1)

Such a setting is typical of these plays - tables, chairs, lamps, ornaments, telephones and all the other paraphernalia of a normal sitting-room are depicted on stage so that we know exactly what we are supposed to be seeing. This very precise definition of the location using objects of course makes frequent changes of location difficult and hence encourages the unity of place.

It should be noted that whereas in the transpositions objects generally acquire a symbolic value or at least form an essential part of the action, in the domestications, objects may have no function beyond establishing location, and here several objects contribute to the same purpose

As with the transpositions, one of the most important reasons for the change of context is to increase the familiarity of actions and events. However, the domestications, by using the modern living-room, also force us to focus on the people and what happens between the characters - there is not space enough for any wider, non-personal issues to be discussed except through the perceptions of those characters.



Theme

It appears that the writers of these adaptations are interested in the situations in which Shakespeare's protagonists find themselves, and their object is to explore a facet of the personality of the chosen protagonist. This is done by translating the context to a modern domestic context, creating a situation equivalent to that faced by Shakespeare's protagonists, and then presenting the main character in such a way that he explores one avenue of his personality and interests. Thus Andrew is the investigative side of Hamlet; Tony is the Hamlet dominated by his mother; David, like Hamlet, is searching for the distinction between reality and illusion; both Lear and Walter are proud, arrogant fathers who cannot distinguish between true and simulated affection. Shakespeare's characters are more complex than this, so in one sense the characters of the adaptations are reductive, but even so these protagonists do generally acquire self-knowledge during the course of the plays, and this acquisition of self-knowledge constitutes the theme of the plays. Thus Andrew realises that his relentless pursuit of knowledge is followed at the expense of both a personal life for himself and the feelings of other people; Tony consciously realises the true nature of his attitudes to his father, mother and step-father; David learns that one can lead a practically useful life while still retaining one's dreams. Mister Lear in this respect is less satisfying than the other plays because, unlike Lear, Walter appears to come to no new conclusions about himself. He discovers the true nature of his daughters, but does not concede his own blindness.

Even the reconciliation scene between Walter and June is very brief, with Walter saying in one breath 'I've missed you so badly. I'm in grievous straits.' (p.67) which almost suggests he is pleased to see her mainly because she might be able to help him out of his financial troubles. Maughan seems to be more interested in women's ingratitude than the quest for self-knowledge. However, all the plays do concentrate on the one main character and his attitudes and discoveries, and though these may not be the same as those of Shakespeare's characters, they do have their roots in the situations of Shakespeare's protagonists.

We have seen how the various parameters of language, plot, character, context and theme may be altered to adapt a Shakespeare play into a domestication. The following is a list of the definitive characteristics of such adaptations:

#### Invariant

1. The situation presented at or near the beginning of the play is similar to the situation in the Shakespearian original.
2. Most of the major characters bear relationships to one another equivalent to those in the Shakespearian original, in terms of personal association (i.e. family status).

#### Variant

1. The action usually takes place in the present (at the time of writing).
2. The location of the action changes to a domestic context, in particular, a private house, and remains the same throughout.



3. Characters have no political status.

4. The language is modern prose.

Any adaptation which does not conform to these general rules cannot be considered as a domesticated adaptation.

Let us now consider some general issues arising from these plays. As with the other groups of adaptations discussed, it is interesting to see to what extent the plays constitute a critical interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. Undeniably, they do comment on facets of Shakespeare's plays, in particular, on aspects of the protagonists' personalities. The adapters seem to wish to pursue one personality trait to its logical conclusion,<sup>18</sup> and this forces us to consider that same trait in relation to Shakespeare's protagonist. However, such interpretation tends to be reductive because complexities and contradictions within a character are ignored unless they are very closely linked to the particular issue under discussion.

There is another sense in which Cue For Passion is literary criticism. The play was inspired by the interpretation of Hamlet propounded by Ernest Jones, and sets out to portray Hamlet in accordance with this interpretation. It can therefore be considered as experimental literary criticism - if the adaptation works, then an Oedipal Hamlet is at least a viable interpretation (though see Gros Louis's comments above pp.172-173).



Given that the domestications do to some extent comment on Shakespeare's plays; then to the same extent they depend on a knowledge of Shakespeare's plays - otherwise the critical commentary is meaningless. However, in general, a knowledge of Shakespeare is not necessary for an appreciation of these adaptations. They are coherent and self-contained, requiring no previous knowledge in order to follow what is happening or to be interested in the protagonists. This is not to say that knowledge of the Shakespearian play is totally superfluous. It inevitably alters the spectator's perspective on what is happening, if only to enrich the action by allowing him to add the Shakespearian associations. There are, more specifically, two consequences of a knowledge of the Shakespearian plot:

1. The knowledgeable spectator will be less interested in the action and sequence of events for he will know what is to happen (and he therefore concentrates on character development).
2. If the spectator knows the original (say, tragic) outcome of the play, then he may feel cheated by the civilised, non-tragic endings.<sup>19</sup> (This leads inevitably to an unfavourable comparison with Shakespeare's play.)

However, the more the adapted plot is disguised (as in Kops' play) the less these possibilities apply.

One other use is made of the original play, a way of illuminating character - this can be picked up by any perceptive spectator whether or not he knows the Shakespearian original. Reference has already been made to the way in which some characters allude to the Shakespearian original, thus showing their literacy, but it also shows their conscious, almost self-mocking attitude to their situation. They are somewhat rueful in their recognition of the parallel situations; they realise that their own lives lack the inspiration of, say, Hamlet's life, but nevertheless a humble parallel can be drawn which is not lacking in significance. Other characters have no such awareness, for example, Walter Craine. At no time does he consciously liken his situation to Lear's, and we must therefore assume he is not aware of it, and yet he insults his daughter in phrases reminiscent of Lear's own. This suggests that Maugham is mocking Walter, and indeed the pomposity of Walter has already been described. Thus, an examination of the precise relationship between a character in the adaptation and the Shakespeare play which has been adapted is a useful key to the personality of that character.

A result of the emphasis on character in the domestications is the primary importance of discussion. Gros Louis refers to this specifically in relation to Rice's play:<sup>20</sup>

His characters, psychologically enlightened, are able to achieve rational understanding among themselves. They can talk their way out of their problems, and need not destroy in order to reconcile.



Action and physical violence are out of place and (when it does occur) ineffective. Problems and conflicts are talked about; feelings are analysed by both the person under discussion and his associates; introspection is widespread. In many ways this works against the general trend of modern drama where language is considered to be of decreasing importance while action is what holds the attention. The concentration on language is thus another symptom of the way these plays are essentially from another period, though one would wish the language to be more compelling.

This leads us to the final issue concerning the domestications - their style. They are realistically staged, purporting to display a 'slice-of-life' with the audience as the fourth wall of a box set. There is never a suggestion that what we are seeing is, in fact, a play - alienation, objectivity, distancing are all out of place. It is interesting to consider whether this style is symptomatic of the period (late 1950s) or of a certain type of play - the modern domestic comedy. Certainly a realistic setting is appropriate and, if one looks at more modern domestic comedies, one sees that it is highly typical. Plays by David Storey and Alan Ayckbourn also use single domestic sets which contain much incidental paraphernalia to provide a realistic setting, despite the prevalence in the 1960s and 1970s of stylistic, symbolic, uncluttered sets. However, despite this apparent concentration on realism, the mere fact that the plays are adaptations (and they draw attention to this fact by their titles)



ensures that spectators are aware that they are viewing a play - all allusions to the Shakespearian original bring that original to mind, resulting in a continual double perspective.

During this chapter there have been several comparisons between the transpositions and the domestications, and certainly the two types of adaptation are similar in some fundamental aspects, stemming from the fact that both take Shakespeare's plot and place it in a different cultural context. Chapter 6 will investigate in more detail the overall similarities and differences between types of adaptation.

Chapter 5: Summary

The domestications generally undergo two processes: they are modernised (or transposed to a non-Shakespearian era), and then the protagonists are transferred to a domestic context. There are few clear references to Shakespeare's language, the characters for the most part speaking modern colloquial prose. There are, however, some references to Shakespeare's play which seem to set the domestications apart from the Shakespearian original while at the same time bringing that original to mind. Plot situations are broadly similar to those in Shakespeare's play, though there are several additions and equivalent substitution is widespread; endings are also changed, mainly in order to avoid tragic outcomes. Characters are reduced in social status, there being no aristocrats, but family relationships are usually preserved; these characters are placed in very familiar surroundings, usually cluttered living-rooms, so that we readily identify with them.

The main purpose of these plays seems to be to investigate a particular character trait of one of Shakespeare's protagonists, and trace the path to self-knowledge taken by that protagonist - only Maugham's Walter Craine ('Mister Lear') fails to attain any such awareness. To this extent, the domestications interpret Shakespeare's plays, and are consequently dependent on the spectator's knowledge of them. However, this dependence does not extend very far because these adaptations are coherent stories in their own right, and can be followed without any knowledge of Shakespeare's plays.

Because an investigation of character within a domestic context is central to these plays, discussion of problems plays a large role - people talk rather than act, and in this way a civilised solution to problems is reached.

When watching the domestications the spectator continually has a double perspective on the action because on the one hand the plays are realistically staged with no references to a world outside the one depicted, and on the other hand we are aware of Shakespeare's world because the writers draw attention to it by their titles.



Notes

1. This play is published in a pamphlet with four other plays, and no individual dating is indicated. The title page merely states: 'Copyright: from 1947 thru 1965 Copyright as unit 1965'  
Thus Hamlet, Incorporated may not actually fall within the time span of this thesis, and certainly it cannot be pin-pointed to the late 1950s like the other plays in this group.
2. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.) p.252
3. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare By Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968.) p.48
4. John Russell Taylor, Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama (Methuen, London, 1962.) pp.171-173
5. Cohn, pp.190-192
6. See Kops' autobiography, The World is a Wedding (MacGibbon and Kee, London, 1963.)
7. Gros Louis, p.229
8. Gros Louis, p.233
9. Gros Louis, p.231
10. Gros Louis, p.232
11. Cue For Passion is not the only adaptation to have been inspired by Shakespearian criticism. Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead must have been inspired by Jan Kott's essay 'King Lear or Endgame' (in his book Shakespeare Our Contemporary) while a play presented at the Edinburgh Festival in 1978, Macbeth 7 (created by its performers, the Stoke Original Theatre) was inspired by an essay by Edward

Gordon Craig in which he showed the witches to be in total control (see Shakespeare Quarterly, vol.30, no.2, Spring 1979).

12. Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus (Victor Gollancz, London, 1949.)
13. Gros Louis, pp.252-253
14. Gros Louis, p.253
15. Gros Louis, p.251
16. This relationship between the Shakespeare play and the adaptation will be discussed in Chapter 6.
17. But see note 1 on the dating of Hamlet, Incorporated.
18. This is not dissimilar to the way, say, Bowen pursues the political situation to its logical conclusion.  
See Chapter 2.
19. It should, however, be noted that adapters are not using an audience's expectations to create dramatic effects as the collage adapters are.
20. Gros Louis, p.251

## CHAPTER 4: REORIENTATIONS

Marion Jay Mistress Bottom's Dream (pub. 1958)

Robert Nathan Juliet in Mantua (pub. 1966; copyright as  
an unpublished work 1955, 1965)

Harold F. Rubinstein Shylock's End (1970 - radio production)

Tom Stoppard Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead  
(1966 - short version; 1967 - complete version)

Cecil P. Taylor Ophelia (1977)

Arnold Wesker The Merchant (1976)

Margaret Wood Cato's Daughter (pub. 1957)

Margaret Wood Instruments of Darkness (pub. 1955<sup>1</sup>)

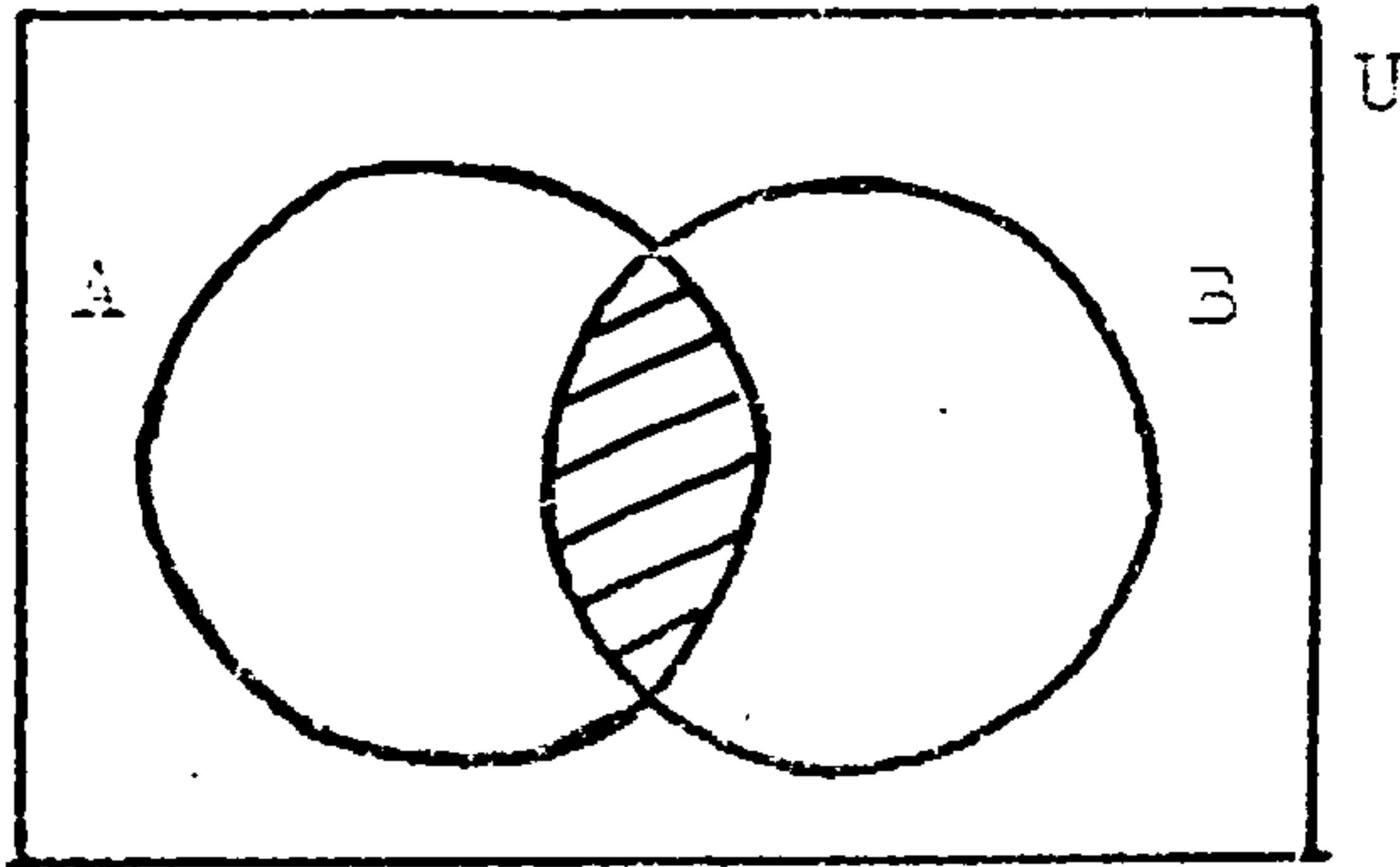
Whenever we watch a play we see a number of events which the writer has selected for us. From these events we build up a picture of a complete world, filling in the gaps which the writer has of necessity left. This process of filling in the gaps is based on the assumption that there is continuity of existence in drama, just as there is in the real world. That is, people and things continue to exist even when we cannot see them. It is this assumption which gives rise to the reorientations: the adapters endeavour to depict some of the gaps in Shakespeare's plays.

We can imagine that a globe represents the complete world related to a Shakespeare play. The audience is sitting in a fixed position and can see only part of that globe, the part which Shakespeare has decided that we should see.



However, if an adapter replaces Shakespeare, he can turn (or 'reorientate') the globe so that the audience now sees another part of the same globe - this new play is a 'reorientation'.

The relationships between the complete world, Shakespeare's play and the reorientation can be represented by a Venn diagram:

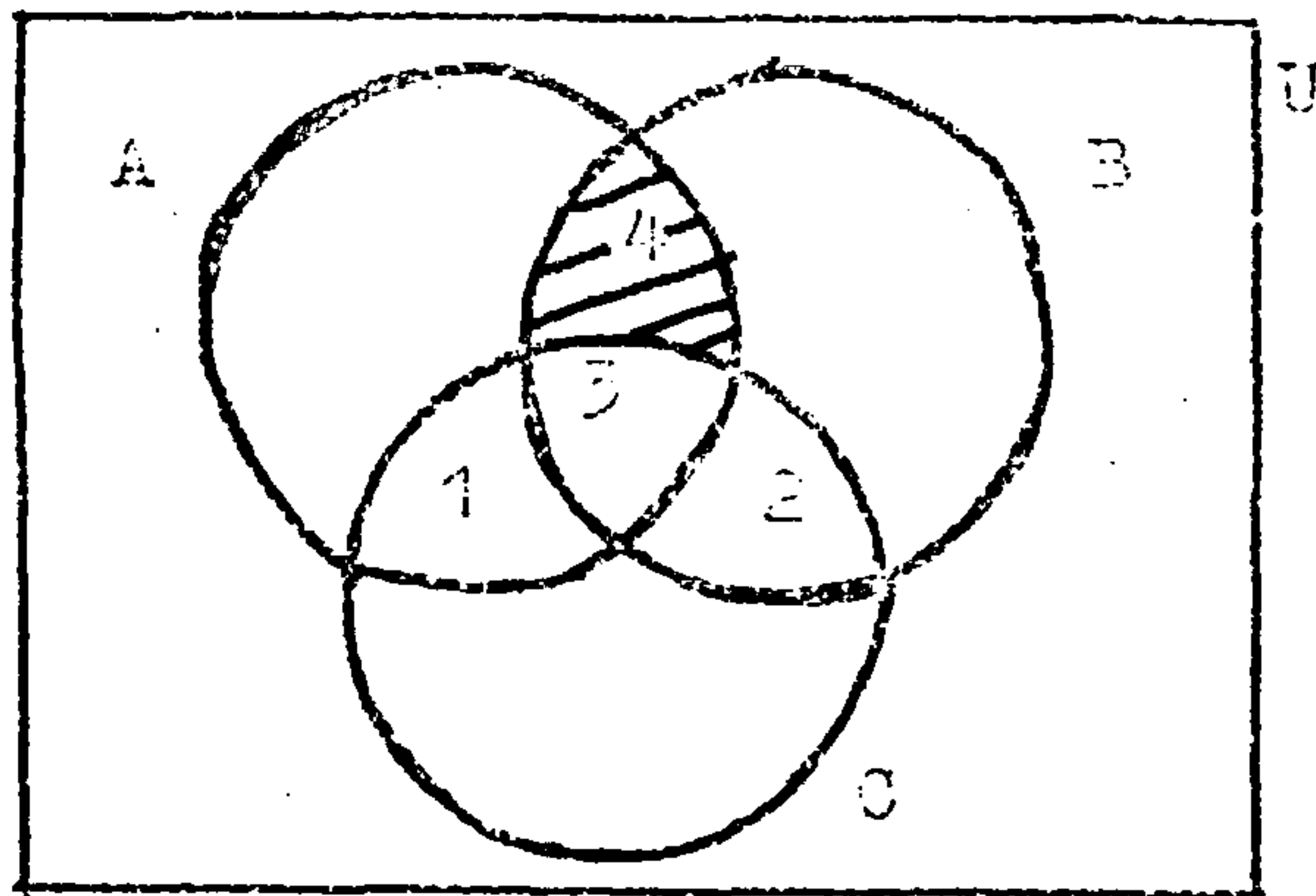


U = complete world

A = Shakespeare's play

B = reorientation

It is clear from this diagram that though A and B show different areas of the complete world, they share some common ground (the shaded area). This common ground constitutes the proof that B is adapted from A, and is not a completely independent play. However, it is possible that B intersects with A but is still not adapted from A. Where this is the case, A and B have a common source, usually historical fact. The situation can be represented as follows:



U = complete world

A = Shakespeare's play

B = reorientation

C = historical facts (or other common source)

1 = section of source used by A and not B

2 = " " " " " B " " A

3 = " " " " " both A and B

4 = similarities between A and B not attributable to the  
common source (i.e. proof that B is adapted from A)

Unless A and B intersect on parameters other than a common source, B cannot be an adaptation of A.

Given that we are shown only a selection of events from the complete world in each case, there must be some principle governing that selection, and the principle changes with each view we have of the world. This governing principle can take many forms; the following are just some examples:

- a) the events which relate to one or two particular characters;
- b) the events which take place during a specific time-span;

- c) the events which occur in a particular location;
- d) the events which contribute to our understanding of a particular theme.

Several of these principles coincide with the classical unities (of time, place and action), and though these particular restrictions may now be out of favour, no writer can avoid placing some meaningful restriction on his material. There will usually be at least two principles at work in each reorientation, and each principle will be given different emphases. What remains constant is the complete world (part of which Shakespeare has already shown us), and the reorientations must be consistent with what we already know.

Before looking at these reorientations in detail, we should note that there are several precedents for the underlying assumption that characters have an off-stage existence.

In 1904, A.C. Bradley published his Shakespearean Tragedy, a critical study of Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and Othello. Bradley criticised characters on the assumption that they were real people. The following passage about Hamlet illustrates this:<sup>2</sup>

So far as we can conjecture from what we see of him in those bad days, [i.e. after his father's death] he must normally have been charmingly frank, courteous and kindly to everyone, of whatever rank, whom he liked or respected, but by no means timid or deferential to others;



Bradley attempts to reconstruct Hamlet's normal mode of behaviour so that his abnormal behaviour, as seen in Shakespeare's play, can be identified and an explanation of it provided. Bradley bases his reconstruction on the text but nevertheless he extends what Shakespeare tells us about Hamlet in order to provide the character with an earlier, pre-Hamlet, off-stage existence.

Bradley is not the only critic to adopt this stance. Indeed, we have already quoted Ernest Jones' attitude to this method of criticism (Chapter 3). His relevant comment is:<sup>3</sup>

No dramatic criticism of the personae in a play is possible except under the pretence that they are living people, and surely one is well aware of this pretence.

He and Bradley therefore concur that, like real people, characters have a past history.

Pirandello has examined the issue in more philosophical terms in his play Six Characters in Search of an Author.<sup>4</sup>

The situation of the play is as follows. Six characters have been created by an author who then decided not to give them stage life. The characters, led by the father, arrive at a theatre in the middle of a rehearsal and persuade the manager to give them life, though the manager insists that his actors give the representation, not the characters themselves. Consequently the characters 'act' their roles before the actors who are finally to play them. This situation gives rise to several questions concerning the theatrical experience. The characters appear to be 'real people' - their conflicts, hopes and inner turmoils

are genuine and independent of the play into which they were written (in the sense that they are not precisely scripted). However, they can only remember their past actions, and need a stage before they can begin to develop or control the progress of their lives. The stage is denied them first-hand, so they have to live through the actors who are to represent them. However, characters and actors have different priorities. The following conversation between the manager and the Step-Daughter makes this clear:

STEP-DAUGHTER: All this talk about what is possible for the stage ... I understand! He [father] wants to get at his complicated "cerebral drama," to have his famous remorsees and torments acted; but I want to act my part, my part!

MANAGER: Ah! Just your part! But, if you will pardon me, there are other parts than yours: His and hers! On the stage you can't have a character becoming too prominent and overshadowing all the others. The thing is to pack them all into a neat little framework and then act what is actable. I am aware of the fact that everyone has his own interior life which he wants very much to put forward. But the difficulty lies in this fact: to set out just so much as is necessary for the stage, taking the other characters into consideration, and at the same time hint at the unrevealed interior life of each.  
(II, pp. 51-52)

This comment recalls those made at the beginning of this chapter about the principles of selection. The manager is suggesting that one of the principles is an aesthetic balance between the characters as they are represented on stage. Pirandello is endeavouring to examine how far a



character does have an existence independent of the play, and seems to suggest that one can extrapolate from what we know to achieve an understanding of the past lives of the characters, but they have no opportunity to progress or develop.

There is one other concrete factor which encourages us to assume the off-stage existence of Shakespeare's characters and that is references in the actual text of a play to off-stage events. The following are just a few random examples:

The King doth wake tonight and take his rouse.  
(Hamlet I,3,8)

There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!'  
(Macbeth II,2,22)

Your lady mother is coming to your chamber.  
(Romeo and Juliet III,5,39)

Last night, I hear, they lay at Stony Stratford,  
And at Northampton they do rest to-night;  
To-morrow or next day they will be here.  
(Richard III II,4,1-3)

By comments like this Shakespeare enriches the texture of a play. Things happen not only on stage but also off-stage, implying that the characters' existence is continuous.

All these factors contribute to a tradition in which characters are considered to be real people, and are judged on those terms. The reorientations further that tradition, though Stoppard's play also questions the assumptions behind it.



With these ideas in mind let us now look at the eight plays in detail. The first four, plays by Stoppard, Wood and Jay, all have new focal characters, and the events depicted relate to them instead of to Shakespeare's focal characters.

In Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, the action is concerned mainly with the lives of Shakespeare's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (abbreviated to Ros and Guil for convenience) from their journey to Elsinore (having been summoned) until the announcement of their deaths. We see not only most of their encounters with Claudius, Gertrude and Hamlet (which are taken verbatim from Shakespeare's play) but also several meetings with the players as well as the periods in between where they are on their own. The similarities between this play and Beckett's Waiting for Godot have been pointed out on many occasions,<sup>5</sup> and certainly the dramatic techniques employed are the same in many respects. The opening stage direction reads:

Two ELIZABETHANS passing the time in a place without any visible character.  
(p.7)

This sums up the roles of Ros and Guil. They, like Vladimir and Estragon, are placed in a limbo situation, and they spend their time questioning what is happening to them and in front of them. They have few points of reference:

GUIL: We have been spinning coins together since -  
 This is not the first time we have spun coins!  
 (p.9)

The only thing they can cling to is the recollection that they were sent for, and since that moment everything has become uncertain. The first symptom of this uncertainty is the fact that when spinning coins, the coin has shown heads ninety-two consecutive times. Guil is the more thoughtful of the duo, and he is worried by the situation, trying to work out the philosophical implications. Ros is less intellectual and tends to accept events as they happen.

A detailed narrative of the play seems unnecessary as it is so well known, so only a brief outline of the action will be given, followed by comments on the philosophical implications of the play.

Ros and Guil travel to Elsinore where they are asked to spy on Hamlet. They agree, but are uncertain how to approach their task, attempting several times to elicit information from Hamlet without success. We see them planning their strategies and later assessing the outcome. Ros and Guil had met the Tragedians on the road, and they meet again at Court where The Murder of Gonzago is to be performed. Ros and Guil watch the rehearsal which closely parallels the Hamlet story as we know it from Shakespeare, and they receive an intimation of their deaths. Eventually, after Hamlet has killed Polonius (off-stage) Ros and Guil are ordered to accompany Hamlet to England. The final act



takes place on the boat which is taking Ros, Guil, Hamlet and the Tragedians (who had to leave Court hurriedly) to England. Ros and Guil discover that the letter they are carrying to the King of England orders Hamlet's death, but they decide not to interfere. While they are asleep Hamlet swaps this letter for another and after he has left the boat accompanied by pirates, Ros and Guil discover that it is now they who are to be killed. They decide to do nothing about their destiny, and the play ends with the final scene of Hamlet in which we learn of the deaths of Ros and Guil.

From this outline of the play's action it is clear that the events of the story are the same as those of Hamlet. The main difference is that we see them from the point of view of Ros and Guil, and this enables Stoppard to comment on Hamlet's behaviour. Shakespeare has presented his plot from one orientation, an orientation in which the absurdities of the plot are obscured. Stoppard's orientation exposes these absurdities. For example, in Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude are puzzled about the reasons for Hamlet's peculiar behaviour. Stoppard, however, suggests that Hamlet's behaviour is perfectly natural in the circumstances:

To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother popped on to his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice. Now why exactly are you behaving in this extraordinary manner?  
(I,p.36)



When the plot is outlined as boldly as this, the enormity of the manoeuverings of Claudius is obvious, though it also makes the need for action on Hamlet's part more demanding. However, the question of Hamlet's irresolution does not concern Ros and Guil and so has no place in Stoppard's play.

Stoppard not only clarifies the situation in Hamlet, he also explores the nature of drama in general. This is most clear in the encounters between Ros and Guil and the Tragedians. The Tragedians are about to perform for Ros and Guil, and Guil therefore has certain expectations about what will happen - there are conventions surrounding drama, and Guil is disturbed when the Player does not obey the rules:

GUIL: Well ... aren't you going to change into  
 your costume?  
 PLAYER: I never change out of it, sir.  
 GUIL: Always in character.  
 PLAYER: That's it.  
 (Pause)  
 GUIL: Aren't you going to - come on?  
 PLAYER: I am on.  
 GUIL: But if you are on, you can't come on. Can you?  
 PLAYER: I start on.  
 GUIL: But it hasn't started.  
 (I,p.24)

By refusing to observe dramatic conventions the Player obscures the boundary between life and drama, because it is the conventions which demarcate that boundary. Thus Stoppard has introduced two levels of reality (drama and real life) and his whole play, being set within Shakespeare's play, further explores levels of reality. Let us attempt to examine these levels.

1. There are real people who exist in the real world.

In the play situation these are divided into actors and spectators.

2. The actor pretends to be someone else. He is aware of his dual role (real person and character) and of the pretence involved. He knows that he is on a stage in a theatre, not in the real world.

3. The character has no existence in the real world, but otherwise behaves as if he were a real person. He relies on the actor for his existence on the stage, but once on stage behaves as if he were in the real world.

These three levels are inherent in any play. Stoppard's play then introduces further complications.

4. The Player is a character who is also an actor. He therefore behaves both as a real person (in the way a character does) and as a person pretending to be someone else (as an actor does). These different levels all have to be portrayed by the real person assigned to act the Player in Stoppard's play.

With these various levels of reality, the boundaries between life and drama inevitably become blurred, and Stoppard uses this to examine real life. He suggests (as Shakespeare did) that a play is a metaphor for life, and that just as his characters Ros and Guil are trapped in the play of Hamlet, unable to avoid the fixed destiny awaiting them, so real people are trapped in their own lives, unable to exercise free will.



Stoppard then moves on to the topic of death, a topic which Guil becomes increasingly concerned about. The Tragedians infuriate him because their acted deaths do not capture the essence of the experience:

Actors!.. The mechanics of cheap melodrama! That isn't death! You scream and choke and sink to your knees, but it doesn't bring death home to anyone - it doesn't catch them unawares and start the whisper in their skulls that says - "One day you are going to die." You die so many times; how can you expect them to believe in your death?  
(II,p.61)

The Player, however, knows better. He once incorporated a real hanging into a play, and it was totally unconvincing:

It was impossible to suspend one's disbelief - and what with the audience jeering and throwing peanuts, the whole thing was a disaster! - he did nothing but cry all the time - right out of character - just stood there and cried ... Never again. Audiences know what to expect, and that is all that they are prepared to believe in.  
(II,p.61)

Spectators prepare themselves to follow certain conventions, and will accept anything within that. If conventions are broken then there is no frame of reference, and we do not know what to believe, giving us a sense of insecurity. Similarly Ros and Guil cannot conceive of life beyond the framework of Hamlet, and prefer to fulfil that known destiny than risk the unknown.



In Stoppard's play, because of the levels of reality, life and death are inextricably entwined - death on one level does not always necessitate death on all levels:

1. The Tragedians, being characters who are also actors, can pretend to die on-stage, and then get up again when their performance is complete.
2. a) Ordinary characters cannot do this. Once they are dead on-stage, or their off-stage deaths are related, they remain dead. The deaths referred to here are those which occur as part of the plot of a play.  
 b) Characters can cease to exist in another way. A character can exist only when represented by an actor on stage. If that actor leaves the stage then the character no longer exists in the real world. (The actor is no longer 'in character'.) Thus when Ros and Guil exit at the end of the play, Stoppard says that they 'disappear' - they no longer exist as characters.
3. An actor pretends to be a real person for the benefit of an audience. The Player suggests that an actor ceases to exist when the audience leaves, and is furious at Ros and Guil for leaving during the performance given by the Tragedians:

You don't understand the humiliation of it - to be tricked out of the single assumption which makes our existence viable - that somebody is watching ...  
 (II, p. 45)

Once there is no audience the actors revert to being real people only:

... demented children mincing around in clothes that  
no one ever wore ...  
(II,p.45)

4. And then there is real death, where no one gets up again.

Guil endeavours to come to terms with the reality of absolute death, unconvinced by the Player's representations, but the concept is unrelated to drama and Stoppard cannot directly confront it satisfactorily.

Stoppard's main achievement in this play is the exploration of these levels of existence in relation to the dramatic experience. By using a known play (Hamlet) as the framework for his own, he can use our knowledge of that play as one kind of reality and relate it to other kinds of reality. Spectators who know Hamlet know more than Ros and Guil about their destiny, and can perceive the dramatic irony; spectators who have less knowledge of Shakespeare's play can identify with Ros and Guil who are trying to make sense of the events surrounding them. Therefore the quality of the dramatic experience depends on the spectator's degree of acquaintance with Hamlet.

Stoppard's play achieved great success, both popular and critical, on its first London appearance, and though longer consideration has resulted in some adverse comments, it is still regarded as a very good play. The main opinion seems to be that Stoppard's attempts to confront large philosophical issues (like death) directly are unsuccessful.<sup>6</sup>



His idiom is not rich enough to sustain a direct intellectual confrontation with Life and Death ... the language does not possess the elusiveness and the economy that are essential if a writer wishes to confront large issues directly.

Certainly the intellectual clarity with which he presents his material has little in common with poetry, and leaves little room for the mystery inherent in metaphysical issues. However, as criticism of drama in general and Hamlet in particular Stoppard's play functions superbly. The dialogues between Ros and Guil in which they try to get to the essence of Hamlet's condition succinctly present salient facts. Berlin maintains that Stoppard comments on life best when he is commenting on the life revealed by art:<sup>7</sup>

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead is art that studies art, and therefore serving as a document, dramatic criticism as play presenting ideas on Hamlet, on Elizabethan drama, on theatrical art, and by so doing commenting on the life that art reveals. That is, Stoppard's play is holding the mirror of art up to the art that holds the mirror up to nature.

Certainly we feel far more detached when watching Stoppard's play than when experiencing most of the other plays in this group which generally use a realistic style.

The next three plays also change the focal characters; they are one-act plays set in domestic contexts. Two of these are by Margaret Wood, and they will be discussed in chronological order.

Instruments of Darkness is Macbeth below-stairs. The action encompasses the time from Macbeth's expected arrival at his castle in Inverness until the bell sounds just before Macbeth murders Duncan (i.e. Shakespeare's I,5 - II,1, just four scenes).



The characters of the play are the servants of Lord and Lady Macbeth. Just as Lady Macbeth eagerly awaits Macbeth's arrival, so Katrine (the chief cook) and Morag (her daughter who waits on Lady Macbeth) await the arrival of their menfolk, Donuil and Niall. Now that Morag has a position upstairs, Katrine feels that Niall, who is just a man-at-arms, is not good enough for her, but Morag disagrees.

The other major character is Ailort, an old serving woman who has an awareness of evil. She tells Morag that when she (Ailort) was little she was caught on the heath by three old women; she escaped, but saw them twice more at Macbeth's castle until she put a cross of twigs over the gate. Morag confides her fears of Lady Macbeth to Ailort, and a bond of sympathy is thus established between them.

The King arrives upstairs, and we see Donuil and Niall arrive. From them, and from various messengers, we learn snippets of news, such as the promotion of Macbeth to Thane of Cawdor.

The steward enters with the news that Donuil and Niall have been chosen by Lady Macbeth to guard the King. Most of them see this as a great honour, and Katrine hopes that this will bring Niall's advancement. However, Morag and Ailort are frightened at this unexpected action, and wish they had not been chosen. The steward stresses that the guards must drink nothing, but reappears sometime later with two steaming tankards from Lady Macbeth for Donuil and Niall. The two men are honoured by such a drink, and despite

the fears of Morag and Ailort, they finish the beverage. This passage is inspired by Lady Macbeth's speech in Shakespeare's play about drugging the guards:

... his two chamberlains  
 Will I with wine and wassail so convince  
 That memory, the warder of the brain,  
 Shall be afume, and the receipt of reason  
 A limbec only.  
 (Macbeth I,7,63-67)

Donuil and Niall then leave to mount the guard.

The steward brings a message from Lady Macbeth that Macbeth's drink should be warmed, and brought to her when the bell rings. After that, no one must stir until morning when the king's sons arrive. (Cf. Macbeth's speech to a servant in Shakespeare's play: 'Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,/She strike upon the bell.'  
 (II,1,31-32)) At this point, Morag looks out of the window and notices that the twig cross above the gate has disappeared. Ailort prophesies that the old women are in the castle, and guesses at their intentions:

MORAG: Ailort, what does it mean? Have they come for you?  
 AILORT: No, not for me.  
 MORAG: Then for whom? For whom?  
 AILORT (prophetically): For the King; for Banquo; for a woman and her children; for Macbeth and his lady; and for Donuil and Niall, the innocent instruments of darkness.  
 (p.17)

Katrine is furious and accuses Ailort of being a witch, but Ailort is calm:

I am no witch. But I know what I know, and Morag knows it, too. Duncan will not see tomorrow's sun, and you will not see your men again.

...  
The King will die, and it will seem their guilt!  
(p.18)

She suggests that Macbeth is behind it because he is ambitious. Then a bell sounds, and there is silence. Katrine gives Macbeth's drink to Morag, and Ailort ends the play with the comment:

It is the signal!  
(p.19)

Throughout the play there is a feeling of doom, and it relies heavily on a knowledge of Macbeth for we are told what will happen only in Ailort's prophesies. If we know Macbeth, we realise as soon as Donuil and Niall are named as Duncan's guards that they are doomed and the fears of Morag and Ailort should be heeded. We also know that the sound of the bell signals not only the desire for a drink but also Duncan's imminent murder.

Wood's other play, Cato's Daughter, is similar in several respects, though as well as servants we see two of Shakespeare's more important characters, Portia and Calpurnia. The play depicts Portia's reactions to the assassination of Julius Caesar and the subsequent conduct of her husband Brutus.



In Shakespeare's play, Portia sends Lucius to the Capitol to see how Brutus is (II,4,1-20); Wood's play opens with Portia's two waiting-women, Julia and Claudia, looking from the window for Lucius' return. Megaera is an older servant who had been Portia's nurse. Both she and the waiting-women have noticed Portia's increased agitation of late, and Megaera decides to speak to Portia. She urges Portia to either weep or tell her secret. Portia is indignant, stressing that she is Cato's daughter and so can stand anything, but eventually, after Megaera has revealed she knows that Brutus had night visitors in the garden, she is about to tell Megaera her troubles when they are interrupted. Portia agrees to see her visitor, Calpurnia, and Megaera knows that she will not get another chance to save Portia.

Calpurnia explains her fears for Caesar's safety to Portia. She describes her dream and the way Decius talked Caesar into going to the Capitol. Calpurnia then makes Portia swear by her father's spirit that she knows of no harm intended towards Caesar - Portia swears.

As Portia is combing Calpurnia's hair, rioting begins in the streets. Gradually we learn that Caesar has been killed, and Brutus has won the crowd's respect. Portia tries to make Calpurnia understand why Caesar was killed (showing her knowledge of the plans), but Calpurnia believes that Antony will avenge Caesar's death.

Rioting again takes place, only this time directed against Brutus (Antony now having spoken to the mob). Calpurnia can leave in safety, but she pities Portia for not being able to weep and bend under misfortune, for she will eventually break. Gradually more news filters through - we learn that first Cassius, and then Brutus, have fled. Portia would rather die honourably than face shame, but Brutus has had the foresight to order the removal of the poison kept in the house. Megaera vows that she will do all in her power to prevent Portia from killing herself, and Portia herself does not really know what is right any more. Then she looks at the brazier brought in to keep her warm, and she has an idea:

(She shudders violently again, and standing, she turns to the brazier. The sight of it makes her pause as if an idea has struck her. Then she looks cautiously round and sees Megaera. Laughing softly to herself she moves C and bends over the brazier so that it lights her face from below) Still there, Megaera? Watch well, old nurse, watch well. (She stretches her hands over the brazier) I shall find a way, Brutus, I shall find a way.  
(p.23)

This is the end of the play, and it means little unless one is familiar with Shakespeare's Julius Caesar for there we are told the manner of Portia's death:

... she fell distract,  
And, her attendants absent, swallow'd fire.  
(IV, 3, 153-154)



Wood's play thus stresses the strict upbringing experienced by Portia and her consequent self-discipline, and offers these as explanations of her suicide. Both Megara and Calpurnia indicate that Portia's refusal to compromise will lead eventually to her death and so again a sense of doom pervades. This is, of course, increased by the spectator's knowledge of the final outcome (gleaned from Shakespeare's play).

The three plays discussed so far lead to death. This next one is more concerned with life, and how to keep your man at home. Mistress Bottom's Dream is set in Athens at the time of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. More specifically it is set in the living-room of Nick Bottom's house. The central character is Mistress Bottom, and towards the beginning of the play she gives her daughter Nance some advice:

But no woman keepeth a man's love by much rebuking!  
 If you should wed a man that looks across the street ...  
 for solace, ne'er let him guess that you be moved.  
 Leave scolding to the shrews! Set him ready the dish  
 that he loveth best. Belike a ... a round o' beef,  
 and a ... pot o' small ale. Welcome him home, like a  
 Lord! That is, if you love him!  
 (p.7)

Before Nance goes to bed, we gather that Mistress Bottom is uncertain of the whereabouts of her husband, and much of the rest of the play depicts other women coming to Mistress Bottom in search of their menfolk. They arrive on various pretenses - fear of being alone on Midsummer's Eve; a desire to consult Bottom; belief that the woman's



husband is in bed with Mistress Bottom and so on. We learn snippets about the recent peculiar behaviour of some of the men, such as Snug's tendency to prowl around the house roaring and his refusal to have his nails cut. Mistress Bottom throughout tries to preserve the illusion that she knows where her husband is, but eventually it is Nance (who has been woken by Mistress Flute looking for her son) who reveals all (Francis Flute having told her): the men are in the Palace Wood rehearsing Pyramus and Thisby to play before the Duke and Duchess on their wedding night. The women are all relieved at this harmless reason for the men's absence, and the neighbours leave. Nance returns to bed, and Mistress Bottom sits down and falls asleep. Puck enters and squeezes juice into Mistress Bottom's eyes, and the following scene is revealed: Bottom (wearing an ass's head) appears with a beautiful Titania and two attendant fairies; Titania speaks tenderly (in Shakespeare's language) and Bottom replies, braying. Mistress Bottom wakes, and tries to reassure herself that Bottom is clever, fine-looking, and honoured to be the lover of the Fairy-Queen. Purposefully she set the table with some beef and ale and, as a mischievous afterthought, a large bunch of carrots.

Mistress Bottom has a warmth and common sense that attract us to her, and though she is as concerned as the other women about the disappearance of her husband, she makes less of a song-and-dance about it, confident that he will return. Her dream somewhat undermines her confidence,

but she relies on the advice which she gave Nance at the beginning of the play, and we know that Bottom will return. The audience, knowing Shakespeare's play, does not share the bewilderment of the women - we are comfortable in our knowledge that the men are merely rehearsing, and even Snug's behaviour is explicable because he acts the lion. This short play in fact extends the themes of love, marriage and jealousy, explored in Shakespeare's play in relation to the aristocratic characters, to the mechanicals and their wives; the magic is dispensed with (apart from Fuck's appearance) and ordinary domestic problems and concerns are depicted.

The next two reorientations to be discussed consider the events of Shakespeare's play from the perspective of some years later. The focal characters are the same as in Shakespeare's play.

Rubinstein's Shylock's End is also a one-act play, this time based on The Merchant of Venice. A new character is introduced, The Juggler, and he manipulates the action. It is his presence which makes it difficult to determine the context of this play. The play opens as follows:

JUGGLER: "In sooth I know not why I am so sad."

ANTONIO: What's that?

JUGGLER: These are the opening words of a comedy.

ANTONIO: I seem to have heard them before.

JUGGLER: The comedy is "The Merchant of Venice"; the speaker, the Merchant, Antonio.

ANTONIO: My name is Antonio. I am a merchant of Venice of long standing.

(p.79)



The Juggler then asks various questions concerning the plot of Shakespeare's play (and consequently summarising it) and establishes that this Antonio is in fact the Antonio of the comedy. Thus it is difficult to know who this character Antonio is: is he just the Shakespearian character? is he an actor? is he both the Shakespearian character and a merchant of Venice? The confusion lies in the fact that the events described relate to a play - the Juggler is specific about that. Nevertheless this person Antonio is a real person who seems to have adopted the history and the characteristics of Shakespeare's Antonio. The confusion does not end there. Antonio asks the Juggler who he is:

ANTONIO: Are you my maker?  
 JUGGLER: No, I do not make. But I am in His service.  
 I help to sort things out. I am the Juggler.  
 ANTONIO: I see.  
 JUGGLER: I am part of a philosophical machine. I put  
 questions, and find answers. I am known to  
 students of Cabala, Alchemy, Magic, Astrology -  
 ANTONIO: That will be quite enough.  
 JUGGLER: Do not alarm yourself. This is only a dream.  
 ANTONIO: Oh, a dream - that of course, makes all the  
 difference. Strange things happen quite  
 naturally in dreams. Is it a friendly dream?  
 JUGGLER: All dreams are friends.  
 (pp.80-81)

The notion that the play is in fact a dream is supported by the Juggler's last words, 'Wake up, everybody!'

However, if the play is Antonio's dream, then only Antonio learns anything - the other 'characters' do not actually exist, or at least, do not necessarily experience the events and feelings depicted. Enough of the context; the action of the play is as follows.



Antonio tells the Juggler that Bassanio has married Portia, and the two friends have not met since then, though Antonio's love for Bassanio remains true. He states that he does not care what has happened to the other characters, but the Juggler indicates that this indifference must change. Antonio all this while has been sitting on a bench in a street, and as the Juggler leaves, Lorenzo enters. Antonio was appointed trustee of Shylock's money for Lorenzo and Jessica, and Lorenzo wants some. Antonio refuses, and Jessica joins them. She and Lorenzo are estranged and they quarrel over money. Antonio asks if they have forgotten their lovers' vows, at which point the Juggler re-enters and speaks the vows (in Shakespeare's language): Lorenzo and Jessica join in. Nothing has changed, however, for the estranged couple mechanically recommence battle. The Juggler summarises the position:

Antonio, yes, they are the same two people.  
Swinging between the opposites of Heaven and Hell.  
So are you all. Lorenzo, Jessica, Antonio, Shylock.  
That is perhaps the first lesson.  
(p.89)

Antonio is again alone, and Tubal enters. Antonio confesses to Tubal that he treated Shylock badly, and Tubal in return confesses that he fed Shylock's revenge against Antonio. They begin to wonder where Shylock is, and at this point Nerissa enters and tells them: Shylock left Venice and wandered until his mental and physical health deteriorated; he was cared for by Portia and on his recovery was given a

small house in Venice where he has been looked after by Nerissa and Gratiano. Nerissa says he is a changed man, and invites Antonio and Tubal to come and see him.

The scene changes to an interior, and Nerissa, Tubal and Antonio are greeted by Gratiano who is ashamed of his past behaviour. Shylock on awakening is wheeled in and is reconciled to Antonio. Tubal accuses Shylock of betraying the Jews by willingly embracing Christianity, but all Shylock's faith is in the young Daniel, the lawyer at the trial (i.e. Portia). Portia, as the lawyer, enters and greets the visitors. At Shylock's request she repeats her 'quality of mercy' speech, and Shylock comments that the words describe the reality behind all their religions. Tubal accuses Portia of hypocrisy saying that after giving that speech at the trial she urged Shylock to revenge. However, on Shylock's insistence, she replies with the tale of the Arab horseman: a man swallowed a poisonous snake while asleep, and a passing horseman whipped the man until the snake was thrown from his stomach. Shylock says that there were three snakes: Hatred, Greed and Pride. Shylock dies, and Portia removes her disguise, acknowledging that she uses tricks and deceptions (just as actors do in a theatre), but she excuses herself by saying that she is on the side of the angels:

... the love I preach is the God of all religions ...  
(p.104)

8

She then calls on the Juggler to 'terminate the proceedings' which he does by ordering everyone to wake up.



The characters in the play are all infected by their increasing age and the spirit of repentance for past intolerance. Shylock and Portia try to convince the others that religious forms are irrelevant, and what matters is the love governing behaviour. There is therefore basically a humanitarian outlook. However, as already suggested, only Antonio benefits from this realisation if the action comprises his dream, and the dream is therefore a manifestation of his own gradually increasing concern for the people in his past.

The other reorientation of time is Nathan's Juliet in Mantua, the sub-title of which describes the scope of the action:

Being the account of the sojourn in Mantua of Romeo and Juliet, and their return to Verona

The action is guided by Friar Lawrence who explains the situation at the beginning of the play:

Here's the honest truth of it; Bandello never knew that the apothecary, mixing his poisons without prescription and against the law, gave Romeo a simple powder made up of alum and bicarbonate. So there he was when Juliet awoke, with no more than a puckered mouth. Not the first man to seek a hero's death, and end up instead alive and married and headed out of town. So here we are ten years later, in Mantua. Romeo and Juliet wait out their banishment, along with Juliet's old nurse, and myself.

(p.4)

Romeo and Juliet are living with the Nurse and Friar Lawrence in shabby lodgings. There are suggestions that Romeo is unfaithful, and he gambles (unsuccessfully) in



order to try to increase their meagre income. Juliet tries to keep romance alive, but it is an uphill task. All their hopes rest on the possibility of their banishment being lifted. The two lovers have moments of happiness together, but nothing substantial. However, at the end of Act I, a messenger enters with the news that the ban has been lifted and they may return to Verona.

At the beginning of Act II Friar Lawrence again sets the scene. Paris (who was only wounded in the fight with Romeo) has married Romeo's former lover Rosaline, and the Montagues and Capulets are still antagonistic towards one another. However, despite this coolness the families do manage to discuss their mutual problems. Romeo and Juliet arrive back in Verona to a large reception; they are to stay at the Montagues' house but Romeo's parents expect a dowry from the Capulets. Gradually, Paris and Rosaline assume more importance, and they are invited on the picnic arranged for the next day. During the picnic several discontents become apparent between various parties, but conversation is desultory and gradually people move away. Romeo, Juliet, Rosaline and Paris go for a stroll together but, due to Rosaline's manoeuvrings, they divide into two couples, Rosaline being with Romeo. She then asks him to kiss her but he backs away. Some distance away, Paris reveals to Juliet his high regard for her, but though she is touched she feels that they should rejoin the others. However, as they return they discover Rosaline and Romeo embracing, and Paris, more concerned for Juliet than for anyone else, demands an apology for her. Romeo, realising

Paris' love for Juliet, slaps him, and Paris demands satisfaction via a duel.

In Act III, Romeo speaks confidentially to Friar Lawrence about his love for Juliet, and Juliet overhears. With this breach mended, Juliet's main task is to call off the duel. She and Rosaline devise a plan. They ensure that the weapons to be used are pistols, and just as the duel is about to commence, the two women step up to their husbands and remove the pistols. They act as if they will perform the duel (being the original cause of trouble) but at the crucial moment they each fire into the air. Honour is satisfied and everyone is reconciled. Juliet announces she will have a baby and the Prince gives Romeo a new position. The play ends as they all sit down to enjoy refreshments.

The play basically deals with the problems of marriage and of living with a person, especially when times are tough. Even where the love is true, poor social conditions and advancing age can bring pressures which make one remember one's youth and the time one was happy with no worries. What Nathan does seem to be suggesting is that all couples have difficulties, but provided social pressures are not applied for too long, true love will weather the storm. At the end of Nathan's play we do not feel that everything will now go smoothly, but we do feel that the characters can make a new beginning based on an increased maturity.



Though Romeo and Juliet is an obvious choice for a story about the disillusionment following young love, Nathan is rather long-winded about his tale. There are too many scenes, and the same idea seems to be communicated several times.

It is not clear when the play was completed in its final form (it has copyrights of 1955, 1965 and 1966), but it seems far more a product of the 1950s than the 1960s.

Like the other 1950s reorientations (those by Jay and Wood) it is essentially domestic, and staged realistically.

In these respects these reorientations are similar to the domestications which for the most part were also written in the 1950s.

The last two plays in this group present something of a problem. The plays by Taylor and Wesker show events which relate to Ophelia and Shylock, but those events undergo a change. Thus, unlike the other reorientations, the situation to which the characters are reacting is not identical to Shakespeare's situation, though there are strong similarities in many respects,

In Taylor's play, Ophelia, Claudius' crime is changed from fratricide to the inhumane slaughter of the Aalborg citizens who could not pay their taxes. This crime, perpetrated in the name of 'political necessity'<sup>8</sup>, is carried out during the course of the play, unlike the Hamlet crime which occurs before the play commences. Other plot changes stem from this transformation.

The play alternates between two time sequences. The framing sequence is the present: Ophelia, mad, is remembering the events which led to her madness, and as she remembers a particular series of events they are depicted in flashbacks;



thus the second time sequence moves from the fairly recent past to the present. Let us refer to these two sequences as A (present) and B (flashbacks).

Sequence A is dominated by Ophelia. She sits on one side of the stage looking abstracted and speaking directly to no one. Polonius tries to establish contact with her to little avail. Hamlet is more aware of her condition and considers her to be on another planet. Occasionally discussions take place about and across Ophelia, involving Polonius, Hamlet and Gertrude, but Ophelia herself takes no part. Ophelia's utterances for the most part are descriptions of how situations arose (those situations then being depicted in sequence B), and her memories become increasingly bitter, though she remains detached and serene - throughout this sequence A she refers to herself and Hamlet as 'she' and 'he', and so refuses to identify with the girl taking part in the events of sequence B (except when she is very happy). Hamlet, against Gertrude's wishes, wants to marry Ophelia, and at the end of the play (when A and B coincide) he reveals that he has found a pastor to marry them.

Sequence B actually carries the events of the play, tracing the action from when Ophelia first arrives at court until her madness. When she first arrives, Gertrude befriends her and also suggests that she should befriend Hamlet who resents his mother. We then see Ophelia's first meeting with Hamlet which takes place by the Chinese Lake. Hamlet is with Horatio, but they have argued and the latter

leaves. Hamlet describes the cause of the quarrel to Ophelia: they came across a peasant family which had been turned off their land (because of the new land enclosures) and was now living in poverty; Hamlet had wanted to help them by letting them live at the court, but Horatio pointed to the impracticability of helping all such peasants in need. Ophelia supports Hamlet, encouraging his anger at the situation. Towards the end of their encounter, Hamlet sees an image of his (dead) father and tries to rid his mind of it; Ophelia tells him to let the image make its impression, and Hamlet says that it is trying to make him understand something.

On a later encounter between Hamlet and Ophelia they discuss Gertrude, and Hamlet's inability to speak to her. Ophelia reveals her love for Hamlet, who replies:

I think I love you. Certainly more than I have ever loved anybody else.

...  
I am certain of this, Ophelia. I am nearer loving you than I have ever been to anyone in my life.  
(I, 5, 16)

This inability or refusal to make a whole-hearted commitment is typical of Hamlet, and recalls the indecisiveness of Shakespeare's protagonist.

We next see a conversation at court between Gertrude, Claudius, Polonius and Ophelia. From this we gather much information. Most importantly, we learn that the politicians (including Hamlet) held a meeting at which it was decided that a military expedition to Aalborg is necessary in order



to force the citizens to pay their taxes - if they were allowed to escape payment, other towns would follow suit. Hamlet did not speak against this plan at the meeting, and when Ophelia turned him away on that account, he disappeared from the castle. Ophelia cannot understand why some people want the power to control the lives of others. The other news we learn is that the marriage and coronation of Gertrude and Claudius (which, unlike in Shakespeare's play, has not yet taken place) is to be in two months, and Gertrude tells Ophelia to send Hamlet to her when he returns so that she may tell him of the forthcoming marriage.

We then see the return of Hamlet, accompanied by Laertes. Hamlet agrees with Laertes that he is unable to face up to the realities of life, but when Ophelia suggests that, being unsuited to kingship, he renounce his claim to the throne, the two men point out that the people need to view the situation as a joint rule between Claudius and Hamlet if they are to keep the peace, so Hamlet does have a responsibility already. Laertes then gives us our first information about the rule of Hamlet's father: he reveals that though he was a humane king, he too razed towns to the ground. Claudius enters with Gertrude and tells Hamlet about the forthcoming marriage - Hamlet sees (in his mind) his father smiling, but does not know how to react himself. Hamlet never feels - he only examines what he should be feeling.



Act II begins with Gertrude (in Ophelia's presence) explaining to Hamlet why she loves Claudius. She reveals that Hamlet's father only wanted a son, and after that he and Gertrude were estranged. Again Hamlet analyses his possible reactions, much to the women's disgust.

In the next scene we return to the problems of the peasant families: Hamlet learns that the peasant family he found may have come from Horatio's estate, and Horatio admits the possibility, but he reminds Hamlet that his (Hamlet's) father set the example by combining small farms in order to increase revenue; he also says that on Hamlet's own estates the same is done - this is too much for Hamlet who orders Polonius to look into the matter. Hamlet again sees his father's image, but this time he is barring the door and forbidding him to take the oath of loyalty to Claudius. Hamlet is indecisive and finds the advice of others no help - he begins learning the oath.

One night, around this time, Ophelia hears her father walking in his room, obviously disturbed, and she goes to see him. Polonius reveals to Ophelia that in order to make the attack on Aalborg more generally acceptable, an agent is being sent to assassinate the king's sheriff. Both Polonius and Ophelia feel out of their depth, remembering the time they felt happy and secure, but Polonius realises intellectually that one death is better than a country at war.

Ophelia later learns that the sheriff in question is a personal friend of Laertes, but her brother refuses to feel pity for there is no remedy.

After the royal wedding, Claudius reveals that the sheriff and his wife have been killed, and orders the court to go into mourning. This hypocrisy disgusts Hamlet, but Laertes tells him that the agent was also used many times by his father. Hamlet (seeing the ghost in his mind) accuses his father of only showing him the light things in life, not the dark things - he comments to Ophelia that his father looks away from him. Hamlet describes how his father is always watching him; he knows of his father's darker deeds and says that even now his father is urging him to kill the king; Hamlet concludes that no reign can be just.

Ophelia is now unable to derive comfort from anyone - neither Polonius nor Hamlet can take away her fear. In the last scene of the play, the two time sequences merge, and Ophelia (sequence A) gives what amounts to a running commentary on the events (sequence B). We learn that the Aalborg citizens received warning of the imminent expedition, and consequently they were massacred. Claudius prays in the chapel while Hamlet learns of these events. Ophelia recognises the cause of her fear - it is a monster, which was sent to Aalborg, and which is now standing beside Claudius and Hamlet. Afraid for Hamlet, she calls him to come to her, but he ignores her, meanwhile telling Claudius that his father's ghost has left him and that he will join Claudius in facing realities. Ophelia then realises that they cannot see the monster because they are part of it, and as Hamlet moves towards her her terror increases and she runs.



The play ends on a tranquil note in sharp contrast to this climactic terror. Ophelia describes how she came out of the dark into the light, 'beyond anyone's touch', and she instructs Hamlet on the beauty of the world.

Ophelia is obviously naive and idealistic, never having been at the court before, and Hamlet just as obviously had a sheltered upbringing. They are sensitive, feeling pity for the sufferings of others, and are innocent enough to believe that something can be done about such sufferings. However, the realities of life become increasingly apparent to them, and they have to find ways of coping with the realities. Hamlet eventually joins Claudius, accepting the necessity of some injustice in the interests of general peace. Ophelia cannot accept this compromise, and she takes refuge in a madness which detaches her from the real world - she relies on her inner world over which she has control.

The main point of the play seems to be that ideals are useless without practical means of implementation. However, the political questions posed receive no real answers. For example, the reason for the murder of the sheriff is that it will make the expedition to Aalborg more acceptable to the people, but in the event it is doubtful whether it does increase the total sum of security and happiness. Furthermore, even if the total happiness is increased, it is arguable that this is of less importance than the individual's freedom and rights. There may be no answers, but the questions are effectively posed. The conclusion seems to be similar to that of Shakespeare's Henry VI plays - no reign can be both just and happy.



Ophelia did not receive particularly good reviews, Victoria Radin being most explicit in her criticism:<sup>9</sup>

Hamlet hedges but finally accepts a line of political expediency. Ophelia reacts by going mad.... this seems such a wet thing for Ophelia to do. Now that, after Germany, we know that nice girls can take action, it is pretty poor stuff to give us a young woman whose feeling for people finally takes the same nursery vein as her love for small animals, trees and flowers. And as an argument, as I take her to be, about the futility of political idealism, Ophelia makes a very weak case.

It is, perhaps, rather unfair to Taylor to criticise him for giving us one character instead of another. He has, after all, taken Shakespeare's Ophelia as his starting-point, and she would not urge people to political rallies or plant bombs in the shopping-centres of Elsinore. He has depicted two possible reactions (Ophelia's and Hamlet's) to the conflict between reality and idealism; Radin may be interested in other possibilities, but that would constitute another play. And after all, even in Shakespeare's play, Ophelia does appear fairly 'wet' - Taylor, if anything, has added interest to the character by filling in the background to her love for Hamlet and the development of her madness. The events of this play could well have been taking place at the same time as the events depicted in Hamlet - each writer has just chosen to show different aspects (though of course there are no references in Shakespeare to an expedition to Aalborg).

The final play in this group is Wesker's The Merchant. Like Taylor's play it strays from Shakespeare's plot. In this case, the governing change is that Shylock and Antonio, though Jew and Gentile, are friends. This

changes the whole basis of the bond which, in Wesker's play, is made to mock the law which insists that all exchanges between Jew and Gentile be formalised by a written contract.

The play opens with Antonio helping Shylock to catalogue his books - the two are obviously close friends. The scene then moves to Belmont, a dilapidated estate which Portia is determined to farm. She is a new woman, educated, and determined to control her own life. Back in the Venice ghetto where Shylock lives, Antonio reveals that an old friend has asked him to be good to his only son, Bassanio. He does not really want to help but decides to send a message to him in the morning after spending the night in the ghetto at Shylock's invitation. The fourth scene, the following morning, shows Shylock's ghetto-life. His daughter Jessica is fed-up with Shylock's strict code, but other people come to Shylock for help and advice. He is contributing money for the new synagogue, and he gives reassurance to others that he will arrange accommodation for Portuguese Jews 'en route' for Solonika. Tubal, Shylock's business partner, reveals that, owing to taxation, at times the ghetto is completely devoid of funds until trade starts the money flowing again. Antonio has by now found Bassanio, and the other characters leave the two together. Bassanio shows his contempt of the Jews, and then asks Antonio to lend him 3000 ducats to help him win Portia. Antonio feels it is his duty to help, and so agrees, but as he has no ready money he must borrow from Shylock. Shylock agrees immediately, but is reluctant to make a formal contract. The two friends argue about this, Shylock



wanting to be trusted and Antonio stressing that Shylock will be punished if it is found that no bond exists.

Eventually Antonio points to the way in which the lives of the Ghetto Jews are totally controlled by law and contract, and the fact that they need the law to preserve any decent life. Therefore Shylock must honour that law - Shylock is forced to agree, but decides that they will both keep and mock the law by having a nonsense bond. They decide that if Antonio fails to repay the money by the stipulated hour, Shylock will have a pound of his flesh.

We then move to Antonio's warehouse where Bassanio is choosing cloth for his new clothes. He, Lorenzo and Graziano are all anti-Jewish, and are surprised at Antonio's liberal attitude to Shylock. Lorenzo is in love with Jessica, Shylock's daughter, but he assumes he will be able to change her beliefs. They are all to meet that evening at Antonio's house.

A short scene at Shylock's house shows Jessica being reprimanded by her father for being late for an appointment and, infuriated by his narrow code, Jessica runs out - we later learn that she has left the house.

Act I ends with the gathering at Antonio's house where Lorenzo is continually antagonistic to Shylock. After giving the assembled company a history lesson in which he shows his learning and love of culture, Shylock is summoned back to the ghetto by a bell.

Act II opens in Belmont. Bassanio has arrived, and Portia leads him to the three caskets, telling him to choose.



(As in Shakespeare's play, Portia's father devised a scheme for choosing her a husband - the suitor must choose the correct casket from gold, silver and lead.) Bassanio speaks his thoughts about choosing a casket (mainly trying to ascertain Portia's father's state of mind when devising the test) and then chooses lead, correctly. Portia agrees to marry him, but stresses that love needs time to form and develop. When Bassanio leaves, Portia shows that in fact she has no need of him and will marry him only to honour her father's wishes.

Two crises now develop for Shylock. The first is the disappearance of Jessica, whom he loves dearly, and the second is the threat that Shylock's ships, which have been captured, will not be rescued in time for him to fulfil the bond which expires soon. Shylock tries to read a letter from Jessica and concentrate on that problem while Rivka (Shylock's sister, a non-Shakespearian character) tries to force him to confront the problem of the bond. Rivka points out that the court will release Shylock from the bond to save Antonio's life but in doing so they will be bending the law, and others of the Jewish community, needing the law for their own protection, may resent the setting of such a precedent. In Antonio's presence Shylock learns that Jessica has joined Lorenzo and together they are on their way to Belmont; they also learn that all Antonio's ships have been taken or sunk, and Antonio has no money. Shylock and Antonio are left alone. Antonio says that he knows they must keep the bond, though they both regret it - Shylock asks only that at the trial they should both

remain silent and give no reasons or excuses. The scene ends with their mutual expressions of love.

At Belmont, Bassanio greets Lorenzo and Jessica, and introduces them to Portia. Lorenzo describes the plight of Antonio's ships and adds that Shylock is insisting on the bond - Jessica tries to suggest that Shylock has his reasons, but the others ignore her. When Lorenzo is alone with Jessica he gradually tries to tell her that, as a Jew, she has chosen the wrong god. At this, she is cold and angry with Lorenzo. The two men leave to attend the court, and Jessica describes to Portia her changed feelings for Lorenzo. She also speaks of the bond, and Nerissa (Portia's maid) urges Portia to attend the court in case her 'untried intellect' can help; at first Portia rejects the suggestion but then she has an idea (though she cannot believe that so common-sense a point can be applicable) and they all attend the court.

The women arrive at court as Bassanio, Lorenzo and Graziano are being scornful of the silent Shylock. The Doge begins the proceedings as Portia peruses the papers. The Doge makes it clear that he will release both Shylock and Antonio from the bond if they wish, and urges first Shylock and then Antonio to explain why they insist on keeping the bond. There are discussions, mainly with Antonio, about executive power, patrician privilege and justice, but Lorenzo tries to emphasise that the real issue concerns usury 'whose evil this bond so tragically exemplifies' (II,5,p.61). He goes on to stress that the bond, not the Jew, is inhuman, and in fact stresses the



Jew's humanity using Shakespeare's speech 'Hath not a Jew eyes'. At such condescension Shylock is furious; he describes how, whatever a Jew does, he is blamed for it. He insists on his bond, that being the law, and draws his knife. At this point Portia rises and suggests that the bond is not legally binding because its contradictions make it impossible (no blood is allowed, and it is impossible to take a precise weight). Portia's interruption is far more low-key than in Shakespeare's play, and appears as common sense rather than a theatrically-staged performance. Shylock is overjoyed, laughing at his own stupidity, but the Doge confiscates his books, insisting that the people of Venice will expect some punishment to be exacted from a Jew who sought the life of a citizen. Antonio asks what his punishment is to be, but he is deemed to have suffered enough. Antonio tries to persuade Shylock to explain to the court that he did not want to set a precedent in law, but Shylock refuses, insisting that they must keep to the letter of the law - he leaves, a broken man.

The final scene takes place at Belmont. Portia and Antonio are obviously kindred spirits - educated and tolerant. She tells him that she will marry Bassanio and run the estate; Antonio will salvage his wrecks and, maybe, visit Shylock in Jerusalem; Portia will ensure that Jessica does not marry Lorenzo. Lorenzo, Bassanio and Graziano converse inanely, scornfully, as Antonio, Portia and Jessica move to three separate corners of the stage, each alone.



Shylock is presented as an educated and cultured man, filling his house with writers and artists, and contributing financially to the culture of the ghetto. Our sympathies lie with him and Antonio rather than the law. However, we are not aware of any suffering on Antonio's part, and surely anyone in such a position would suffer, even while insisting on the bond. The problem with the play is that it is too biased. We have to accept Shylock's view as the only possible view for we are shown no other in depth; Bassanio and Lorenzo are so unintelligently prejudiced that they just deserve our scorn. It has been suggested that Shylock's goodness is only described, not shown, for example,

Victoria Radin:<sup>10</sup>

The play itself founders in special pleading, for we are told much more about Shylock's goodness, scholarship, cleverness and generosity than we are offered demonstrable evidence of them.

This comment is rather unfair for we are left in no doubt as to Shylock's love for his books and generosity towards Antonio. The dramatic conflict of the play does not reside between Jews and Gentiles but between love and duty. He loves Antonio and wishes him no harm, but their bond, undertaken with perfectly reasonable motives, has trapped Shylock into a position from which he can escape only by betraying his people or killing his friend. He decides to sacrifice his love to his duty, but there exists a genuine conflict which Wesker has portrayed effectively, despite his tendency to preach.

The bond itself, however, does present a problem. One might argue that the bond presents a problem in Shakespeare's play too, but that does not absolve Wesker for he was at liberty to choose only those features which would work in his play. He chose to include the bond and therefore presumably thought that it was satisfactory for his purpose.

Wesker created a situation where Shylock would be thankful that the bond could not be carried out, but the reason for making the bond in the first place is rather puerile. They are both supposed to be intelligent men, and to make such a bond when there is even the remotest chance that it will have to be carried out seems unbelievably stupid. Surely a bond could be found which mocks the law without relying on a man's death. When they realise that the bond has to be carried out, they appear rather like naughty schoolboys who have been found out. This, coupled with Antonio's apparent calmness, leads to an air of unreality about the bond's immediate implications, that is, Antonio's death, though the legal implications are clear enough.

The plays of both Wesker and Taylor obviously deviate far more from Shakespeare's events than the other reorientations, but it is possible for the most part to regard the changes as matters of viewpoint or interpretation -- the degree to which this is so will be seen in an examination of the invariant and variant features, which now follows.



### Language

In general the language is non-Shakespearian, but some Shakespearian passages do intrude. This is particularly so of Stoppard's play where the principal characters, Ros and Guil, frequently move into the Shakespeare play. However, even in this play the percentage of Shakespeare lines is only about 8%. One of the effects of the Shakespearian passages is that they help guide us through the play, providing reference points by which the Shakespeare play and the adaptation can be correlated. Wesker's play incorporates about 8 lines of Shylock's speech 'Hath not a Jew eyes', but changes the context because Lorenzo uses it condescendingly of Shylock - this is an example of an adapter using the spectator's knowledge of the Shakespeare play, and working against expectations. Wesker does incorporate a few other allusions to Shakespeare's words, but not particularly significantly. Jay's play incorporates part of Titania's speech in Mistress Bottom's dream, but here it is set apart from the domestic context of the play. Similarly Rubinstein includes two Shakespearian passages, but these are set apart as quotations from a play as the characters try to remember their earlier emotions.

Wood's plays, though devoid of direct quotations, do contain verbal echoes, as where the steward tells the servants to warm Macbeth's drink, and where Calpurnia tells Portia her dream. Nathan uses no specific verbal echoes, but does refer to events in Shakespeare's play. Taylor too avoids Shakespearian language.



As far as the use of Shakespeare's language is concerned, then, there is a continuum from the frequent inclusion of fairly long passages to the total absence of even echoes.

The non-Shakespearian parts of the text differ greatly from one play to another. In general, the characters speak in prose, though occasionally Nathan's main characters are given verse soliloquies, for example, the following speech by Juliet:

Man is an island nibbled by the sea,  
On which he nurtures weeds to hold the soil,  
And sometimes in his youth and by the moon,  
Names one a flower and calls the preacher in.  
April was full of birds and meadow-things;  
We had no May; we came too fast to June.  
And now - July? And there's no blossom left;  
No bud or bush to tempt the butterfly  
Or plundering bee to dredge the honey up.  
(III,1,p.89)

Only Ros, Guil and the Players, from Stoppard's play, speak modern English, and their speech is very much the product of a university training, full of philosophical terminology and an enjoyment of the language which is used as a substitute for action. Ros and Guil switch quite readily from this modern idiom to Shakespeare's language, and Narowitz<sup>11</sup> sees this as showing how people have different languages for different roles: Ros and Guil use the modern idiom for personal intercourse and Shakespeare's language for business.

Plays dealing with non-aristocratic characters attempt to evoke a sense of distance in time by using archaic

language. For example, Instruments of Darkness includes such words as 'Hark', 'trenchers', 'posset', and 'Save You, fair Princess'. Similarly, Jay's play has 'Beshrew your heart',

'tis lamentable fortune', 'Prithee' and 'affrighted' as well as many verbs ending with -eth (e.g. 'keepeth', 'loveth', 'requireth', 'remaineth', 'cometh'). The language is not dissimilar to the prose given to Shakespeare's common characters, though it is less complex and convoluted in construction. There is also a sense of dialect, particularly in Wood's play which is set in Scotland and gives rise to such phrases as 'the wee bairn' and 'the poor kerns'.

The dialogue of Nathan's play (apart from the verse) is similar to that of the domesticated adaptations. It is modern colloquial prose, but of little interest in itself.

The Merchant, Ophelia, Cato's Daughter and (to a lesser extent) Shylock's End are also written in modern prose, but the tone is less colloquial and a sense of timelessness is evoked by the increased formality. Particularly in Ophelia there is also a lyrical quality to the language. For example, Ophelia's comments (sequence A) on a dress she had been given (sequence B):

It was the most beautiful dress she'd ever had in her life. A blue that was just blue. Like the sky. Yards of material. Silk. And rich embroidery. But not flowers. Abstract patterns. They wanted to give her flowers. But she told them she hated anything imitating nature like that.  
(2,2,6.)

One of the problems of these reorientations is that they are supposedly taking place in the Shakespearian context, but they are not using Shakespeare's language (unlike the collage adaptations). Therefore a language has to be devised which is readily comprehensible to a modern audience but which does not too blatantly contradict the impression of

a period long past. Most of these writers succeed fairly well, though Nathan seems to have taken less care than the others - in this respect his verse is more successful than his prose.

### Plot

Let us assume that the spectator knows the original Shakespeare play. In this case, he will always have two series of events in mind:

A - Shakespeare's sequence of events

B - the action on stage

The spectator's task is to fit B, as it develops, into A.

One may consider a continuum of time which begins before Shakespeare's play starts and ends after it finishes: each reorientation takes one section of this continuum, as is shown diagrammatically below.



	before Shakes- peare's play	concurrent with Shakespeare's play: Act division					after Shakes- peare's play
		I	II	III	IV	V	
Complete continuum							
Shakespeare's play							
<u>Rosencrantz and Guil- denstern are Dead</u>							
<u>Instruments of Darkness</u>							
<u>Cato's Daughter</u>							
<u>Mistress Bottom's Dream</u>							
<u>Shylock's End</u>							
<u>Juliet in Mantua</u>							
<u>Ophelia</u>							
<u>The Merchant</u>							

Note

The sections indicated are not totally accurate for adapters may omit incidents and so on (i.e. the lines may be discontinuous) but the diagram gives an approximate idea of how each reorientation fits into Shakespeare's plot.

Basically there are three temporal relationships between A and B:

1. B before A
2. B concurrent with A
3. B after A

Choice of relationship goes far to determine the kind of reorientation.

1. B before A

In this case we are not shown any of A; the plot is entirely new, though it will be governed and determined by A. It is usual for these reorientations to depict Shakespeare's characters at a younger age with a view to showing how the situation, established at the beginning of Shakespeare's play, came about. Such an adaptation is largely concerned with psychological motivation, and assumes that stage characters do have an off-stage existence. There are, in fact, no modern examples, but earlier in the century Gordon Bottomley wrote two such reorientations, one of King Lear (King Lear's Wife, 1915) and one of Macbeth (Gruach, 1921). However, Wesker and Taylor do incorporate some earlier events into their plays, for example, we see Ophelia as soon as she comes to court and the development of her relationship with Hamlet.

2. B concurrent with A

In this case references are often made during the course of B to A, and some sections of A may even be depicted (as in Stoppard's play). There are parts of B which are new, not identical with A, but they are

governed by A because what we see are the characters' reactions to A. These plays deal with events shown through the eyes of a different character, and often events of primary importance in Shakespeare's play become insignificant in the reorientations. Mistress Bottom could not care less what Helon, Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius feel towards one another (and indeed these characters are not even mentioned in Jay's play); she merely wants to know what her husband is up to, and ensure that he returns home safe. Thus, only those events of relevance to the new central character are depicted.

### 3. B after A

As in (1) we are not shown any of A (though flashbacks might be incorporated as a central character remembers past events). However, unlike (1), A has already occurred and characters are largely a product of A. B is concerned with Shakespeare's characters at an older age, and the plot depicts events which result from the situation which has developed by the end of the play (Shakespeare's). Thus Romeo, banished in Shakespeare's play, is shown with his wife Juliet in Mantua - once the banishment is repealed a happy ending is possible.

We can see that A and B can either be very similar or totally disparate. What does remain invariant, however, is the events to which the characters are reacting. We may not see those events, but we see the reactions to



(or, in the case of (1), the causes of) the events. It is because these events are invariant in reorientations that Taylor's play is a doubtful case - though much is similar to Shakespeare in terms of character and general situation, the events are different. Jane Asher, who played Ophelia in the first production, explains this as follows:<sup>12</sup>

Everyone knows the vague outlines of Hamlet, but this play doesn't even follow the same events. As the author came to explore the characters he found that they did slightly different things.

It is as though the events of Shakespeare's play determined the characters, and into this situation Taylor inserted another series of events to see how these characters would react. However, this new series does not actually contradict Shakespeare's events (except in that Polonius is still alive after Ophelia has become mad), and so it seems legitimate to see the play as a reorientation.

What should be remembered about these adaptations is that they are very conjectural. Using Shakespeare's play as basic evidence the adapters speculate as to what other characters might have thought of events, or what Shakespeare's characters might have become as a result of those events, or what might have caused those events. Generally the main limit on such imaginative conjecture is that it should be consistent with what is already known.

## Character

The characters of the reorientations can be divided into four categories:

- a) Shakespearian characters
- b) those mentioned by Shakespeare
- c) those assumed by Shakespeare
- d) complete additions

### a) Shakespearian characters

In fact, all these plays include at least one Shakespearian character, but that need not be the case. In Instruments of Darkness the only character who also appears in Macbeth is the Porter, and he has little impact on Wood's play. Where the Shakespearian characters are included, they usually take over everything from their Shakespearian counterparts - role, name, status, title and personality. After all, these characters are supposed to be Shakespeare's characters. (There are occasionally minor variations, but this will be discussed later in relation to distortion.)

### ^b) Characters mentioned by Shakespeare

Some characters do not actually appear in Shakespeare's play but, despite that, they play a significant part in the plot. The adapters often choose to depict such characters and the part they played. Examples are the grooms from Macbeth (Donuil and Niall in Instruments of Darkness) and Romeo's former lover Rosaline (in Juliet in Mantua).

c) Characters assumed by Shakespeare

There are some characters who play no part at all in Shakespeare's play but whose existence causes no comment or surprise - they could quite feasibly have been introduced by Shakespeare. Their existence is thus assumed or taken for granted by Shakespeare. In Wood's plays such characters are servants; in Jay's play they are the mechanicals' womenfolk - mothers, wives and daughters.

d) Complete additions

The three categories described so far fit quite readily into the Shakespearian context. This is less true of the complete additions (though there are not many of these). Nathan includes a few, but insignificantly (mainly Italian reporters and a drunken man). The two main additions occur coincidentally in the two adaptations of The Merchant of Venice. Rubinstein introduces a Juggler, an omniscient presence who guides the action; he therefore frames the play. Wesker introduces five new characters into the action. They are all Jewish and are used to establish Shylock's status in the ghetto as well as his patronage of the arts, but they have little direct effect on the action - they tend to stand apart from actual events.

The other feature which changes in relation to character is the emphasis. Obviously the new focal characters are portrayed far more fully than in Shakespeare's version, to the detriment of other characters. (For example, Macbeth does not even appear in Wood's play.)



## Context

The context of these plays is perhaps the most difficult area to define, because (as with the language) it attempts to bridge the gap between Shakespeare's world and the modern world. The plays by Wood and Jay define fairly specifically the time and location of the action. Thus the action of Cato's Daughter 'passes in an apartment in the house of Marcus Brutus in Rome. Time - the Ides of March, 44 B.C.' while Instruments of Darkness takes place in 'The servants' quarters in Macbeth's castle of Inverness'. Jay's play is also specific: 'The Athens of Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream. The living-room in the house of NICK BOTTOM, the Weaver. Midsummer's Eve.' Thus all three plays essentially adopt Shakespeare's context, but transfer the focus to the domestic circumstances rather than the political situation.

Wesker's context is not dissimilar for he too adopts the Shakespearian context. The action moves from the Ghetto Nuovo (where Shylock lives) to Belmont and various other places in and around Venice, and takes place in 1563. Shakespeare's play is set at no precise date, but the action does take place in Venice, and 1563 is not inappropriate. As much of Wesker's purpose is to give an idea of what life in Venice was like for a Jew in the 16th century, he needs to be fairly precise in his context, and so it relates more to historical dating than Shakespearian dating.

Nathan too is precise, but more in terms of which room in which house than which date. The action moves from Mantua to Verona, but beyond that we know little. Nathan has commented on this in his 'Note to the Players':<sup>13</sup>

As for the scenery, little more than a suggestion is needed, and a few props; the play is in the lines, not the scenery. The costumes can be of whatever period the director chooses; for myself, I favor the Byronic dress; as I say, what's time to Mantua? If one holds too close to period - to tights and ruffles and codpieces - the anachronisms ... will appear awkward; the audience must be made to accept everything (after the first surprise) without complaint.

Nathan is obviously aware of having to bridge the gap between Shakespeare's context and modern life as unobtrusively as possible, but his play is written in such a way that choices of period have to be made - no timeless costume or setting are really possible when the characters are concerned with such everyday events as doing the accounts, viewing rooms and going on picnics which require a certain amount of paraphernalia.

The other three plays in this group (those by Stoppard, Rubinstein and Taylor) tend to take place mainly in rather bare, undefined locations. As Stoppard's play opens we see 'a place without any visible character', while in Rubinstein's play Antonio is sitting 'on a long bench in a deserted street'. Taylor merely specifies 'A place in Elsinore'. In fact, none of these contexts remain quite so undefined. Stoppard's characters obviously arrive at

Elsinore and just as obviously spend Act III on a boat bound for England; Antonio and Tubal go with Nerissa to Shylock's house, 'an interior simply furnished as a parlour' (p.96); the B sequences of Ophelia take place by the Chinese lake, or in Ophelia's bedroom, or Gertrude's bedroom - we know this quite specifically because Ophelia tells us. However, in none of these locations is there much clutter, and we move from one to another with little difficulty. The other feature of these plays is that no date is specified or even hinted at (though Rubinstein's play obviously takes place after The Merchant of Venice while the other two are concurrent with Hamlet).

What we can say about all these reorientations is that in general they take place a long time in the past in a location with which we are not familiar. All references to fashions, food, drink, household goods, methods of warfare and so on are consistent with this.

So far we have looked at context in terms of time and location, but there are other aspects. For example, the difficulties of placing the context of Rubinstein's play (dream? play-within-play?) have already been discussed. If it is a dream, then we are being given an internal view of Antonio's mind. Similarly, Taylor's play attempts to portray Ophelia's mind - we see her memories and hear her comments on them. The other plays give external views of events but for the most part the world depicted remains separate from the audience (like the domestications); there are no references to the world in which the audience lives. There is one exception to this sense of detachment,



and that is Stoppard's play where occasionally characters make references to the audience. This usually occurs when Ros and Guil are sitting around waiting for something to happen. The following is one example:

(A good pause. ROS leaps up and bellows at the audience.)  
 ROS: Fire!  
 (GUIL jumps up.)  
 GUIL: Where?  
 ROS: It's all right - I'm demonstrating the misuse of free speech. To prove that it exists.  
 (He regards the audience, that is the direction, with contempt - and other directions, then front again.) Not a move. They should burn to death in their shoes.  
 (II,p.43)

We have an ambivalent attitude to Ros and Guil. Most of the time we see them as characters, but occasionally (as above) we are made aware of their role as actors, and this contributes to Stoppard's main aim which is to expose the levels of reality contained in the dramatic experience. In order to make the audience aware that they are watching a play, Stoppard has to make a reference beyond the world of the play.

### Theme

Several of these plays adopt Shakespeare's themes and apply them to the new focal characters. For example, Hamlet's concern with death and the whole issue of mortality is transferred to Guildenstern in Stoppard's play, while the questions concerning Hamlet's madness and the nature of insanity find a parallel in Taylor's exploration of Ophelia's madness; Jay's domestic characters, like

Shakespeare's aristocratic ones, are concerned with love and marriage, while the ambition of Donuil and Miall sends them to their deaths (though in a more innocent and honourable fashion than Macbeth).

Stoppard's play is concerned with the different levels of reality and existence which can be elucidated by the dramatic experience, perhaps using not so much Hamlet as As You Like It as his inspiration:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
(II,7,139-140)

He shows Ros and Guil as characters in a drama with a fixed, though to them unknown, destiny, and suggests that we all undergo the same experience.

Most of the reorientations have a strong interest in character. (In this they are similar to the domestications.) Cato's Daughter and Ophelia investigate just what makes these women the people they are. Wood portrays Portia's self-discipline and strength, a result of her father's Stoic upbringing, by contrasting her with Calpurnia, a woman who does bend under misfortune, making her more resilient to misfortune in the long term. In fact, Hamlet (in Taylor's play) is not unlike Calpurnia for he eventually accommodates unpleasant reality by compromising, and facing the realities; Ophelia is more like Portia in that she cannot bear the reality - Portia will commit suicide while Ophelia goes mad.

The reorientations governed by an altered time, by Nathan and Rubinstein, are also based on the adapters' perceptions of character. They have discerned certain character traits in Shakespeare's play which would, in the long term, become far more evident. Rubinstein obviously feels that the Lorenzo/Jessica relationship, despite the lovers' vows, is built on very poor foundations, and he depicts their quarrels and their grasping natures. Antonio is a thoughtful, meditative person, and from the perspective of old age he begins to wonder whether his earlier actions and attitudes were right - this gives rise to the whole play as, in a dream, he thinks about what might have happened since then. Nathan's play takes the romantic story of young lovers banished, and shows that poverty and social deprivation can quickly lead to disillusion with the world and with one another. (This is really the more interesting aspect of Nathan's play - the return to Verona, marital infidelities and the happy ending are all rather slight, and more akin to the domestications, though Act I of Nathan's play suffers from lack of plot, relying on descriptions of their situation in Mantua.)

Though the emphasis is personal, political themes are still in evidence in some of these plays, notably those of Wesker and Taylor. In Hamlet the Prince is faced with the problem of whether or not to kill a king who rules well though he has no right to the position; in Ophelia Hamlet's problem is still what to do about Claudius, but here there is no suggestion that Claudius killed Hamlet's father - it is the methods of government which



are under scrutiny. The needs to maintain the peace, be just, run the economy and so on are often mutually incompatible, and Taylor shows us just such a situation. On such occasions, choices have to be made about priorities, and inevitably there will be some undesirable consequences. Hamlet manages to come to terms with this but Ophelia, idealistic and naive to the end, cannot accept that compromise is necessary and she retreats into her inner world as a shield from the nasty things happening around her.

In Wesker's play the political themes are more specifically related to the position of the Venetian Jews in the 16th century. His main point is that the position of the Jews was both controlled and preserved by the law, and any violation of that law would be to the detriment of the Jews. For this reason, given that Antonio and Shylock had made their ridiculous bond, they had to keep to it, though the Doge would release them for Antonio's sake. The trouble with such a theme is that it has little general application. It works more as a historical document than as a piece of relevant drama helping us make sense of our own lives.

Thus the reorientations provide a certain amount of scope for introducing new themes, but in general the emphasis is on the reactions of the new focal character to people and events surrounding him.

To summarise the variant and invariant features of the reorientations is rather more difficult than for the other categories for many of the parameters allow more scope than with the other adaptations. However, the following gives quite an accurate picture of this type of adaptation:

#### Invariant

1. The events of Shakespeare's play remain the focus of attention, and the events of the reorientation can consistently be fitted into Shakespeare's plot. (i.e. They form part of the complete world suggested by Shakespeare's play.)
2. The characters of the main action either actually appear in Shakespeare's play or could have appeared there not incongruously, being referred to or assumed by Shakespeare. (Completely additional characters may be incorporated but they take no active part in the main story.)
3. Some of Shakespeare's characters either actually appear in the reorientation or form the focus of attention for the adapter's characters.
4. The action can be considered to take place in the same time and location as Shakespeare's play (give or take a few years or miles).

#### Variant

1. Most of the language is non-Shakespearian prose.
2. Most of the events depicted in the reorientation are taken from a section of the complete world which Shakespeare does not show (though there is usually some intersection between Shakespeare's events and those of the reorientation).

These reorientations are very much concerned with the characters and events of Shakespeare's play, and by showing them from a different orientation we understand more about them. That is, our knowledge of Shakespeare's play is increased and so the adaptations constitute the adapters' interpretations of Shakespeare's plays. By giving more explication of their focal characters the adapters provide us with causes, motives and results. However, such obvious interpretative comment carries responsibilities - the spectator expects the interpretation to be a valid one, supported by Shakespeare's text. In most cases such expectations are fulfilled, but there has been some criticism of Stoppard's play on this account. The criticism is based on Stoppard's omission of one of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's most important scenes, the recorder scene (Hamlet, III,2,290-363). Brustein explains:<sup>14</sup>

In Shakespeare, these characters are time-servers - cold, calculating opportunists who betray a friendship for the sake of a preferment - whose deaths, therefore, leave Hamlet without a pang of remorse. In Stoppard, they are garrulous, child-like, ingratiating simpletons, bewildered by the parts they must play - indeed, by the very notion of an evil action. It is for this reason, I think, that Stoppard omits their most crucial scene - the famous recorder scene where they are exposed as spies for Claudius - for it is here that their characterological inconsistency would be most quickly revealed.

Whether or not one agrees with this specific allegation of distortion<sup>15</sup> one does have to acknowledge that the possibility exists. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 8 in relation to the validity of adapting plays.



To return to the reorientations as examples of Shakespearian interpretation, we must acknowledge that however Stoppard has distorted Ros and Guil, his clear insight of Hamlet is fully revealed in the summaries of the situation which Ros and Guil construct, and so Stoppard's play is to a large extent a critical commentary on Shakespeare's play (mainly because Ros and Guil are in effect making critical comments on Hamlet).

We have seen before that there is a relationship between the adaptation's degree of Shakespearian criticism and its degree of dependence on the spectator's knowledge of the original Shakespeare play; the reorientations are no exception. As with all the adaptations, the literary comment fails unless one knows the object of the criticism. To this extent, knowledge is required. However, there is more than that to the dependence of the reorientations on prior knowledge, and these adapters have several ways of using the knowledge of Shakespeare's play, indicating that they do assume such knowledge:

#### 1. Framework

There is rarely an explicit account of what actually happens in Shakespeare's play and where the reorientation fits in. The adapter assumes that we can do this for ourselves (though some give summaries of the situation, particularly the reorientations of time). If we do not know Shakespeare's play, then we have no framework into which we can fit the reorientation, and often no idea about what the characters are referring to.

## 2. Implied conclusion

Related to (1) is the way adapters need not be explicit about what finally happens to their characters. Wood in particular uses this. If we have read or seen Julius Caesar we know that when Portia looks at the brazier she is thinking of swallowing the burning coals; if we know Macbeth we realise that when Donuil and Niall climb upstairs to mount the guard they will be killed by Macbeth. Without this knowledge, we either have no clue as to what happens or we have to rely on a description (such as Ailort gives) of the outcome, which is dramatically unsatisfactory.

## 3. Dramatic irony

Assumed knowledge of Shakespeare's play allows the author to use dramatic irony, as Jay does. The women do not know where their husbands are until Nance tells them, but the knowledgeable spectator is well aware of the harmless pursuits of the mechanicals, and so we view the women's fears from a comfortable position, remaining detached. Such knowledge therefore prevents the spectator from identifying too closely with the characters.

## 4. Inevitability

The knowledge of what will happen can sometimes be part of the theme of the play, for the sequence of events is fixed. The outcome is inevitable, allowing the characters no choice. This is particularly so of Rosencrans and Guildenstern are Dead, where the two protagonists continually feel themselves to be part of

a larger scheme and consequently have no control over their fate. Similarly Wood's grooms play their part, unaware of their significance and unable to change the course of events. We know that death is the fate of all these characters and that nothing can happen to prevent it. (Contrast the domestications which do not use this inevitability - they change the plot and people do not die.)

##### 5. Subjectivity of perception

Finally we can be made aware of the subjectivity of perception. When watching a reorientation we are continually aware of Shakespeare's play, and automatically, while trying to fit the two plays together, we realise that we are being shown different things, or different attitudes. There is continuous comparison which highlights not only the similarities but also the differences, differences which can be accounted for only by the change of perspective. We therefore become aware of the importance of the orientation towards events, rather than the events themselves.

This chapter is concerned with plays which view the events of Shakespeare's plays from different orientations. To conclude, let us consider exactly what endows such events with significance. Anderson considers the issue in relation to Stoppard's play:<sup>16</sup>

By changing the perspective of Shakespeare's play [Stoppard shows] that events take their significance from the viewpoint of the observer.



In the opening comments to this chapter it has already been suggested that the position of the observer is fixed, and if his viewpoint is to change the complete world must be reorientated. If events take their significance from the section of the complete world shown to the observer, then we are interested in the interrelationships between events depicted in that section, and interrelationships which go beyond that section are now insignificant (even though Shakespeare may have been more interested in them). These interrelationships are organised by the adapter so that his purpose may be fulfilled. Adapters may have one of a variety of purposes: critical, political, personal and so on. Having established his purpose the adapter must select those characters and events from Shakespeare's complete world which will allow him to fulfil that purpose. Each feature selected should contribute to that purpose, and the features derive their significance from their relevance to the purpose. Thus the adapter acquires a series of events which all relate to his purpose. He forms these into a connected structure, for the interrelationships between the events selected are as significant as the events themselves (indeed, the organisation of events into meaningful structures is the prime task of any writer).

Though the adapter's purpose is the overall principle governing selection, once this is established more concrete principles can be used. For example, the overall purpose may be to show the possible consequences of the conflict between personal idealism and the realities of the real

world (as in Ophelia). However, though all events selected should contribute to this purpose, the mere statement of purpose is not very helpful when the adapter comes to actually choosing and organising events - he has to have more concrete objectives which indicate how the purpose is to be achieved. Taylor will thus have established the following governing principles:<sup>17</sup>

1. the complete world is that of Shakespeare's Hamlet;
2. the focal character is a naive Ophelia (who forms the framing consciousness);
3. Ophelia's main concern is with Hamlet.

These principles establish the situation where everything shown in the reorientation relates in some way to Ophelia, and as she is interested in Hamlet we are shown a lot of him (as seen by Ophelia). This allows the possibility of showing two different reactions to the same series of events, and of showing Ophelia's reaction to Hamlet's reaction. There is obviously much more to writing an adaptation than this, but the details fit into this kind of framework and derive their significance from the framework.

Many of these ideas relate not only to reorientations but to other types of adaptation and even totally new plays. However, a consideration of the reorientations highlights the issue because these adaptations often use the same characters and events as Shakespeare to say very different things, and their ability to do so lies in the change of emphasis and the particular principles governing selection.

Chapter 4: Summary

The reorientations are based on the assumption that the characters continue to exist when we cannot see them, an assumption which has a precedent in the criticism of Bradley and the plays of Pirandello. Any play necessarily shows only part of the complete world suggested by that play, and the reorientations attempt to depict events in that world which Shakespeare does not show. The spectator's task is to interpolate the events depicted (B) among what he knows of Shakespeare's events (A). There are three possible temporal relationships between A and B: B before, concurrent with, or after A. Each relationship gives rise to a different kind of reorientation, and so choice of time is one of the principles governing the selection of events to be depicted. Other principles are choice of focal character, theme, location etc..

The language is mainly non-Shakespearian prose; plot and characters are consistent with those in Shakespeare's play, though the degree of intersection between the Shakespeare play and the reorientation varies considerably; the context remains basically Shakespeare's complete world, though we are often shown different (usually more domestic) aspects of that world; themes are related to individual characters (their motivations and thoughts), though occasionally political ideas are introduced.

The reorientations constitute dramatic commentaries in that they add to our knowledge of the world of Shakespeare's play. (There is a danger here that an adapter



may distort Shakespeare's play in such a way as to make such comment invalid.) Apart from the interpretative comment there are five ways in which the reorientations can rely on the spectator's knowledge of Shakespeare's play:

1. provides a framework;
2. allows the conclusion to be implied only;
3. dramatic irony;
4. inevitability;
5. suggests the subjectivity of perception.

As the reorientations often use the same characters and events as Shakespeare to say different things, we question from where significance derives. Each adapter has an overall purpose, and events acquire significance through their relevance to that purpose - irrelevant events are superfluous.

Notes

1. Although this play is outside the date limits of this study, it is included because it is so similar to Wood's other adaptation, and to include one and not the other would be rather arbitrary.
2. A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (MacMillan, London, 1956 edition.) p.109
3. Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus (Victor Gollancz, London, 1949.) p.18
4. Published in Three Plays by Luigi Pirandello (Dutton, New York, 1922.) pp.1-71
5. See particularly Anthony Callen; 'Stoppard's Godot: Some French influences on post-war English drama' (New Theatre Magazine, vol.X, no.1, December 1969, pp.22-30)
6. Normand Berlin, 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead: Theater of criticism' (Modern Drama, vol.XVI, nos 3 and 4, December 1973, pp.269-277) p.270
7. Berlin, p.276
8. This idea is quite similar to Peter Hall's recognition of political sanctions. He writes in his introduction to the published text of The Wars of the Roses:

Over the years I became more and more fascinated by the contortions of politicians, and by the corrupting seductions experienced by anybody who wields power. I began to collect 'sanctions' - those justifications which politicians use in the Press or on television to mask the dictates of their party politics or their personal ambitions: 'not in the public interest'; 'the country is not ready for it'; 'the man in the street will never accept ...'; 'the taxpayer's money'; 'I shall do my duty if the country needs me'; 'the normal processes of consultation'; 'let me say quite frankly ...'; I could go on and on, even providing

examples of those ultimate sanctions which use God, the Queen, and the Commonwealth.

I realised that Shakespeare's history plays were full of such sanctions: 'God', 'Fortune', 'The Common Weal', 'Duty', 'St George', 'England', 'France'. What had seemed conventional rhetoric was really, when spoken by Warwick or Richard III, an ironic revelation of the time-honoured practices of politicians. I realised that the mechanism of power had not changed in centuries.  
(pp.x-xi)

In this respect Taylor and Hall/Barton seem to be exploring the same ideas, though using different types of adaptation.

9. Victoria Radin, (The Observer, 30 October 1977)
10. Victoria Radin, 'Mr Wesker's Merchant' (Observer, 22 October 1978.)
11. Charles Harowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971 (Eyre Methuen, London, 1973.) pp.123-126
12. Quoted by Terry Grimley, 'The new Ophelia' (Birmingham Post, 15 October 1977.)
13. Robert Nathan, 'Note to the Players' in Juliet in Mantua (Alfred A.Knopf, New York, 1966.) p.v
14. Robert Brustein, 'Waiting for Hamlet' (Plays and Players, January 1968, pp.51-52.) p.51
15. In fact I do not agree with this specific allegation.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern after all are Hamlet's university friends, unaccustomed to the court (unlike Horatio for example) - even Hamlet is surprised to see them at court. It seems perfectly plausible that they should be somewhat overawed by all that royalty, and when asked (and paid) by the king and queen to do



something (in this case, spy on Hamlet), they would do it. They may not have great moral strength, but in such a situation they are socially vulnerable and anxious to please. To see them only as 'cold, calculating opportunists' implies far more manoeuvring on the part of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern than is warranted by Shakespeare's text.

16. Michael Anderson and others, A Handbook of Contemporary Drama (Pitman, London, 1971.) p.429

17. I am not suggesting that in fact Taylor did sit down and list these principles for himself. However, the principles listed are fundamental to his play and so would have been established early in the writing process.

## CHAPTER 5: TRANSFORMATIONS

Edward Bond Lear (1971)

Peter Ustinov Romanoff and Juliet (1956)

The two plays cited above are superficially very different and would not normally be compared, Bond's play being serious and possibly significant drama while Ustinov's is more in the nature of entertainment. The transformations are therefore unlike any other adaptations in that the differences within the category are considerable (even more so than the collages). The reason for this is that the transformations, while still retaining enough connections with Shakespeare's plays to be termed 'adaptations', are nevertheless extensive alterations of Shakespeare's plays, and not all the alterations are in the same direction. One problem with the following analysis is that it is based on a sample of only two plays which makes any generalisations rather unreliable; also, it is difficult to discern which features are significant. Despite this, we shall attempt to discover the common properties of the transformations and their relationship to Shakespeare's plays, and postulate the defining characteristics of the category in broad terms allowing a high degree of variation between transformations. The fact that these adaptations are so far removed from the original Shakespeare plays is useful in that it allows us to explore the limits of the process of adaptation, though this issue will not be dealt with in detail until Chapter 6.

Let us consider these two plays chronologically.

Peter Ustinov's Romanoff and Juliet (1956) encompasses one day in 'the Capital City of the Smallest Country in Europe'. The scene is the main square of the city with, on one side, the Russian Embassy and, on the other, the American Embassy (both complete with balconies). Occasionally the facade of each embassy is raised to reveal the interiors, both downstairs and upstairs. The general impression is of clarity and order with flat, primary colours and much symmetry. The world portrayed by the play is a child-like one of innocence, idealism and gaiety. This neutral country is ruled by a benign general who also guides the action of the play and orders our responses. He is a diplomat, his main task being to keep the peace between the ambassadors of Russia and America. Although the play is basically light-hearted, the General has moments of bitterness, as when talking about diplomacy:

And finally, dawn is the herald of the day, our twelve hours of unimportance, when we have to cede to the pressures of the powers, smile at people we have every reason but expediency to detest.... I hate the day because it's an insult to my intelligence, a slur on my honour, and a worm in the heart of my integrity, whereas the night ... That night is marvellous ... because it is the time when the great powers are asleep, recovering their energies for the horrors of the ensuing day ... and in that time of magic and of mystery, our horizons are infinite ...  
(Act I, p.10)

Until this point in the play the time has been early dawn, but after the General's resentful comments, the street lamps go out, and the General's speech itself has prepared us for the change he undergoes at dawn.



The rest of the play, taking place as it does during the hours of general activity (day or evening) shows him in the role of the diplomat. There are therefore various perspectives on his actions: those of the two ambassadors and those of the General himself (which the audience, knowing the General's attitude to his task, can share).

We are next shown two lovers who have obviously just become aware of the extent of their feeling for one another. The girl (Juliet Moulsworth) accepts their love readily and ecstatically but the boy (Igor Romanoff) finds it difficult to reconcile these feelings with accepted ideology:

For my own good, for our future, I must analyse my reasons for loving you in spite of vast and irreconcilable spiritual and political divergencies.  
(Act I, p.14)

It is obvious that these are the children of the Russian and American ambassadors, and so the Romeo and Juliet situation is established: there are two opposed communities, and two people, one from each, fall in love with one another. At this point in the play we can guess that much of the action will be concerned with the efforts of the lovers to marry and to reconcile their families (or their countries/ideologies as this is what their families represent).

When the General reappears on the scene and realises who these lovers are he decides to take control of the situation. His first action is to order another celebration (they occur with monotonous regularity in this country) for that evening in order that the two might meet again.

The lovers themselves do not seem overly grateful but the General ignores them, only ordering them to 'bear your separation with fortitude' (Act I, p.18). Already the mock-heroic tone is apparent.

Inside the American embassy, Juliet steels herself to tell her parents that she loves Igor; she succeeds, but not before they have revealed that Freddie (Juliet's fiancé) will be arriving at midday. The American ambassador (Hooper Moulsworth) is far more angry at Juliet's news than his wife Beulah who mainly wants the best for her daughter, though Beulah still goes along with her husband's actions.

We next see the Russians at home. A Spy (a member of the Russian police) is installed to keep the Romanoff family in order, and we gather that for members of the family to denounce one another is a regular, even daily, occurrence. Igor is in the process of making a confession (about his love for Juliet) and here Ustinov satirizes this Russian practice:

A confession of only eight pages? It appears as though you were still attempting to conceal something. Comrade Kotkov's recent confession ran to two hundred and fourteen type-written pages, and was written in a clear, concise, functional style. At the end, the reader had a vivid impression of the author's inner rottenness. It was a model of how such documents should be prepared.  
(Act I, p.24)

Igor's parents reveal that Junior Captain Marfa Vassilievna Zlotochienko, Igor's betrothed (of whom he has never heard) is arriving today. Igor refuses to marry her; Evdokia,

Igor's mother, also shows a germ of rebellion by confessing that she covets a hat, against all Marxist ideology; the Spy himself has to confess to indulging in decadent American magazines, excusing himself by the loneliness of a spy's life. At this point they return to the topic of Igor's new emotional condition, and on learning that it is Juliet whom Igor loves, Romanoff sends his son to his room, saying that he has lost a son.

The focus of attention now turns to the centre of the square where an American boy and a Russian girl enter together, having shared a taxi. They part company and enter their respective embassies (and though we are not told we rightly assume that they are Freddie and Marfa). Act I ends with Igor and Juliet chanting one another's names from their rooms, and with the General finding hope in this.

Act II opens with 'heart-rending' scenes of the lovers' sufferings as they sit despairingly in their respective rooms. Then the conversation between Freddie and the Moulsworths is shown. Freddie wants only what Juliet wants and is prepared to relinquish her; Hooper on the other hand sees marriage (and everything else) in terms of a business deal, and urges Freddie accordingly:

She may argue the terms of the contract, but she's initialled the rough draft, that's how I see it. Son, go up there and clinch that deal.  
(Act II, p.37)

Freddie agrees to go upstairs and talk to Juliet. He is very sympathetic and understanding of Juliet who appreciates



him and realises he has changed for the better ('You've started to think.'). There is no question of their marrying, and Freddie leaves after they have exchanged expressions of mutual affection. Freddie tells Juliet's parents that Juliet is truly in love; he will leave in the morning on the next plane.

The focus turns next to the Russians' domestic situation where Marfa has adopted the role of vigilance while the Romanoffs and the Spy have become subversive. Romanoff blames the change on the environment:

It must be this confounded country which is subversive -  
the climate - the atmosphere -  
(Act II, p.44)

Romanoff has become subversive. He accuses Marfa, a child of the revolution, of being no one, and recalls the days when the Russians were enthusiastic, contrasting these favourably with the present state of Russia:

Those were the days of our enthusiasm. And what has happened since? Our land has become a huge laboratory, a place of human test-tubes. Our language, so rich, so masculine, so muscular, is but a pale shadow of its possibilities. Our literature, which ravished the dark soul of man with such pity, is now mobilized to serve an empty optimism. Our music, divorced from sadness, and the twilight, has lost its anchor in an ocean of dreaminess. ... Do with us what you will. I have rediscovered my enthusiasm, and I will know how to laugh, even in death.  
(Act II, pp.46-47)

This tirade by Romanoff gives clearly the Western view of Soviet Russia - the boredom, the conformity, the regularity, the lack of individual expression. Romanoff, under the

influence of this child-like neutral country, can see and condemn the consequences of the revolution, and surely these are also Ustinov's views. Marfa announces that she will return to Russia in the morning and denounce the staff of the embassy 'for anarchistic and fascist tendencies in surrendering to emotionalism of the most dangerous and subversive variety.' (Act II, p.47)

At this point the General begins to organise his plan for the uniting of Juliet and Igor. He decides that the excuse for the evening's entertainment will be the celebration of 'the Royal Marriage of our Boy King Theodore the Uncanny to the Infanta of Old Castile in thirteen eleven ... with the symbolic blessing of two papier-mâché dummies by the Archbishop.' (Act II, p.49) He then induces first Juliet and then Igor on to their respective balconies, telling them to write farewell letters to their parents and then knot their sheets together and hang them from the balconies. After some persuasion, they agree.

The General then visits each embassy in turn. The ambassadors try to persuade the General to form part of the Western Community or the Eastern Bloc, demanding an answer by nightfall. The General is evasive, talking more about Juliet and Igor than politics, and securing promises from both families that they will attend the evening's celebration. The act ends with Juliet and Igor lowering the knotted sheets from their balconies.

Act III shows the evening's carnival. The General ensures that everything is ready - the sheets, the letters,

the papier-mâché figures and the Archbishop (who is rather deaf) - and we then see the ambassadors preparing for the evening. We gather that Freddie and Marfa are both out somewhere, Juliet and Igor are sulking in their rooms, and each ambassadorial couple feels rejuvenated, with Romanoff even giving Evdokia the hat she so much wants. The diplomats then emerge from their respective embassies and the ritual begins. The General relates some of the historical background to the celebration and then the papier-mâché figures are brought forward so that the Archbishop can conduct the symbolic marriage ceremony. However, the figures had been concealing the knotted sheets which now become revealed. The two ambassadorial families become angry and hysterical when they realise what has happened (i.e. that their children have run away together). During the commotion, the papier-mâché figures are replaced by Igor and Juliet and the Archbishop unwittingly continues the ceremony. Thus the two lovers are married. The two mothers are the first to condone the act, being mainly concerned with the happiness of their children. The ambassadors see the marriage as a diplomatic disaster, but eventually they too come round to the idea, having already been greatly influenced by the environment. They realise that their diplomatic careers are over, but do not care. We then see Freddie and Marfa, obviously in love, and the play ends with four happy couples.

The first production of the play was generally well received. The Times reviewer was impressed by the way Ustinov, despite his serious purpose, was able to be entertaining throughout the play:<sup>1</sup>



The satire of the piece is both firm and good humoured. It has a serious purpose; but it never forgets to be entertaining in pursuit of it..

In this production, Ustinov himself acted the General, and Anthony Hartley praised the way he managed to control the whole play from this position:<sup>2</sup>

Mr Ustinov conducts his play like an orchestra, now giving the scenery a push, now slyly pointing out that a joke has been made - in case we did not know.

Certainly, even on reading the play, we are aware of the General's control of events, and performance allows far more scope for this. No one considered the play to be great, but it is good of its kind, and makes a serious political point.

Romanoff and Juliet is obviously very much concerned with contemporary politics. It transforms the Cold War into a personal conflict between ambassadors with the General as intermediary, ridiculing the conventions surrounding such a situation. It does, however, present harsh political truths under its guise of gaiety and lightheartedness. At the opening of the play the General describes how his country has attained its current neutrality:

We tactfully declared war on Germany several hours before her surrender. As a consequence we were offered six acres of land which didn't belong to us by the grateful Allies. This we cleverly refused. And now we are on good terms with everyone.  
(Act 1, p.6)

This shows the necessity of careful timing and long-term planning in diplomatic relations, and that appearances are all important. Indeed, the whole play reveals the need of diplomats to appear to be or do or believe something that is not their true selves. There is a continual need for balance, and if the Russians do something then so must the Americans; the actions of one side govern the actions of the other. Thus the stage symmetry is a visual symbol of this diplomatic necessity. Another example of political reality occurs towards the end of the play:

MOULSWORTH: What's your subsoil like?  
 GENERAL (pleasantly): I haven't the slightest idea.  
 MOULSWORTH (investigating the ground): I bet it's lousy with oil.  
 GENERAL (violently): Then kindly leave it where it is. We only need to strike oil in order to be invaded tomorrow.  
 (Act III, p.73)

This comment is probably even more telling today, where there is a large energy crisis and world shortage of oil, than in 1956.

Despite the fact that the political conflict is reduced to personalities, those characters are not fully drawn. They remain ciphers for capitalist and communist ideologies. The stereotypes are moderated by their local environment, but everyone is moderated in the same way - towards happiness, love and so on. We are given no insights into particular characters - that is not the function of the play. Indeed, the mere fact that they act a bit like robots is central to the theme of the play, that ideology (whether of communism or capitalism) tends to make everyone the same. It is only where there is no adherence to one

particular ideology or power that individuals are free to express themselves. Juliet and Igor, having grown up in this neutral country, have the capacities to transcend their ideologies and behave naturally.

Ustinov offers no solutions to the political problems raised, but he does propound eternal human and moral values such as love, freedom, peace and happiness, values which are also Shakespearian values,<sup>3</sup> and perhaps this is what Ustinov has borrowed from Shakespeare more than anything else.

The same cannot be said for Bond's Lear (1971) which shows a world where most of these values are absent. The most one can hope for is pity. Lear is about violence, and about a world where one has to be violent in order to survive. Whereas the pattern of Ustinov's action is symmetrical, that of Bond's action is cyclical - no sooner is one violent regime toppled than another, equally violent, takes its place, and there is no way out of this vicious circle.

Like Shakespeare's King Lear, Bond's play opens with Lear in power. His workers are building a vast wall in order to protect Lear's kingdom from his enemies, the Dukes of North (Albany in Shakespeare) and Cornwall. The conditions in which the men work are appalling, with everything being geared to the fast progress of the wall. The first scene shows Lear, accompanied by his two daughters Bodice and Fontanelle (Goneril and Regan in Shakespeare), inspecting work on the wall. There has been an accident in which one of the workers has died, and Lear demands that the person responsible be found:



It's a flogging crime to delay work.  
(I,1,p.2)

One of the workers is pushed forward and all those present contribute to the fiction which Lear is creating that the accident was sabotage. Lear orders that the worker be shot, and though there are murmurs of surprise, only Bodice speaks out:

Father, if you kill this man it will be an injustice.  
(I,1,p.4)

Lear knows this is true but explains to Bodice:

Of course there was an accident. But the work's slow. I must do something to make the officers move. That's what I came for, otherwise my visit's wasted.  
(I,1,p.4)

Already it is established that violence is a way of life rather than a form of punishment for any particular crime. Lear sees the wall as a necessity, saying that Bodice and Fontanelle will be able to govern justly after his death because they will be safe. However, the daughters then reveal that they plan to marry the Dukes of North and Cornwall, and so there is no need for the wall. Lear is furious and, like Shakespeare's Lear, he denies that he has any daughters. We realise that the balance of power is shifting to the daughters who, once married, will govern the land. They threaten anyone who shoots the worker accused of sabotage, so Lear does it himself. He prophesies

that Bodice and Fontanelle will bring ruin to his people and then leaves; the daughters leave also to organise a Council of War with their husbands.

The next two scenes show both sides preparing for war. Bodice knows exactly how her father will attack (he always uses the same strategy), and so it is inevitable that she will win. One of Lear's advisers is Warrington who is not unlike Shakespeare's Gloucester. Here, however, he fulfils the function of Shakespeare's Edmund in that each daughter tries to persuade him to betray her sister and kill her husband, with the promise of sex and power as reward. Unlike Edmund, Warrington is loyal and reveals these plans to Lear.

By Scene 4 the war is over. The husbands are (by chance) still alive, and in power; Warrington is a prisoner though Lear is still free. There follows one of the more horrific scenes of violence - the torturing of Warrington. Lear shot the worker (in Scene 1) as an act of political necessity, but Bodice and (in particular) Fontanelle take a sadistic delight in devising means of torture. Warrington's tongue is cut out, he is brutally kicked, the soldier and Fontanelle jump on his hands, and finally Bodice (who has been knitting throughout this entertainment) pokes her needles into Warrington's ears. Throughout, Fontanelle urges the torturer (soldier) to new heights:

Throw him up and drop him. I want to hear him drop.

...  
I've always wanted to sit on a man's lungs. Let me.  
Give me his lungs.

(I,4,p.14)

Warrington is eventually set free. In this scene, Warrington's experience bears certain similarities to Gloucester's experience when he is tortured by Lear's daughters for being loyal to their father and then set free to find his way in the world as best he can. Here however there are no loyal servants to relieve his suffering in any degree, only the soldier who carried out the torture under instruction:

It's all over, Walking offal! Don't blame me, I've got a job t'do. If we was fightin' again t'morra I could end up envyin' you anytime. Come on then, less lave yer. Yer'll live if yer want to.  
(I,4,p.16)

The new regime is established, and despite the apparent compassion of Bodice and Fontanelle in Scene 1., now they are in power they are, if anything, more dependent on violence than their father was.

The scene now moves to a pastoral location where Lear is wandering, tired and hungry. Warrington, carrying a knife, also enters, unseen by Lear, but he leaves when he realises that someone else is coming. It is the gravedigger's boy who enters, and he takes pity on Lear, offering him food and shelter. Lear accepts, on the condition that the boy has no daughters:

LEAR: Your place? Have you any daughters?

BOY: No.

LEAR: Then I'll come. No daughters! Where he lives the rain can't be wet or the wind cold, and the holes cry out when you're going to tread in them..  
(I,5,p.18)



Again, this harping on his daughters is reminiscent of Shakespeare's play. The Boy is prepared to look after Lear (who does not reveal his identity) but his wife is resentful of the intrusion. As they go to sleep, Warrington enters and attacks Lear, but escapes before the Boy can reach him. The next morning Lear, having slept well, is very tempted to stay and help the Boy look after the pigs:

I could have a new life here. I could forget all the things that frighten me - the years I've wasted, my enemies, my anger, my mistakes. I've been too trusting, too lenient! I'm tormented by regrets - I must forget it all, throw it away! Yes! - let me live here and work for you.  
(I,7,p.25)

The Boy, after telling Lear the common man's attitude to the wall (hell on earth) admits that his wife will be cool at first:

... she'd like to put a fence round us and shut everyone else out.  
(I,7,p.26)

We see this coolness when the Boy's wife, helped by Lear, hangs white sheets on the washing-line. She tries to persuade Lear to go away, but he wants to stay. Then soldiers arrive and on very little pretext they shoot the Boy and rape his wife (who now acquires the name Cordelia). The Carpenter, a friend of Cordelia, executes revenge by killing all the soldiers. The action takes place largely by the sheets which become stained a vivid red.

Act II opens with Lear's trial. Bodice instructs the judge:

This is a political trial: politics is the higher form of justice. The old king's mad and it's dangerous to let him live. Family sentiment doesn't cloud our judgement. I've arranged to call the people who upset him most.  
(II,1,p.32)

Lear knows that the trial is corrupt, but during it he acquires an insight that guides his actions for the remainder of the play. He looks at himself in a mirror (Cf. Richard II) and sees himself as a wounded, caged animal longing for freedom:

No, that's not the king ... This is a little cage of bars with an animal in it. No, no, that's not the king! Who shut that animal in that cage? Let it out. Have you seen its face behind the bars? There's a poor animal with blood on its head and tears running down its face. Who did that to it?

...  
O God, there's no pity in this world.  
(II,1,p.35)

His one aim now is to release the animal and to bring freedom back. Lear is pronounced mad, but despite the wishes of Bodice and Fontanelle that he should be killed, he is for the moment imprisoned. His daughters have other problems - civil war is imminent again because there are rebels against the new regime, rebels led by Cordelia and her new husband the Carpenter.

While Lear is in prison, the ghost of the gravedigger's boy appears. He is thin and emaciated, shrivelled, with white hair. He and Lear agree to give one another comfort.

The scene moves to the country where the rebel soldiers have captured one of the soldiers of the present regime. He is shot, despite offering to fight for the rebels. Cordelia states:

When we have power these things won't be necessary.  
(II,3,p.45)

and remembering Shakespeare's Cordelia we have a glimmer of hope that she may be right.

Bodice now has the power - North and Cornwall are in prison, and Fontanelle, though vindictive, has no business sense; she does as she is told (including signing her father's death warrant). Bodice realises that though she has power she has no freedom:

War. Fower. I'm forced to sit at this desk, work with my sister, walk beside my husband. They say decide this and that, but I don't decide anything. My decisions are forced on me.  
(II,4,p.48)

The mere fact of having the power forces her to try to maintain it, and so she has to take the necessary (usually violent) actions to preserve her position.

The prisons have been evacuated and the prisoners are being taken to HQ. Lear and four other prisoners are chained together by the neck and blindfolded, and three soldiers guide them. However, they are lost in rebel country and soon the rebels capture them. The prisoners think that they will now be freed, but no - first they must be vetted by the political officers. Fontanelle has also



been captured, and she is tied to the end of the chain.

Scene 6 returns to the prison - some of the prisoners are shot outside, and then Fontanelle is shot on stage. The prison medical officer carries out the autopsy while Lear watches, looking for some physical manifestation of her cruelty ('the beast') - Lear can see only the beauty and order of her organs; he thrusts his hands into her body and lifts out the organs, accusing himself of killing his daughter. Bodice too has been captured, but thinks that she is in a position to negotiate for her life; the Carpenter quickly disillusiones her:

The government found no extenuating circumstances in your case.

...

You were sentenced to death.

(II,6,p.61)

Bodice accuses him of being cruel now he has the power, and then she is bayonnetted to death. The Carpenter refuses to have Lear killed because his wife knew him and forbids it. However, the prison doctor has devised a scientific method for removing human eyes, and he suggests this be used on Lear. Lear is strapped to a chair and then a square frame is lowered over his head and face. The doctor operates the contraption, blinding Lear. Like the torture of Harrington, this scene has parallels with the blinding of Gloucester. Bond has transferred the loss of sight to Lear, and with it the accompanying insight which results. Like Gloucester and Harrington, Lear is

then freed. The ghost accompanies him, saying:

I can stay with you now you need me.  
(II,6,p.64)

The act ends with Lear near the wall begging for alms. He is told that now rebuilding has recommenced on the wall ('count a the govermin's changed') people's homes have been destroyed and they are going to work camps. Lear now sees that the wall is wrong, and having learnt this he wants to tell Cordelia:

Cordelia doesn't know what she's doing! I must tell her - write to her!

...  
I must stop her before I die.  
(II,7,p.67)

Lear now realises that he has a moral obligation to take action against a way of life which he perpetrated and which he now realises is wrong. Any hope we had that Cordelia would rule without violence is by now extinguished; she is like all the rest.

By the beginning of Act III Lear is back at the gravedigger's boy's house, accompanied by the ghost who is becoming increasingly weak and thin. The house is occupied by Thomas, Susan and John who cared for Lear when he arrived there. It is a haven in a troubled world, but they are always afraid of having their peace disturbed. A deserter from the wall arrives, as does a prison orderly (Ben) who was kind to Lear. Lear refuses to turn people away, even though their presence may bring the soldiers.

Gradually many people come to listen to Lear preaching until Thomas realises that Lear has become a political threat to Cordelia. He thinks that they should infiltrate the work camps and organise the workers to rebel. Soldiers arrive capturing the deserter and Ben (who will now be able to incite the workers), and they tell Lear to stop involving himself in public affairs as he is becoming a political nuisance. Lear begins to feel that he can do nothing. He realises that the violence perpetrated by a government in the name of law and order is far more pervasive than crime:

I have lived with murderers and thugs, there are limits to their greed and violence, but you decent, honest men devour the earth!  
(III,2,p.79)

Lear is still asking how to live. The ghost cries because he knew how to live, and his death was such a waste. When Cordelia enters with the Carpenter the ghost begs Lear to tell her of his presence, but Lear does not. Instead he tries to make Cordelia see that she is wrong to rebuild the wall, but she, like Lear before her, argues that the wall is necessary to keep out her enemies. Lear stresses that she must have pity:

Our lives are awkward and fragile and we have only one thing to keep us sane: pity, and the man without pity is mad.  
(III,3,p.85)



Unconvinced, Cordelia and the Carpenter leave, followed by the ghost. Lear tells Susan that the next day she must lead him on a journey. Suddenly the pigs start squealing and the ghost enters having been gored by the pigs. He dies for a second time, this time in Lear's arms, leaving Lear in some sense free to accomplish his final act of defiance. He is led by Susan to the wall and begins to shovel earth from the wall in an attempt to demolish it. He manages to throw down four shovelfuls before being shot dead.

Bond's theory is that a violent society is self-perpetuating. Bodice and Fontanelle, having been brought up in the society created by Lear, could not be other than violent, and to this extent Lear is responsible for their actions. Cordelia too, once in power, has to resort to violence to keep that power. Lear, once he realises the error of his ways, cannot just endure the consequences in order to expiate his crimes, as Bond explains:<sup>4</sup>

I wanted to explain that Lear was responsible, but that it was very important that he could not get out of his problems simply by suffering the consequences, or by endurance and resignation. He had to live through the consequences and struggle with them.

Thus he has to preach to those who come to him, he has to try to persuade Cordelia that she is wrong to rebuild the wall, and finally he has to himself begin to demolish the wall. Only thus can he atone for his earlier crimes, crimes which were sanctioned by the banner of 'political necessity', the socialised morality which Bond so much abhors.

Bond is concerned with society rather than individuals, and his portrayal of government has its counterparts in the contemporary world. The dramatic structure, like that of Ustinov's play, is governed by moves in the political game. Actions and events succeed one another with a certain logical progression; psychological plausibility is irrelevant. At the beginning of the play Lear says of North and Cornwall:

They're my sworn enemies. I killed the fathers  
therefore the sons must hate me.  
(I,1,p.5)

This is the natural order. Violent act succeeds violent act - deaths are pervasive with tortures and rape thrown in for good measure. The effect is cumulative, but by the end of the play we are somewhat deadened to the violence. It is all meaningless because there is no specific causality - people are not killed because they have done something wrong so much as because they are in the way; their presence is inconvenient or their deaths would be useful. Several reviewers of the first production felt that the sheer number of atrocities became monotonous. Nicholas de Jongh is one example:<sup>5</sup>

Thematically the dynastic interweavings with revolutionaries and authoritarians lurching from butchery to butchery accreted a certain monotony rather than pained exaltation.

J.M.Lambert<sup>6</sup> feels that the only way to cope with this 'grand guignol supermarket' is through laughter, and

believes that the play should have been presented as a bitter farce. However, when he saw the play it was presented and absorbed seriously which suggests to Lambert that Bond has lost control of his material. Katharine Worth, on the other hand, feels that the humour is there.<sup>7</sup>

If we can never for a moment forget that it's our time, this is very largely because of the idiom: the slang, the rough colloquialisms and above all the humour. The sombre incidents are continually being checked and measured against humour ... Even the cruelty is in a way humanized by the humour.

...  
Laughter is our way into the horror, our interim response to behaviour that seems to defeat understanding and reason.

Certainly there is humour present in the text which allows us momentarily to distance ourselves from what is happening (as when the soldier torturing Warrington asks of Lear's daughters: 'Yer wan 'im done in in a fancy way?') but acts of violence, even accompanied by the odd laugh, can still become monotonous.

As usual, Bond does try to give us a glimmer of hope, in this case, the fact that Lear can feel and inspire pity, and that he can try to demolish the wall. Also, unlike Cordelia and the gravedigger's boy, Susan and Thomas are left unharmed. Even so, Cordelia is still in power, and there is no reason to believe that the vicious circle of revolution and counter-revolution has been broken.

These, then, are the two transformations, and the following analysis will not only compare and contrast them with Shakespeare's plays but also with the transpositions and, where relevant, the domestications.



Language

The language of the transformations has little in common with that of Shakespeare's plays. Bond's play does use animal imagery, as does King Lear, but in general the two writers use it for different purposes. Shakespeare uses animals as images of viciousness and savagery whereas Bond is more concerned with their ability to suggest man's vulnerability.<sup>8</sup> Thus Shakespeare's Lear speaks of the sharpness of the serpent's tooth, Goneril's 'wolfish visage', Regan's 'serpent-like' tongue, 'those pelican daughters' and so on. Bond's Lear, on the other hand, speaks of himself as a 'famished dog' and 'a dog [turned] out of its kennel'; he sees the wolf '[crawling] away in terror' and the animal being caged. Bond's Lear also speaks bitterly of his daughters in terms reminiscent of Shakespeare's Lear, but otherwise the two languages are very dissimilar.

Lear contains two principal types of language: one is modern idiomatic prose and the other is lyrical poetic prose. The idiomatic prose prevails and is used by all characters in normal conversation. The following dialogue between soldiers searching a cell is typical:

SOLDIER H: Watch careful an' take it all in.  
 SOLDIER I: Corp.  
 SOLDIER H: Under the sack an' in the corners. Can  
 yer remember it? Five times a day. Yer  
 skip the personal.  
 SOLDIER I: Corp.  
 SOLDIER H: Less see yer try.  
 (11,2,p.41)

This is the kind of language which is immediately recognisable for the modern audience. It is slightly more or less refined, according to social status of the character speaking, but is essentially colloquial.

The lyrical prose is used mainly by Lear when he has acquired an insight into a situation; it is poetic in that there is a high concentration of images. The following comment is made by Lear immediately after the death of the ghost in Act III:

I see my life, a black tree by a pool. The branches are covered with tears. The tears are shining with light. The wind blows the tears in the sky. And my tears fall down on me.  
(III,3,p.26)

The significance of such passages is not always immediately apparent. The above passage may perhaps suggest that through his pity for others (his tears) he has inspired pity in others ('my tears fall down on me'). The passage also shows Bond using water imagery, possibly a substitute for Shakespeare's storm. It is these lyrical passages which elevate the play to the status of symbolic drama while at the same time providing regular succinct summaries charting the thematic progress of the play.

Rosenoff and Juliet too contains several varieties of language. Perhaps three types can be distinguished:

- a) American/colloquial (no significant difference)
- b) Russian
- c) anorous

Of these three, the American and the colloquial are most neutral. This is because the audience is familiar with

everyday speech of Americans (from films and television) and take it to be the norm. It is the Russian and amorous languages which are subject to satire. Marfa exemplifies the Russian extreme for she has not been in the country long enough to succumb to its influence:

It is my duty to inform you that owing to the scandalous and anti-democratic attitude of your entire family, I will be forced to return by the first aeroplane to-morrow morning ...  
(II,p.47)

It is the overt precision of every statement which Ustinov highlights - all names are formally given, explicit reasons for actions sought and described, knowledge precisely tabulated and mentally filed for immediate recall. There is nothing colloquial or informal about the Russians' speech until they are influenced by the General's country. Ustinov is suggesting that such speech is indicative of the way the Russians conduct their personal relationships - 'emotionalism' is to be avoided at all costs.

In contrast to this, Ustinov presents us with the language of love, spoken mainly by Juliet and, to a lesser extent, Igor. The tone is mock-heroic for Ustinov has exaggerated the reactions of his protagonists to their plight so that those reactions appear disproportionate. For example, in the following passage Igor sees his situation as potentially tragic and himself as a broken man:



Oh, how undignified to feel the hot tears rolling down where rain and sleet hammer so ineffectually! Remember, in your lucid moments, Igor Vladimovitch Romanoff, that you are second-in-command of a warship ... No, Igor Vladimovitch Romanoff ... there are no lucid moments left ... you are a man in love ...  
(II, p. 35)

The main point of using such language is to provide humour, but it is also in direct contrast to the Russian attitude (as exemplified by the Russian language) and is indicative of the influence wielded by American emotionalism and the General's benignity.

In both of these plays the language of Shakespeare's plays has been completely replaced, and there is no necessary connection between Shakespeare's play and the transformation in linguistic terms.

### Plot

Similarities between the plots of Shakespeare's plays and those of the transformations are limited to only a few major situations and events. For Romanoff and Juliet these are as follows:

- a) There is a feud between two communities.
- b) A boy and girl, one from each community, fall in love.
- c) A mediator arranges their marriage.
- d) There is a possibility of reconciliation between the two sides.

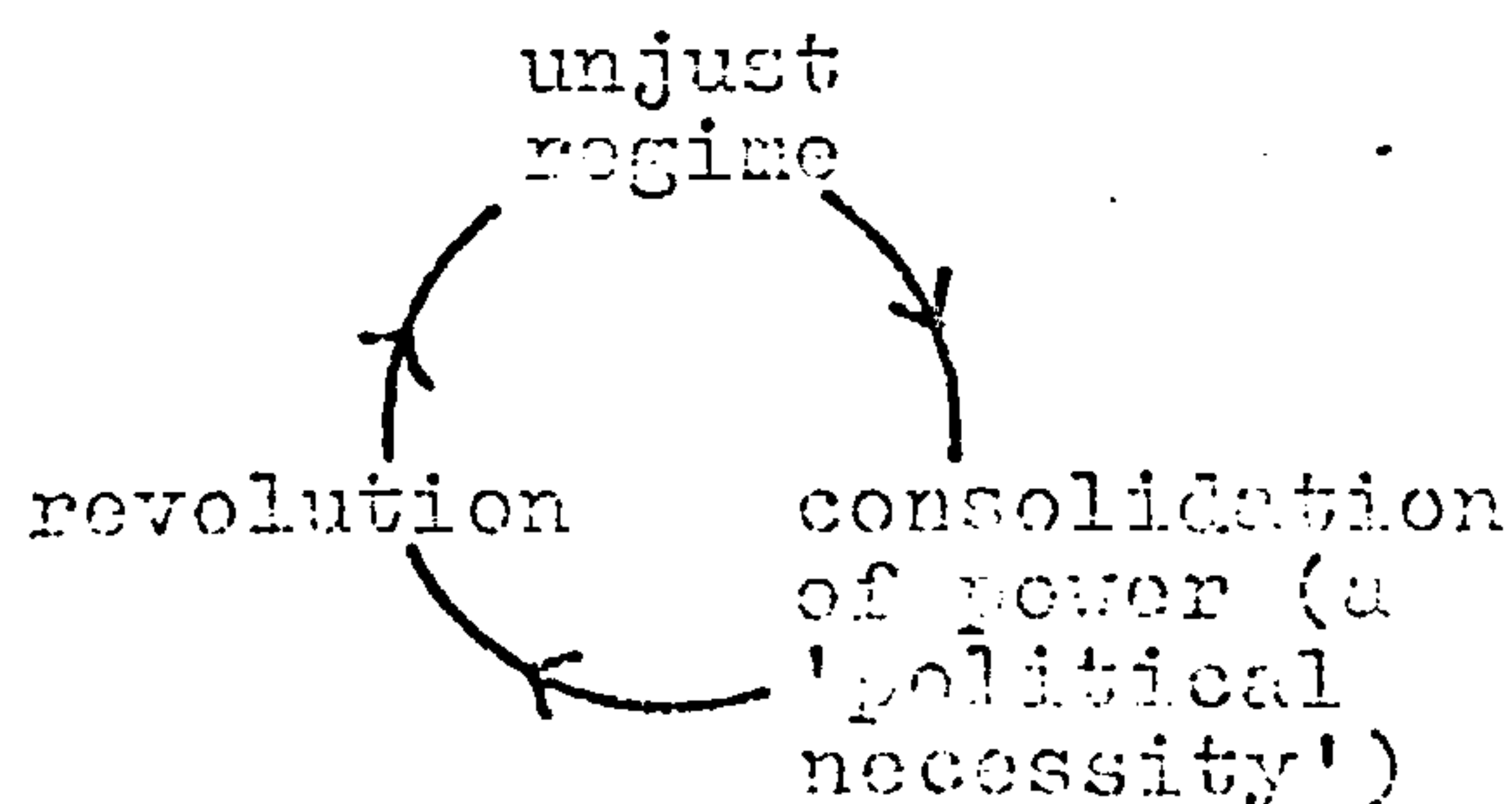
The following events in Lear derive from King Lear:

- a) Lear is deprived of his power and his kingdom is ruled by his two cruel daughters.
- b) Lear and his followers are badly treated.
- c) Lear lives with Nature and achieves self-awareness - his previous beliefs were wrong.

d) Lear dies as a consequence of the wrongs offered him in the play.

These lists indicate the overall dramatic progression of the adaptations but necessarily take no account of the additions and alterations made by the adapters, and in the transformations such features are extensive and thematically significant.

In general the additions are designed to clarify the political structures of the plays. Thus the General conducts negotiations with both sides about alliances; Igor and Juliet tell their parents of their love so that the direct conflict is brought out into the open; Freddie and Marfa also fall in love thus further consolidating the Russian/American union. In this way the symmetry is accentuated. Bond extends Shakespeare's political structure. By the end of King Lear, the people in power uphold the same values (in this case, humane values) as those in power at the beginning of the play: the circle has turned once. Bond's rulers also all uphold the same values (in this case, survival, which necessitates being physically stronger than everyone else). Bond shows the circle turning from one set of rulers to another, not once, as in Shakespeare, but twice, suggesting that the circle is continuously in motion. Thus the plot elements which Bond adds accentuate the following pattern:



Consequently the band of rebels led by Cordelia is introduced, a power group which has no equivalent in Shakespeare's play. Other elements are introduced to show the extremes of violence and injustice imposed by individuals in power (e.g. arbitrary violence, sacrifices to the wall etc.).

We can see that there are connections between the plots of Shakespeare's plays and of the transformations, but these are far less precise than, say, the connections between the transpositions and the Shakespeare plays. Minor details of Shakespeare's plots do not generally appear in the transformations, only enough major events to enable us to term the modern play in some sense 'the same story' as the Shakespeare play. This raises a problem concerning provenance for we are less able to say with absolute certainty that the modern play adapts Shakespeare's play - it may adapt another version of 'the same story'. This problem will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.

### Character

As with the transpositions and domestications this category can be sub-divided into role, name, status, title and personality.

#### a) Role

Because the plot deviates so much from Shakespeare's plot, the roles of the principal characters are necessarily changed (cf. domestications). Thus Igor Romanoff does not kill a Tybalt-equivalent in return for a Mercutio -



indeed, there are no such characters. He does, however, confess his crime of emotionalism to the Spy - something completely alien to Shakespeare's play. Similarly, Lear's act of demolishing the wall has no place in King Lear.

However, having recognised that in most details the actions of the characters deviate from those of Shakespeare's characters, one must also acknowledge that the broad outlines of their roles are preserved. Thus, the two families in Ustinov's play are still enemies; Igor and Juliet are still lovers; the General is still an intermediary. It is obvious that in this play the roles of the characters are largely defined by their interrelationships and, as will be shown below, the networks of relationships in Romeo and Juliet and Romanoff and Juliet are very similar. Even in Lear, the overall roles are not dissimilar to those in Shakespeare's play: Lear is king, but loses his power to his two cruel daughters, and this eventually brings about his death. In some ways Cordelia too fits into this pattern for she, like Shakespeare's Cordelia, causes civil war, but unlike her namesake she wins and indirectly commands Lear's death.

The actions of the characters, therefore, tend to deviate to a high degree from those of Shakespeare's characters, and even the overall roles are not always similar. However, some of the major characters in the transformations do fulfil fairly similar roles to those of their Shakespearian counterparts.

b) Name

The naming of characters in these transformations quite a complex business for different principles used for different characters.

1. Some characters are given Shakespearian names e.g. Lear, Cordelia, Juliet. This is essential because it is one of the main ways in which the playwright tells the audience that his play is an adaptation of a Shakespeare play, and that he wishes us to pick up the Shakespearian associations. Lear in particular would be far more difficult to recognise as an adaptation without the Shakespearian names as an easy clue.
2. Ustinov's characters have names which are typical of their country of origin. Thus the Russians are Vadim, Evdokia and Igor Romanoff, while the Americans are Hooper and Beulah Houlsworth. (In this respect 'Juliet' is fairly neutral and is taken from Shakespeare.) Ustinov also combines this category with the first in that 'Romanoff' carries resonance of 'Romeo', particularly when juxtaposed with 'Juliet'. By using these very ethnic names, Ustinov adds to the stereotypical characterisation and so to the humour.
3. Some of Bond's characters have names which suggest (in a fairly subtle way) personality traits of those characters. A 'fontanelle' is the soft part of a baby's head, so maybe we should regard Fontanelle as 'soft in the head'. A 'bodice' is a garment which

covers the torso, including the heart, and perhaps this indicates the way Bodice has covered her heart so that she no longer feels anything.

4. There are several characters in both plays who have no names at all - they are known only by their titles. In Bond these are functionaries, a whole range of characters whose roles are to perform the tasks described by their titles e.g. soldier, prisoner, judge. Bond says of these:<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the ten or so main characters of the play there are about seventy other speaking parts. In a sense these are one role showing the character of a society.

By keeping these characters anonymous (i.e. giving them no names) they become representative and typical instead of individual. We feel that there are more where they came from, and that these people form the bulk of the population - a violent, inarticulate, mindless majority. Ustinov's unnamed characters are very different because they still appear as individuals. The characters in question are First and Second Soldier (who, admittedly, are fairly indistinguishable), the General, the Spy and the Archbishop. Apart from the Spy, these are the characters who are neither Russian nor American but are connected with the country where the action takes place. In this way the neutrality and anonymity of the country is preserved. Using this principle we would

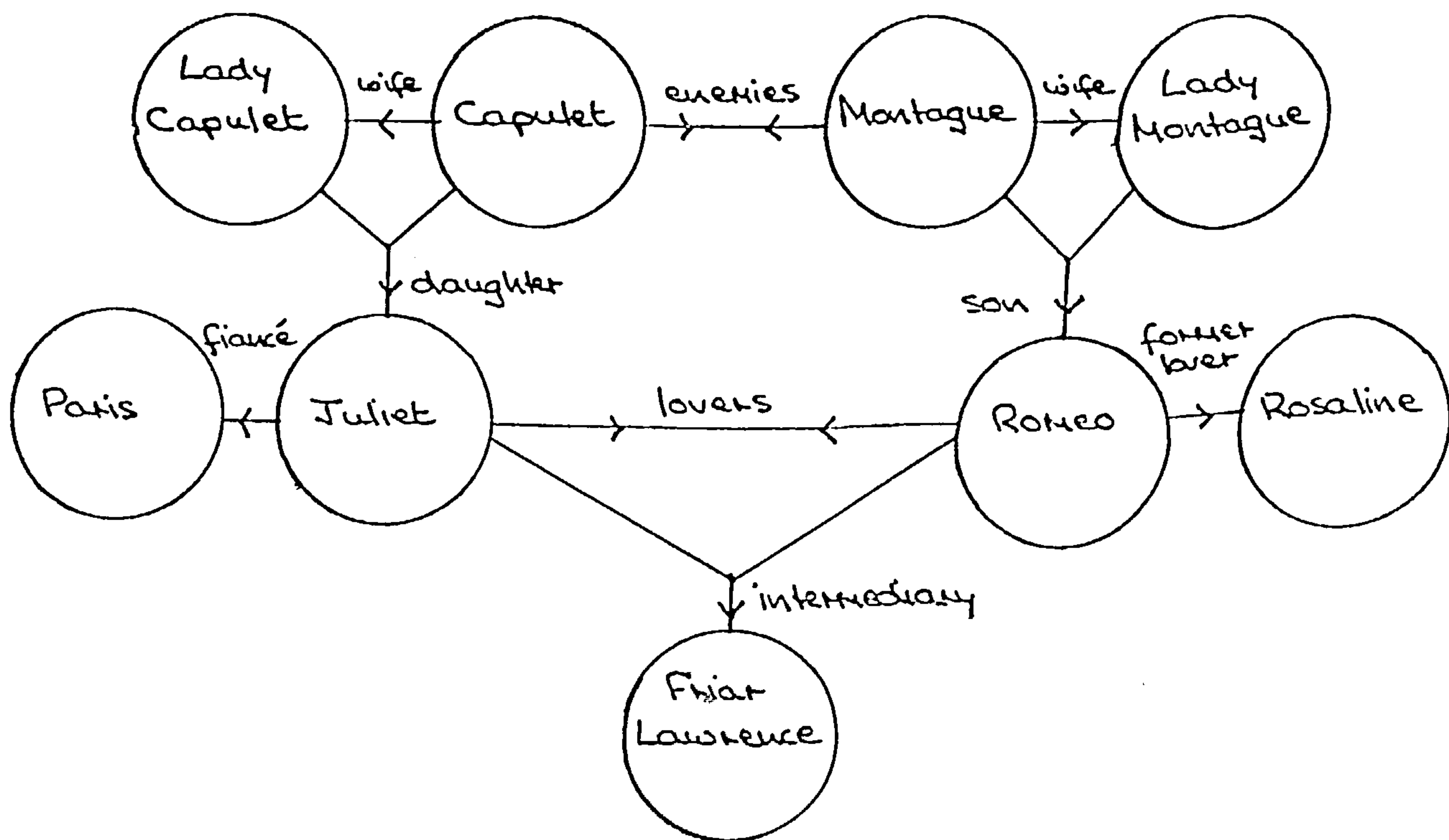
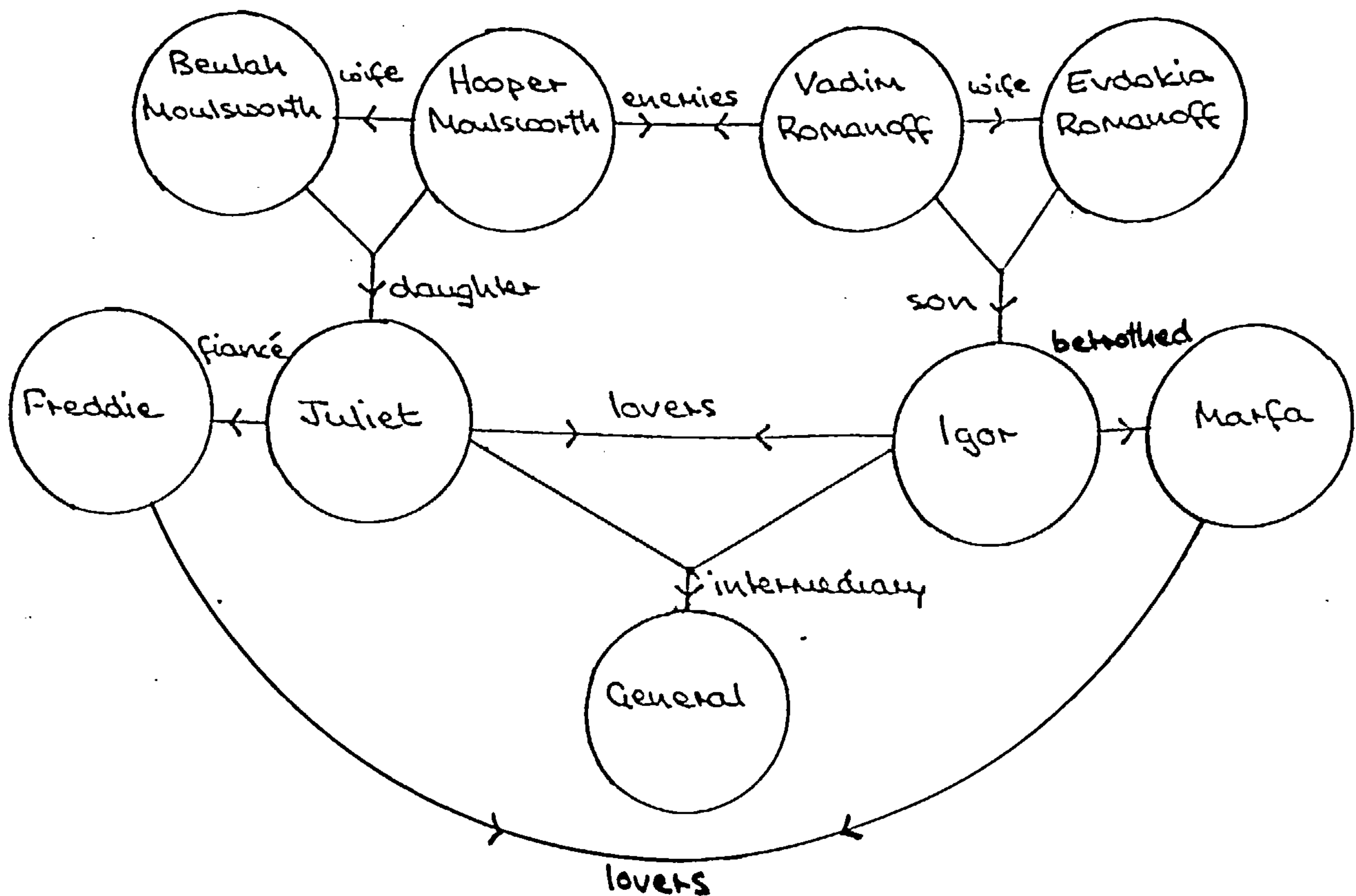


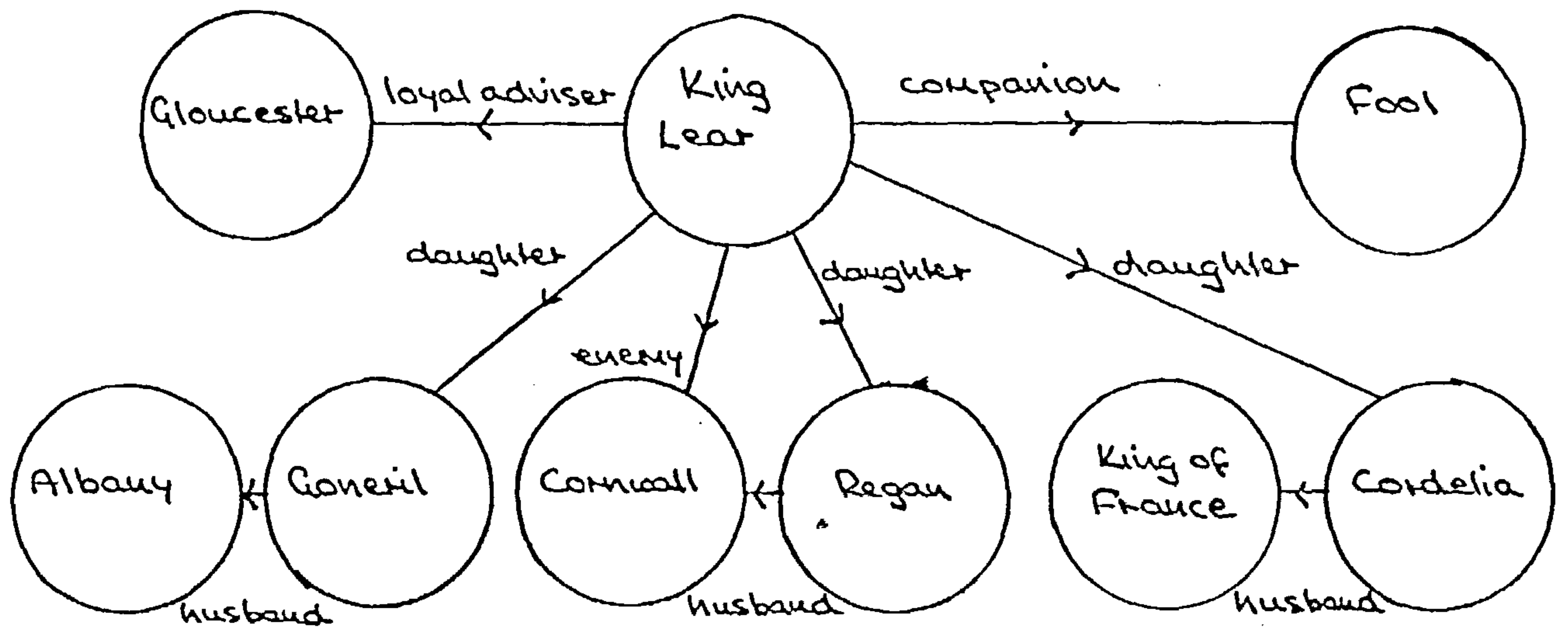
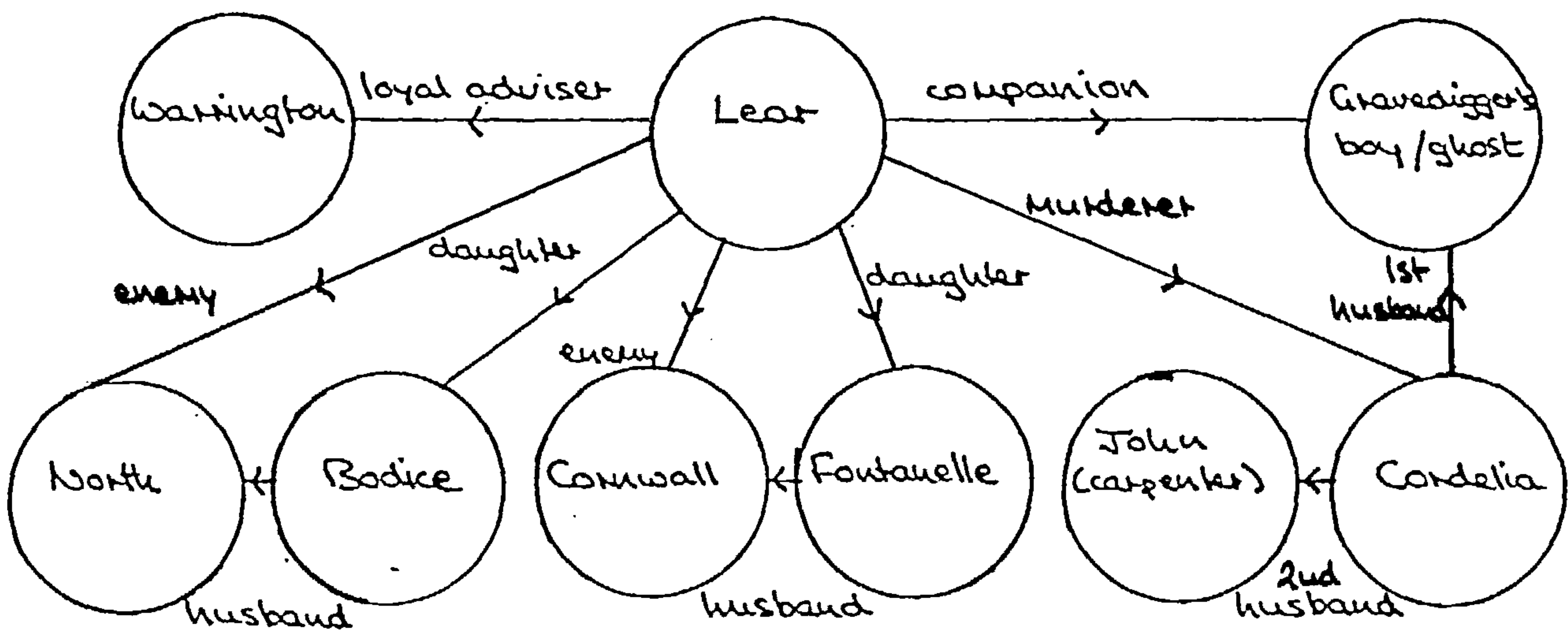
expect the Spy, who is Russian, to be named. However, this would upset the symmetry in which mother, father, child and child's betrothed are the only named characters.

It can be seen that reasons for names given vary from establishing a Shakespearian connection to contributing to the new themes of the play.

c) Status

As with the domestications we can consider two types of status, domestic and political. In terms of domestic status the transformations change very little (again this is similar to the domestications); in this sense, the characters are modern equivalents for Shakespeare's characters. This can be seen from relationship diagrams (differences between Shakespeare's relationships and those of the adapters being shown in red).

ROMEO AND JULIETROMANOFF AND JULIET

KING LEARLEAR



The most obvious differences are that Cordelia is no longer Lear's daughter but his enemy and eventual murderer, and that Freddie and Marfa form a union (Cf. Paris and Rosaline in Nathan's Juliet in Mantua). A discussion of Cordelia's contribution to the play occurs later in the chapter.

Although from the diagrams these plays appear to be family dramas, in fact there is little investigation of interpersonal relationships, and characters themselves are presented in little depth. As in the transpositions, the political status of the characters is more important than their personal feelings; they are like pieces being moved on a chess board - no one questions how the pawn feels at being taken. It is this political status which the adapters often alter. For example, in Shakespeare's play the Montagues and Capulets have no official position (though they inevitably wield a certain amount of influence) but their modern counterparts are diplomats for the two greatest world powers in a neutral country which holds the balance of power; the Friar Lawrence equivalent (the General) not only desires to help the lovers - he also has the power in that he can order events to his own satisfaction (hence the successful outcome).

In Lear too the political status of the characters is often altered. From the beginning of the play the Dukes of North and Cornwall are Lear's enemies because he killed their fathers, and Cordelia's political status is self-determined rather than dependent on the established hierarchy founded on heredity.

This question of status is a significant guide to the process of transformation. The adapters are interested in the political implications of the story, and emphasise this accordingly, altering some political aspects of Shakespeare's plays where this is necessary for their purposes. Nevertheless, they preserve fairly accurately the interpersonal relationships, even though they are not themselves explored. There are perhaps two reasons for this. One is that the network of personal relationships can also be seen as a political framework - the terms 'enemy', 'alliance', 'adviser' can have both personal and political applications, and the adapters presumably considered that the Shakespearian patterns of relationships were appropriate as bases for their political plays. The other reason for the preservation of personal relationships while ignoring the personal implications is that for the play to be readily identified as Shakespearian in origin (an identification which contributes to the meaning of the play) there must be a structural connection between the Shakespeare play and the transformation. The pattern of interrelationships forms such a structure, and is therefore preserved largely to provide the Shakespearian associations. How these associations are used will be seen later in the chapter.

d) Title

As far as the principal characters are concerned, Ustinov is more inclined to provide titles than Bond. His General rules the country (suggesting a military dictatorship except that the army possesses only blanks for its guns!) and Romanoff and Moulsworth are ambassadors in that country for Russia and America respectively. Bond's characters refer to Lear as 'king' but otherwise the principal



characters have only names, or titles that we as spectators may invent (e.g. we may term Cordelia 'leader of the rebels' or, later, 'dictator'). To Bond, titles are necessary only as a substitute for names, as a means of identification, and he uses them for the functionaries (e.g. soldier, foreman etc.). These are the people who neither inspire nor feel pity - they merely reinforce whichever regime is in power.

e) Personality

Because of the emphasis on political status, the characters tend to be rather stereotyped in order to allow a clear exposition of the issues (cf. transpositions). The use of titles instead of names is symptomatic of this. We are rarely allowed to become particularly interested in any one person - Ustinov especially uses humour as a means of distancing the spectator from the characters. The adapters do make some personality changes, for example, Bodice and Fontanelle behave far more sadistically than Goneril and Regan, and Ustinov's General emerges as a friendly host (unlike Friar Lawrence). However, personality is not of central importance - in Bond's world everyone is malicious, while in Ustinov's land the tendency is to geniality.

Finally in this investigation of character, let us consider the omissions and additions. Both transformations omit many characters from Shakespeare's sub-plots - only those crucial to the central drama are transferred to the adaptations. Additions are also made to the casts of both



plays. Nearly all the unnamed characters in both plays have no direct equivalent in Shakespeare's plays (exceptions being the General and the gravedigger's boy). The role of these characters in Bond's play has already been discussed (see Names (4) above), and such characters both carry out and comment on the work of the current regime. Ustinov's additional characters also fulfil some of the functions of a chorus. He includes two soldiers (the entire army of the country) who, when off-duty, become vendors determined to catch the tourist trade. In these two roles they, with the General, see what is going on and make their comments. The Spy is Ustinov's other main addition, and he is used as a tool in the political satire against the Russians.

#### Context

The contexts of these two plays are very different, but neither of them uses a Shakespearian context. Ustinov's play is very similar to the cultural transpositions in this respect for it is set in the present in a public, political arena:

The Main Square in the Capital City of the Smallest Country in Europe.

This is an imaginary country (cf. Bowen's Heil Caesar!), but it represents any country in which America and Russia struggle for supremacy; the Cold War is a twentieth century phenomenon which places the play firmly in the present. Ustinov refers to a specific situation in the real world with named antagonists, and depicts ways in which the

situation is handled (by diplomacy and spying, for example). As with the transpositions, the picture of a modern developed country is created with the help of gadgets such as telephones, and references to modern forms of transport such as aeroplanes.

Lear is very different, and this contextual disparity is one of the major divergences between the two transformations. In fact, unlike Ustinov's play, the context of Lear is ambiguous. The society portrayed is primitive: there are few appurtenances of modern life; physical labour alone is used to build the wall; Lear rules only a small area (which can be bounded by a wall) and is surrounded by enemies. In spirit the play is not unlike King Lear - both appear vast, grey and bleak. Despite this primitive feel, however, there are suggestions of modernity. The most insistent is the language, particularly the idiomatic prose which reflects the way we speak today: 'Thankyermun', for example, would not be found in a play written about a much earlier era. The other modern feature in Bond's play is the device 'perfected on dogs for removing human eyes.... With this device you extract the eye undamaged and then it can be put to good use.' (II,6,p.63)

This is the only gadget which we see, and though it looks like a fairly primitive instrument of torture, the precision which the fourth prisoner attributes to the device makes it an instrument of modern science.

This ambiguity of context creates problems when looking for some kind of referent - who is Bond talking about in the modern world? Unlike Ustinov, Bond does not make the



reference specific. One possibility is the Third World, undeveloped countries where modern technology is rarely seen and where revolution is frequent. However, knowing Bond's preoccupation with violence everywhere, it seems unlikely that he would choose so alien a culture as his target. Another possibility is modern Britain after some kind of holocaust which would return us to a primitive state while we retain some aspects of modern life. This too seems unlikely as there is no reference to such a catastrophe - it would therefore be an unwarranted supposition. We are left with the assumption that no such specific referent is intended by Bond, and the context must be symbolic. That is, in some way he is depicting modern society in Britain. Perhaps the bleakness of the environment is intended to reflect the poverty of spirit which is both a result and subsequent cause of aggression in society. If people only want to survive, without caring about the quality of their lives, then one can see how, taken to an extreme, the situation depicted in Lear can arise. In this light we can see that the context of the play has a timeless, mythic quality which is unrelated to any specific era. It is an archetypal world of political savagery.

What these two transformations do have in common is the political emphasis - we are shown the implications of political manoeuvres, and the private thoughts of individuals for the most part remain private. Such disregard of personal attitudes, feelings and discoveries is very unShakespearean and constitutes a variant feature.



Theme

Both Ustinov and Bond are writing about contemporary society. Bond himself makes this clear:<sup>10</sup>

I am concerned in trying to examine modern time.

He feels that contemporary society is conditioned to accept aggression, usually on the part of authorities, and this 'legalised' violence is pervasive and (being unnatural) causes tension. Thus he seems to be using overt acts of violence to symbolize the more insidious aggression inherent in modern society, showing the self-perpetuating nature of that society. As Lear says:

Your Law always does more harm than crime, and your morality is a form of violence.  
(III,3,p.25)

Such phrases as 'political necessity', 'national security' and 'law and order' are used to moralise the violence of a society, and Bond abhors this. He seems to be advocating a total revolution - not the sort which he depicts in his play, but the sort which Lear himself tries to initiate by demolishing the wall. All the walls of society need to be torn down for they create barriers of understanding which in turn create violence (walls between classes, races and so on). Bond is convinced that such aggression is just beneath the surface of sophisticated society. He describes this in his Preface to Lear:<sup>11</sup>

Whatever happens, most of [the children] will grow up to act in ways that are ugly, deceitful and violent; and the conforming, socially moralized, good citizens will be the most violent of all, because their aggression is expressed through all the technology and power of massed society. The institutions of morality and order are always more destructive than crime.

He shows that whatever party is in power (Lear, Bodice or Cordelia) the methods used are the same. Similarly, both Labour and Conservative governments base their policies on similar fundamental principles. What is needed is a different set of principles (though Bond does not suggest any beyond asserting, in his Preface, that each individual's needs must be fulfilled).

This attitude differs greatly from Shakespeare's attitude for at the end of King Lear order is re-established, an order of which Shakespeare totally approves. He is not advocating revolution but rather upholding the rightness of traditional values. Like Bond, Shakespeare does for most of the play show a disordered society, but his disorder can be remedied - it is local, caused by one foolish man's actions and leads to tragedy through which order re-emerges. Bond's disorder is universal with no obvious remedy; tragic sacrifice is meaningless in such a world.

Bond's main concern, then, is to make us aware of the aggression inherent in modern society as we know it. The events of Ustinov's play are more distant for, though the implications of a war between America and Russia would be all-embracing, actual day-to-day diplomatic relations between the powers have little to do with the average spectator's daily life.



Nevertheless, the reference is to modern politics, as it is with Bond's play. Ustinov's subject allows him to explore various themes, including the idea that diplomacy is basically a preservation of appearances. It entails maintaining an apparent balance in everything:

GENERAL: I hope to see you at our little celebration tonight.

ROMANOFF: My wife is very tired ... so am I ...

GENERAL: The Americans have accepted.

ROMANOFF (with a deep sigh): We will be there.  
(II,p.58)

The topic under discussion here is just another local celebration, but the same attitudes apply in the real world to summit meetings, arms treaties and so on. Ustinov uses the local celebration to ridicule such attitudes because they set in motion a vicious circle - each side acts because the other side will or has acted, even though neither side really wants to act. It is all an elaborate charade. Spying is another conventional activity - both sides have to have spies because neither can trust the other not to have spies. Therefore everyone knows everything, and the ridiculous situation exposed by the General is the result:

Incidentally, they know you know they know you know the code.  
(II,p.59)

Moulsworth, to whom this is addressed, is alarmed at the intelligence - the Russians in this case are just one step ahead, except that now the General has revealed all, the Americans have the advantage.



This kind of satire is very funny and rises naturally from the feud situation. The fact that Igor and Juliet fall in love makes the need to reconcile the ideologies all the more pressing, but in fact this is impossible.

Ustinov shows that in order for the families to be reconciled they must first renounce their ideologies (which, under the influence of this country, they are able to do). We are therefore left with the view that America and Russia (in the abstract) are irreconcilable, and that any reconciliation will have to take place on a human plane rather than in terms of treaties and agreements.

Ustinov takes very little in the way of theme from Shakespeare's play, though their values are similar. He shows political conventions, to which the love story is just a complication. Shakespeare, on the other hand, shows little diplomacy between the Montagues and Capulets. Romeo tries half-heartedly to temper the violence of his followers, but to little avail. Shakespeare is concerned with the personal love story and the tragic fate of the lovers which is as much a result of Fate as of the feud.

The transformations, then, are more interested in Shakespeare's basic situation and in imposing their own themes on the material than in extending or adopting Shakespeare's more humanitarian themes. Ustinov and Bond are interested in the patterns, the structures, of political behaviour, not in explorations of personal dilemmas.

When attempting to define the transformation, more stress is placed on the invariant features than on the variant features because so much changes that the interest lies in what these adapters have preserved and how they have used it.

#### Invariant

1. Some major events in Shakespeare's play are transferred to the transformation.
2. The network of interpersonal relationships between most of the major characters is equivalent to that in Shakespeare's play.

#### Variant

1. The context is public, political and non-Shakespearian.
2. Characters act mainly in accordance with their political status (rather than according to personal loyalties or individual preferences).
3. There is much alteration of plot detail.
4. New political themes are imposed on the material.
5. The language is modern prose.

As this analysis is based on a study of only two plays, one is reluctant to be too dogmatic about these criteria - it is possible that one would wish to classify other adaptations as transformations though they do not strictly conform to these characteristics. However, pending the emergence of such adaptations we will accept these criteria as constituting a working definition.



All the adaptations discussed in previous chapters contain within them interpretations of the Shakespeare plays on which they are based. To a limited extent this is also true of the transformations which emphasise the political manoeuvrings of some of Shakespeare's characters. Though changes are made in the political machinations, we still return to Shakespeare's plays with a heightened awareness of the power games in which Shakespeare's characters indulge. Romeo and Juliet, not normally regarded as political, emerges as an unofficial struggle for local influence (where diplomacy is noticeably lacking) while King Lear, already a play about a war-torn nation, is imbued with a sense of despair - order may be restored for the moment but will it last?<sup>12</sup>

Despite these additions to our understanding of Shakespeare's plays, such interpretations form a relatively minor part of these adapters' purposes. Why, then, do they use Shakespeare's plays? To answer this we must consider how features of Shakespeare's plays are used in the transformations. Let us consider each play separately.

Bond's principal method in Lear is to work against our expectations so that we are forced to contrast Shakespeare's ordered society with our own chaotic world. The beginning of the play is not unlike that of King Lear in that Lear, as king, loses his power to his two cruel daughters. This plot similarity makes us expect, in particular, two other features to follow:

1. the emergence of a kind daughter embodying humanitarian values;
2. the re-establishment of order by the end of the play.



Neither of these do in fact occur, though Bond often hints that they might. It is only at the end of Act I that the gravedigger's boy's wife becomes known as Cordelia, and so only at that point (just before she is raped and her husband killed) that we begin to compare her with Shakespeare's Cordelia. By this stage Lear and Cordelia have built up an uneasy relationship. Cordelia is frightened that the haven she and her husband have created will be destroyed if strangers like Lear are allowed to invade it, and so she wants him to leave. Lear is unwilling to do this as the Boy has invited him to stay, so though there is no personal animosity there is a certain degree of tension between them. Thus Cordelia is seen to be reasonably humane but forced by circumstances to protect her way of life. Nevertheless there is a bond between them in that they are both oppressed by the current regime led by Bodice and Fontanelle, and later we learn that Cordelia refused to have Lear killed because she knew him. We next see Cordelia as leader of the rebels. We have not been led to expect this for until now she has had no political status, but the similarity with Shakespeare's Cordelia is further established for both women bring civil war to their countries in order to rid them of Lear's cruel daughters. Bond's Cordelia says of the atrocities she is forced to perpetrate:

When we have power these things won't be necessary.  
(II,3,p.45)

Here we can hope that Cordelia will bring order to the nation and rule in peace. The comparison with Shakespeare's heroine enforces these expectations so that when she gains

power and continues to use the same brutal methods of control as before, those expectations are dashed, and the differences between what was possible in Shakespeare's society and what is possible today become evident. We suspect that in Shakespeare's society, Bond's Cordelia would act as her namesake does, but in the harsh world she inhabits she has to fight for survival. Bond is therefore using Shakespeare's play to show how society has changed; he shows that modern society works by placing personal survival as the chief value (survival which is achieved by acts of 'political necessity') whereas Shakespeare's society worked by valuing a strict hierarchical order: God, nature, state and family. The order is no longer present, which leads to a lack of morality: individuals are not good or bad, they oppress or are oppressed. Both Cordelias embody the values of their respective societies; the change in values indicates the change in society.

Bond has reduced the scope of Shakespeare's play, almost excluding religious, cosmic and domestic matters in order to concentrate on political concerns. Ustinov, on the other hand, expands the scope of Romeo and Juliet by including to a far greater extent the political implications of the domestic love story. Ustinov's main purpose in using Shakespeare's play seems to be humour. His characters are exaggerated stereotypes and so to some extent they are caricatures of both Shakespeare's characters and of their counterparts in the real world: Igor Romanoff points satirically at both Romeo and youths raised on communist ideology. The Shakespearian features add little of thematic significance to Romanoff and Juliet. The play is about



a feud, and so an obvious possibility is to base it on Romeo and Juliet, a play with a widely known story which is rooted in our cultural heritage. Its use adds to the fun of the play - spotting similarities and so on - but it really just forms a framework into which Ustinov can insert his own ideas about a particular current feud.

It appears, then, that a knowledge of King Lear is crucial to Bond's purpose which is founded on the juxtaposition of the two plays, whereas Romanoff and Juliet makes its point without reference to the Shakespeare play, though knowledge of Romeo and Juliet allows us to understand the feud situation more quickly as well as adds to the humour of the play.

The transformations are at the limit of what we wish to term 'adaptations' and so they bring special problems in that it is more difficult to establish that the plays have an integral connection with Shakespeare's plays.

A study of the transformations thus raises a problem which is less evident in the other adaptations, the problem of the common source. The transformations use fewer Shakespearian plot details than other adaptations, making comparison more difficult and thus obscuring the link between the Shakespeare play and the adaptation. It also raises the possibility that the adaptor has used as his model, not Shakespeare's play but Shakespeare's sources for that play. Before continuing the argument it should be stressed that this is largely an academic point, other factors making confusion unlikely. For example, both writer and audience will be far more familiar with Shakespeare's play than his sources, and this will affect both how the play is written and how it is received, even if in fact



the adapter has used sources other than Shakespeare's play; the general assumption will be that Shakespeare's play is the model, and unless the adapter indicates otherwise we should take this to be so.

However, the academic argument should be followed through so that all possibilities are covered.

For many of Shakespeare's plays there are several possible sources, several versions of the same story, all of which preserve the basic outline (which allows us to class them as 'the same story') but which include or omit different plot details, minor characters, attitudes etc.. As the transformations also have 'the same story' but different details, there is no obvious necessity for Shakespeare's play to be involved. Thus in order to establish the connection between Shakespeare and the adapters we must look to Shakespeare's process of adaptation. If we can discover the features which Shakespeare added to his sources, and then find these features in the transformations, then we can say that the transformations are adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. If such features cannot be found in the transformations, then the term 'adaptation' (at least from Shakespeare) is invalid in this context. We cannot even rely much on the equivalent patterns of character relationships because 'the same story' usually involves the same major characters.

Let us then look at these two transformations in the light of the above comments.

When writing King Lear Shakespeare made several additions to his many sources.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most far-reaching aspect of his creativity was the way in which he juxtaposed various stories which, until then, had appeared only separately. Most obviously, he added the Gloucester sub-plot which both parallels and impinges on the main plot. Another change was that Shakespeare's main source play, King Leir, only covered the period until Leir's restoration to the throne. However, Shakespeare discovered from the chronicles that after Lear's death, Cordelia was deposed by her nephews and cast into prison where she committed suicide. Shakespeare transformed these stories so that he could depict this tragic sequel. The time is greatly compressed; Cordelia is murdered and dies before Lear, whose death from grief we also see. Other elements added by Shakespeare are the storm and the Fool.

How much of this has Bond used? Like Shakespeare, Bond has shown the complete story until Lear's death. Though one might argue that he could have taken this from the chronicles, such an argument cannot really stand for there, Lear died a natural death while in power, whereas in the plays of both Shakespeare and Bond his death is (directly or indirectly) caused by tyrants who have seized his power. We have also noted earlier in this chapter similarities between certain incidents in Bond's play and the blinding of Gloucester. This too must have come from King Lear. In addition, the ghost who keeps Bond's Lear company may be modelled on Shakespeare's Fool. These factors are sufficient to allow us to say with certainty that Lear is an adaptation of King Lear.



Let us turn now to Romanoff and Juliet.<sup>14</sup> In Shakespeare's main source, the action encompassed about nine months. Shakespeare compressed this to about five days and Ustinov goes even further by depicting just one day. Shakespeare's other additions were questions of attitude. Brooke, the author of the main source, set out to show the sinful nature of the alliance, though in fact his sympathy for the two lovers does keep breaking through. Shakespeare, however, goes much further in showing the lovers to be worthy and honourable. Ustinov could not go as far as Shakespeare because his characters are not as fully developed. Indeed, their postures of despair give rise to a certain amount of ridicule. However, we never feel their love to be sinful and our sympathy is with them rather than the system which endeavours to keep them apart. Shakespeare also developed the characters of Mercutio and Tybalt in order to emphasise the futility of the feud. Ustinov does not use these characters but he does pour ridicule on the feud and, like Shakespeare, work towards a reconciliation.

Questions of attitude are not quite as convincing as plot details when looking for invariant features. Nevertheless, the combination of these three factors (compressed time, sympathy for lovers and futility of the feud) does suggest that Ustinov took his material from Shakespeare rather than Brooke.

We can, then, establish the link academically, but in practice this is rarely necessary for where a modern play uses a Shakespearean story it is reasonably safe to assume that the source is in fact Shakespeare.<sup>15</sup>



The transformations are further removed from Shakespeare's plays than the other adaptations discussed, and in Chapter 6 we shall see how this has helped to mould our definition of an adaptation by setting the limits to the genre.

## Chapter 5: Summary

In this chapter we have considered only two plays (Peter Ustinov's Romanoff and Juliet and Edward Bond's Lear) which makes any generalisations rather unreliable. However, certain similarities have been traced, in particular, the high degree of divergence from Shakespeare's play in many different ways. Language and context are totally unShakespearian, while plot, character and theme have only slight connections with Shakespeare: a few major plot elements are transferred from Shakespeare to the transformations, and the network of personal relationships of most of the major characters of the transformation is equivalent to that in Shakespeare's play.

Both plays are unambiguously political, with any personal considerations being generally suppressed. Ustinov's play shows the symmetrical structure of diplomatic relations, as exemplified by the Cold War, while Bond's play stresses the continuous cycle of violence and revolution inherent in modern society.

Though these adaptations do provide interpretations of Shakespeare's plays, showing Romeo and Juliet to be partly an unofficial struggle for local power and suggesting that King Lear is just part of a longer story in which violence is continuous, the principal purpose of these adapters is to describe modern society, not Shakespeare's plays. We therefore consider why they used the Shakespeare plays at all. Ustinov seems to use it mainly to add to the honour of the play as well as to provide a well-known framework for his own ideas; however, it contributes little to the thematic significance of the play. Bond,

on the other hand, needs his audience to know King Lear because he wishes us to juxtapose the ordered society presented in Shakespeare's play with the chaotic society presented in his own play; this juxtaposition will indicate how society's values have changed. ... look at the

Finally we look at the problem of establishing that the transformations do in fact adapt Shakespeare's plays (a problem which arises because of the high level of variance from Shakespeare). In order to establish this conclusively we look at the features which Shakespeare added to the different versions of 'the same story' which were available to him, and try to find Shakespeare's additions in the modern adaptations. Where we do find evidence of Shakespeare's additions we can be sure that the modern writer has used Shakespeare's play and not Shakespeare's sources as a basis for his own play.



Notes

1. The Times (18 May 1956)
2. Anthony Hartley, 'Republic of Cockayne' (The Spectator, 25 May 1956, vol.196, p.730)
3. See Dolores May Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968.) p.130
4. Edward Bond (in interview), 'Drama and the dialectics of violence' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.II, no.5, January - March 1972, pp.4-14) p.9
5. Nicholas de Jongh, 'Bond's Lear' (Guardian, 1 October 1971)
6. J.W.Lambert, 'Bond's Lear' (Sunday Times, 3 October 1971)
7. Katharine J.Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama (Bell, London, 1972) pp.178-179
8. For a more extended examination of this topic see the interview with Bond conducted by Uli Imig, April 1977. It is unpublished, but held at The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.
9. Edward Bond, 'Author's preface' to Lear (Eyre Methuen, London, 1972.) p.xiv
10. Edward Bond in the interview with Imig, p.5
11. Edward Bond, 'Author's preface' to Lear, p.x
12. This interpretation of King Lear is similar to Jan Kott's view of Shakespeare's history plays, as described in his essay 'The Kings' in Shakespeare Our Contemporary (Methuen, London, 1967.) The following description

of the typical Shakespearian protagonist's path to the throne is very reminiscent of the action in Lear:

In each of the Histories the legitimate ruler drags behind him a long chain of crimes. He has rejected the feudal lords who helped him to reach for the crown; he murders, first, his enemies, then his former allies; he executes possible successors and pretenders to the crown.  
(p.6)

13. Information about the way in which Shakespeare altered his sources for King Lear has been taken from Kenneth Muir, Shakespeare's Sources: Comedies and Tragedies (Methuen, London, 1957.) pp.141-166
14. Information about source alteration for Romeo and Juliet taken from Muir, pp.21-30.
15. The reader may remember that in our discussion of the domestications we concluded that the invariant features were as follows:
  1. The situation presented at or near the beginning of the play is similar to the situation in the Shakespearian original.
  2. Most of the major characters bear relationships to one another equivalent to those in the Shakespearian original, in terms of personal association (i.e. family status).

Compare this with the invariant features of the transformations:

1. Some major events in Shakespeare's play are transferred to the transformation.
2. The network of interpersonal relationships between the major characters is equivalent to that in Shakespeare's play.

In this respect the domestications and the transformations are very similar - in both cases the plot connection with Shakespeare is tenuous while the character connection is firm. This situation has impelled us, in respect of the transformations, to seek confirmation that Shakespeare was indeed the modern adapter's source. Should we not undergo the same confirmatory process in respect of the domestications? Certainly such a process would enable us to establish the connection absolutely. However, it is interesting that at the time of the earlier discussion we felt no need for such confirmation. The probable reason for this lies in the differences between the transformations and the domestications. The transformations rely very heavily on plot and action, and they ignore interpersonal relationships. They therefore rely on features which have very little connection with Shakespeare. Hence the need to confirm the connection. The domestications, on the other hand, rely far more on interpersonal relationships than on plot, and as there is a fairly strong connection with Shakespeare in this respect, we feel no need for further confirmation of the connection.



## CHAPTER 6: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADAPTATIONS

In this chapter the aim is to draw together the significant features concerning the process of adapting one play into another. Some of the issues discussed here have already been referred to in previous chapters but now it is time to incorporate them into a more unified view of the field of inquiry. In explaining our definition of an adaptation we shall have occasion to refer to plays which might have been regarded as adaptations but which on closer study were rejected. A study of these negative examples was often more help in defining the boundaries of adaptations than the adaptations themselves.

So far we have distinguished five mutually exclusive categories which can be used to classify adaptations: collages, cultural transpositions, domestications, reorientations and transformations. Each adaptation studied falls into one, and only one, of these categories. It is, however, possible to combine some of these categories so that we are left with only two types of adaptation, those which preserve the Shakespearian context and those which find an equivalence (usually modern) to Shakespeare's story. Thus the collages and reorientations fall into the first category while the transpositions, domestications and transformations comprise the second category. The context is a most important parameter in that it determines many other factors. With the Shakespearian-context adaptations the world is Shakespeare's world peopled by his characters who carry out his actions, sometimes talking in his

language. What we see is not incongruous with a production of Shakespeare's play. There are some exceptions to this, particularly in parts of the collages, but such exceptions tend to be modern-context insertions - Marowitz's The Shrew follows the above Shakespearian pattern except for the Boy/Girl sequences which tend to show a modern equivalent. The other-context adaptations, on the other hand, usually show the contemporary world (though this need not necessarily be the case); characters perform equivalent roles (in terms of either political or domestic behaviour) to those of Shakespeare's characters, but are not intended to be Shakespeare's characters because they inhabit a different world; the language is modern and usually prose.

This dichotomy has further implications. The Shakespearian-context adaptations evince a high concern with the original Shakespeare play. The central interest with both collages and reorientations tends to be the adapter's interpretation of the Shakespeare play, and adapters tend to assume the spectator's quite detailed knowledge of the Shakespeare play, using that knowledge for various purposes and effects. The other-context adaptations are far less dependent on the spectator's knowledge of Shakespeare and can usually stand on their own. Though they do present an interpretation of the Shakespeare play, that is not their central purpose. Rather, they are concerned to illuminate contemporary society - by modernising the context they attempt to make Shakespeare's plays 'relevant'. It should be noted that



Bond's Lear fits less well into this scheme than the other adaptations because Bond does rely on a spectator's knowledge of King Lear to make his point about the way society has changed. Nevertheless, further general comments about the other-context adaptations do apply.

One further consequence of the dichotomy is that other-context adaptations tend to be fairly rigidly either political or personal, whereas the Shakespearian-context adaptations can retain more ambiguously both spheres of interest (as do the Shakespeare plays themselves), though many do have a political or personal emphasis. This emphasis, however, is not integral to the type of adaptation, unlike the other-context adaptations which are largely defined by their main interest.

Where there is a decided emphasis on either political or personal matters, certain other features are altered accordingly. Political plays are presented mainly in terms of a plot which unravels itself in public using stereotyped characters. Personal plays tend to use more fully-developed characters who, within their domestic location, use language (debate, self-analysis) as a means of self-discovery.

For the adaptations so far studied we can see that the most influential parameters in determining the type of play which materialises are context and emphasis (theme). In Chapter 7 we shall see that non-Shakespearian adaptations can be classified in the same way.



Let us now attempt to define 'adaptation'. We suggest that the following four conditions are necessary and sufficient to define an adaptation. References are made in these conditions to Shakespeare's plays as the sources, but it is hoped that the definition will still apply if other source plays (or maybe even other non-dramatic sources e.g. The Bible) are substituted. Whether this extension can be made will be examined in the next chapter.

1. The adaptation must provide, however obliquely, an interpretation of the Shakespeare play.
2. There must be structural similarity between the adaptation and Shakespeare's play.
3. There must be some proof, based on features other than 'the same story' that the source for the adaptation is primarily Shakespeare's play.
4. The adaptation must work as a metaphor for Shakespeare's play and, optionally, for contemporary society.

Conditions (1), (2) and (4) are very closely integrated in that metaphors require structural similarity and constitute interpretation. However, they are here separated for clarity and so that the different issues raised by each can be considered without confusion.

### Interpretation

There are some plays which use Shakespeare's plays but are not adaptations because they do not interpret Shakespeare's play in any way. The crucial point is that the Shakespeare play should be integral to the adaptations and not incidental.

Let us clarify this by an example. Tom Stoppard's play Dog's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth<sup>1</sup> sounds as though it could very well be a Shakespearian adaptation. Though there are links between the two halves of the programme, Dog's Hamlet and Cahoot's Macbeth can be considered separately for our purposes. In Dog's Hamlet, pupils and staff are preparing for the school's speech day, including rehearsals for a performance of Hamlet. The play ends with this performance, which takes about fifteen minutes. It includes all the major plot elements of Shakespeare's play, represented by key lines and stylised actions, and is no different in kind to any 'straight' production of Hamlet which omits lines, scenes or characters. This performance of Hamlet is just part of Stoppard's play, and he could have chosen any play to fulfil the same role. In this sense Hamlet is incidental to Stoppard's purpose. (Cahoot's Macbeth will be discussed under the fourth condition, metaphor.) Another, rather trivial, example is Joy Anderson's Poor Mr Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> Anderson depicts a Women's Institute group in the process of rehearsing A Midsummer Night's Dream. As with Stoppard's play, the occasional scene or passage is acted out, but it is more in the nature of holding the women up to ridicule. They could be rehearsing any play and still achieve the same effect.

It is obvious that in both these cases the characters are attempting a straight, if somewhat abbreviated, production of the Shakespeare play in question. These Shakespearian productions are certainly not good or detailed enough in themselves provide an interpretation of

Shakespeare's play, and the surrounding action is more concerned with other issues than with Shakespearian criticism. The Shakespeare play is therefore incidental to the main action in that the choice of play is immaterial - the content of Shakespeare's play is not integral to the content of the new play, and any other play would serve the same purpose.

### Structure

In the plays discussed above where Shakespeare's plays are incidental to the action, the Shakespeare play itself forms only a small part of the overall structure. We suggest that in an adaptation there must be a fundamental structural similarity to the Shakespeare play. There are various features of a Shakespeare play which can be adopted by a modern writer; language, plot, character, context and theme are the features we have considered in this thesis. However, a writer may borrow some features, resulting in an adaptation, or he may borrow other features which may provide resonances of Shakespeare's play but which do not create an adaptation.<sup>3</sup> There are two types of structural feature which will allow an adaptation to be created:

1. plot sequence;
2. character interrelationships.

All the adaptations preserve character interrelationships for the most part. Some alterations are made (such as Bond's alteration of Cordelia's relationship to Lear) but these are used significantly (and therefore rely on the spectator's knowledge of Shakespeare's relationships). It is not necessary that every character should have a



role in both Shakespeare's play and the adaptation, only that the network of interrelationships between the major characters of both plays should be recognisably similar. Plot sequence is more variable. Omission, addition and rearrangement may so transform the plot as to be almost unrecognisable (as in the transformations) and in this case much reliance is put on the structural equivalence of character relationships to establish the new play as an adaptation. It is also quite common for the adapter to alter Shakespeare's ending. Despite such variance, however, the adaptations still contain plot elements which are found in Shakespeare's plays, and for the most part these plot elements are related to one another much as Shakespeare relates them.

It is now apparent why Bond preserved (for the most part) the character interrelationships, though he used them to little purpose. Without this network his play could not so obviously be seen to derive from Shakespeare's play because the plot structure is not similar enough to that of King Lear to fulfil the structural condition.

### Source

This condition is included in order to overcome the problem of the common source, already referred to in previous chapters. The structural condition may be fulfilled coincidentally because both the Shakespeare play and the modern play are based on the same source (often historical fact) and some proof is needed that the modern play adapts Shakespeare's play.

Given an event which has some basis in fact, we can distinguish several possible versions of that event:

- a) historical fact: what actually happened;
- b) eye-witness accounts;
- c) accounts by historians;
- d) literary expositions: for our purposes

- 1. pre-Shakespeare
- 2. Shakespeare
- 3. post-Shakespeare.

It is axiomatic that (a) can never be known absolutely - there is always more to discover. The task of the eye-witness accounts is to describe exactly what was seen. Necessarily, only a partial picture of the whole event can be given by any one such account. The historian's aim is to discover and explain what actually happened as accurately as possible. He will use several eye-witness accounts and any other information which is available in order to represent the total picture. The writer is concerned to draw significance from the event, but his knowledge of the event will probably be largely determined by the historians' accounts and by other literary representations. At any one of these stages, distortion can occur, due to failing sight, inaccurate memory, prejudice, specific purpose, search for significance and so on. Obviously a version which is based on second- or third-hand material is more likely to be distorted than first-hand accounts because of the tendency of distortion to accumulate. Despite this it is quite possible, even probable, that all these versions will describe the same major events with the same major characters i.e. they all have a structural equivalence which enables us to recognise

them as the same story. This same story, however, can be used for different purposes, even within one type of account (e.g. historians may want to discover the truth, place the event in a wider context, use the event to support or denigrate a particular person and so on). The different purposes and viewpoints lead to the different versions or distortions where the differences are usually non-structural i.e. they will be such features as inclusion or exclusion of minor characters and events, mode of communication, attitudes, conclusions drawn and so on. In order to establish that a modern play is an adaptation of Shakespeare's play, we must look at these non-structural elements (or structural elements added to the fundamental structure) in Shakespeare's play and see if they are adopted by the modern writer. We performed this task in Chapter 5 and concluded that the transformations are adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Two other plays, however, failed to pass the test and so cannot be considered adaptations.

The title of David Pownall's Richard III - Part Two<sup>4</sup> suggests that his play is an adaptation of, or at least a sequel to, Shakespeare's Richard III. However, there is nothing in the play which links it positively to Shakespeare's play - everything could have been taken from historians' accounts of Richard's life. Richard is presented fairly sympathetically and though we are told he has done evil things (a point of the play being that he needs a new image), as we see him he is manipulated by others and a victim of circumstances. This has little to do with Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard as evil, cunning and charming.<sup>5</sup>



Paul Foster's Marcus Brutus<sup>6</sup> involves the story of Julius Caesar, but again there is nothing to link it positively to Shakespeare's version. Indeed, Shakespeare is never mentioned while Appian is referred to several times, and the play includes a few events referred to by Appian in his account of Julius Caesar<sup>7</sup> but not alluded to by Shakespeare.

In both these plays the major characters have the same relationships to one another as in Shakespeare's plays, and they cover the same period as at least part of Shakespeare's plot. Structural equivalence therefore exists, but the plays are not adaptations of Shakespeare's plays because there is no positive link with the Shakespeare play on non-structural grounds. The equivalence arises solely because there is a source (versions of historical fact) common to both Shakespeare and the modern adapter.

### Metaphor

The New English Dictionary defines 'metaphor' as follows:

The figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object different from, but analogous to, that to which it is properly applicable;

A metaphor can be divided into three components:<sup>8</sup>

- a) tenor (that which is being described);
- b) vehicle (the image or analogue in terms of which the tenor is represented);
- c) ground (the basis of comparison between tenor and vehicle).

Geoffrey Leech, who has put forward this clarification of metaphor components, suggests that in order to analyse a metaphor one should separate the literal meanings from the figurative meanings in the following way. We shall use the banal example: The ship ploughs the waves.

Literal: The ship ——— the waves.

Figurative: " ——— ploughs " ———

Having separated the types of meaning we then attempt to make each line literal, filling in the gaps in the sentences by postulating appropriate words.

L: The ship [disturbs] the waves.

F: " [plough] ploughs " [land].

In this way we can discern the three components of the metaphor:

tenor: relationship between ship and waves;

vehicle: relationship between plough and earth;

ground: the ship disturbs the water in the same way as the plough disturbs the earth.

Language used metaphorically is more precise than literal language because the context allows fewer interpretations - there are semantic selection restrictions. Hence the word 'ploughs' has several associated meanings, and if used literally (The plough ploughs the land) can give rise to various connotations - we may think of the brown earth, the farmer's daily work, the birds which follow the plough, the lines of furrows in the ploughed field and so on. However, used metaphorically, as in the example above, most of these associations are inappropriate, and so our attention is focused on the one meaning or small range of

meanings which make sense. In this case, the nautical context allows us to concentrate on the movement of the ship, and the similarity of the relationships between moving ship and sea, and moving plough and earth, constitutes the ground of the metaphor.

This analysis of metaphor has been rather lengthy, but it is necessary in order to understand how the adaptations work in relation to Shakespeare's plays. We suggest that, in so far as the adaptations are interpretations (or descriptions) of Shakespeare's plays, they work as the vehicle which represents Shakespeare's play (the tenor). The interest, as with all metaphors, arises when we consider the ground for comparison. This differs with each adaptation but most are based on one or two of the following:

- a) the state of mind of the characters is the same;
- b) the political manoeuvrings/systems are similar;
- c) mental activity is compared to physical movement;
- d) both describe the same events (though from different viewpoints).

The adapter is suggesting that his play, in some figurative sense, represents and describes Shakespeare's play - the figurative meaning lies in the alterations which the adapter makes to Shakespeare's play.

As with metaphors, the context restricts the interpretation of the figurative elements. Thus, the tenor (Shakespeare's play) imposes restrictions on the ways in which we can interpret the alterations made by the adapters.



An example is Marowitz's The Shrew. If we just saw his inserted scenes between the Boy and Girl, several interpretations and associations would be possible. However, as they form part of a play with Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew as the tenor, we interpret the inserted scenes in relation to Shakespeare's play, concentrating on those meanings of relevance to Shakespeare's play, and in consequence illuminating that play.

Intrinsic to this metaphorical use of Shakespeare's play is the superimposition of the adaptation on the Shakespeare play. It is this condition which rules out Murray Carlin's Not Now, Sweet Desdemona<sup>9</sup> as an adaptation. This short play is a duologue between a black actor and a white actress, off-stage lovers who are to play Othello and Desdemona. The actor is dissatisfied with the traditional interpretation of Othello and persuades the actress to try to present his interpretation. This is based on racial differences, the actor believing that white women want to control black men, having absolute power over them. By experimenting with this interpretation they achieve a greater awareness of their own attitudes. The play undoubtedly propounds an interpretation of Othello, and there are linguistic and structural reasons for considering it to be an adaptation. However, it works as a simile rather than a metaphor. A simile, unlike a metaphor, explicitly states the tenor, vehicle and ground (e.g. It had fur as white as snow.), and Carlin's play too does this.

A Shakespearian scene is played (tenor), the actor describes and acts out his interpretation (which provides the ground) and then the two characters discuss and argue about their own relationship (vehicle). Thus Carlin is stating explicitly: 'the relationship between Othello and Desdemona is like that between the actor and actress because a white woman always wants control over a black man'. There is little room for imagination. In the adaptations, on the other hand, we are not presented with Shakespeare's play as something separate and to be likened to the stage situation.

Stoppard's Cahoot's Macbeth also works more as a simile than a metaphor. The play is based on the political situation in Czechoslovakia where many writers and actors are prevented from working in public. Consequently performances are arranged in the sitting-rooms of private houses. Stoppard's play depicts one of these private performances and the police harassment which accompanies it. The play being performed is Macbeth, and by seeing it within the context of a tyrannical Czech regime, we gain a clearer image of the consequences of Macbeth's tyranny. However, though Stoppard is less specific than Carlin in pointing out correspondences, we do see the two situations (modern and Shakespearian) in parallel, not superimposed as in the adaptations.

There is another way in which the adaptations can work as metaphors. They describe the contemporary world (tenor) in terms of Shakespeare's play (vehicle), the ground being the similarity between Shakespeare's world and the modern world. The simulations (see Chapter 2) are the most



obvious example of this, but most of the adaptations are concerned with contemporary relevance and attempt to show that issues which concern us now also concerned Shakespeare. The Shakespeare plays are familiar to us and this serves two functions: they provide a way in to the contemporary situation presented by the adapters, and they also focus our attention on aspects of the adaptation which we can relate to the Shakespeare play, thus more clearly guiding our interpretation. Just as the modern appurtenances and language of Heil Caesar! help us to appreciate the political intrigue in Julius Caesar, so our knowledge of the Shakespeare play enables us to appreciate the parallels in the contemporary political world indicated by Bowen, and perhaps to learn something from Shakespeare's play of relevance to the contemporary situation.

Given these four conditions, let us consider what is preserved and what changed in an adaptation:

#### Invariant

1. Structural similarity.
2. Non-structural proof that Shakespeare's play is the source (unless there is no possibility of a common source in which case structural similarity constitutes the proof).
3. The adaptation constitutes or contains an interpretation of Shakespeare's play.



Variant

1. The adaptation is analogous to Shakespeare's play, not identical to it; therefore it manifests differences of reference.
2. The adaptation differs thematically from Shakespeare's play; themes either add to our knowledge of Shakespeare's characters or comment on the contemporary world.

This analysis should enable us to answer some of the questions posed in the introduction to this thesis, and in particular to identify two boundaries:

- a) between a director's interpretation of a Shakespeare play and an adaptation;
- b) between an adaptation and a new play.

When considering (a) we should look at the variant features. For the play to be an adaptation these variant features should be positive - they should contribute to the original play, not be merely reductive. We have seen that an adaptation is analogous to its source, but not identical to it. Therefore one of the main indications of an adaptation is the change in reference. This is most clear in the other-context adaptations where the contemporary reference is obvious. Such an alteration is a positive addition to Shakespeare's play in that it broadens the application of Shakespeare's perceptions to our own time, both personally and politically. The change of reference in the Shakespearian-context adaptations is more difficult to detect simply because the context does not change at the same time. The extensive use of visual

imagery in the collages is one strong indication of an adaptation - Shakespeare's Hamlet's vacillation is as if he were swinging on a rope, so Marowitz depicts his Hamlet swinging on a rope. The new reference is one of visual symbolism - psychological conditions are externalised, the analogy being between the psychological condition of Shakespeare's character and its representation (in language and stage symbol) in the collages. With the reorientations it is not so much that the story is removed to a different plane as that it is seen from a different point. The play can therefore be presented in the same terms as Shakespeare's play but the reference point moves from one character or time to another. To use a spacial metaphor, the collages, transpositions, domestications and transformations 'translate' Shakespeare's plays while the reorientations 'rotate' them. Nevertheless, both kinds of movement constitute a change of reference, and this is important in separating adaptations from directorial interpretations.

The other variant feature, not surprisingly, concerns the thematic content of the adaptations. If an adapter has nothing to say, or nothing other than Shakespeare has said, then there would be little point in his writing a play at all. The Shakespearian-context adaptations, as we have already suggested, are mainly concerned to illuminate Shakespeare's play, but they can use extreme methods to do this which would not be available to the director. For example, directors are often inclined to omit Rosencrantz and Guildenstern completely, and the idea of showing them on occasions which contribute nothing to the



plot concerning Hamlet would appear ridiculous and certainly beyond the director's brief. And yet, as Stoppard has shown, such occasions can contribute much to our appreciation of Shakespeare's play. Adapters can invent new scenes in which their interpretations are evident, or (as in the collages) they can rearrange, omit and add scenes and passages in order to emphasise an interpretation. These are extreme methods unavailable to the director who, apart from minor cutting from practical considerations, is constrained to the received text. Other-context adaptations are more concerned to point out truths about contemporary society, comparing or contrasting this with Shakespearian society where relevant. Again, the director can do this to some extent, but adapters can use extreme methods to communicate their beliefs. They are not constrained to Shakespeare's words and can explicitly cite their targets. Themes can be either personal or political but, unlike Shakespeare's plays, are rarely both. Consequently those aspects of the adaptations which we recognise as thematic are governed by dramatic techniques which go beyond methods available to the director, mainly in terms of textual alteration.

Presented with a production of a play, therefore, we can distinguish the adaptation from the director's interpretation by the change of reference and the extreme textual alterations required by the altered or imposed themes.



To distinguish the adaptation from the totally new play we must consider the invariant features. These require less detailed discussion here for they have been fully dealt with elsewhere. It is sufficient to state that if the play in question has a structural similarity to Shakespeare's play, contains non-structural proof of its connection with Shakespeare (if the possibility of a common source arises) and constitutes an interpretation of the Shakespeare play, then it is an adaptation.

One point was mentioned rather cursorily above and perhaps needs further elucidation. It is the question of the director's alteration of the given text. Hamlet is rarely presented in its entirety - it is too long - and yet we still consider most versions produced to be Shakespeare's play. Cutting of lines, speeches, minor characters and scenes is therefore part of the director's province. This in itself may sometimes necessitate a certain degree of rearrangement so that the remaining text is coherent. This technique is obviously similar to that used by writers of collages, and so we may ask wherein the difference lies. It is here that the question of motive becomes particularly relevant, and we suggest that the director alters the text for practical reasons while the adapter does so for thematic reasons. Thus, although the director may wish to emphasise one particular interpretation of the play, this must be an interpretation warranted by Shakespeare's complete text, and any alterations are made to ease comprehension, to allow fewer actors to be used, to shorten the playing time and so on. Adapters, on the

other hand, are not so restricted because they are not pretending to present Shakespeare's play.<sup>10</sup> They can, and do, therefore present non-Shakespearian themes, and though the adaptations do constitute interpretations of Shakespeare's plays, most of them also do much more.

At this point it is worth remembering the very broad meaning of 'adapt' discussed in the introduction to this thesis. We stipulated (see p.4) that dramatic adaptation required the following three conditions:

- a) an original play (for our purposes, a Shakespeare text);
- b) an altered set of cultural, social and political conditions;
- c) an adapter who will alter (a) in such a way that it is more relevant, effective and/or comprehensible to people in (b).

We are now in a position to describe (c) more precisely:

- c2) an adapter who will alter (a) in such a way that the people in (b) gain insights into (a), (b) and/or other areas of their existence i.e. the motivation for the alteration is principally thematic.

We shall use this definition in the next chapter when discussing different media.

Let us at this stage review some of the criteria which other commentators have suggested for adaptations:

1. Ruby Cohn suggests three categories:<sup>11</sup>

- a) reduction/emendation - words are omitted or amended;
- Cohn correctly sees such local textual alterations as part of theatre history;



- b) adaptation - the plays are essentially close to Shakespeare's story (though other features can change), and additions are incorporated;
- c) transformation - the plot is partly or wholly non-Shakespearian, and non-Shakespearian characters may be introduced.

The distinction made here between adaptation and transformation seems rather tenuous for though adaptations are 'essentially close' to Shakespeare's story, some degree of plot alteration does take place, and to use this parameter to distinguish transformations from adaptations seems unsatisfactory. The classification suggested in this thesis is that transformations are a type of adaptation and they alter plot to a greater degree than the other types of adaptation.

## 2. Christopher Spencer:<sup>12</sup>

The typical adaptation includes substantial cuts of scenes, speeches, and speech assignments; much alteration of language; and at least one and usually several important (or scene-length) additions. Accompanying these measurable changes are alterations or at least new emphases in tone, in character, and in theme.

These suggestions form a useful guide to the kind of techniques used by adapters, but do not really define the term. Most important, there is no reference to structural equivalence ('same story'), though he may be assuming this as he concentrates on variant features at the expense of invariant features. He does make the point, however, that the alterations are thematic as well as technical.



3. Benedict Nightingale:<sup>13</sup>

There is a point at which a critic must feel bound to resist, and that point, which will doubtless cause disagreement in any given case, is the one where interpretation becomes reconstruction. Too much extraneous stage business has had to be introduced, perhaps; too many lines to be cut. The bias is too great, the slant too strong, the selection too sweeping, the effect too limiting, and Shakespeare's own injunction against interference with his bones has been metaphorically disobeyed. Let the director go and write his own play.

Nightingale is here attempting to distinguish between interpretation and adaptation, and his term 'reconstruction' (and his last sentence) indicates that he sees the adaptation as a separate entity, though it implies rearrangement rather than addition. What he does not make clear is that interpretation becomes adaptation when significant thematic alterations are made.

Several critics have said about specific productions: there are too many alterations here; the play is no longer Shakespeare's.<sup>14</sup> However, such comments rarely suggest at which point the play becomes an adaptation. The framework suggested in this chapter is more specific, and though little of what other critics have said is refuted, it directs our attention to the areas of significance.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of the adaptations is the complexity of response which they allow. This arises as a consequence of the double focus of the spectator, on the adaptation as a new play and as a Shakespeare play. We have seen in previous chapters how the adapter can use a spectator's knowledge of the Shakespeare play to dramatic effect, and the following list is a brief summary of these methods:

- a) the adaptation becomes a critical commentary upon the Shakespeare play;
- b) the adapter can assume that we know the main events of Shakespeare's play and so refer to them without being explicit;
- c) the Shakespeare play is the objective reality with which we compare and contrast the subjective reality portrayed in the adaptation;
- d) the spectator of the adaptation experiences a sense of inevitability, knowing what will happen;
- e) the adaptation creates surprises by working against the audience's expectations;
- f) the spectator can pin-point the adapter's main concern by noting the changes he makes to the Shakespeare text;
- g) the spectator has a set of ready responses, acquired from familiarity with Shakespeare's play, which can be applied to the equivalent situation or character in the adaptation;
- h) the spectator is increasingly aware of the universality of issues and problems, whether personal or political.

Most of these methods rely on a comparison between the adaptation and the Shakespeare play, hence the double focus. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which, when watching the adaptation, we assume that we are watching the story of Shakespeare's characters - this is particularly so of the Shakespearian-context adaptations. Hamlet (if considered to be a real person) has only one life whether shown by Shakespeare, Marowitz or Stoppard, and when we are watching, say, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, it is Shakespeare's Hamlet (or the character of whom Shakespeare wrote) that we see. In this way the adaptation replaces the Shakespeare version, despite the fact that we are constantly comparing the two.

We now have a coherent framework for understanding and identifying modern Shakespearian adaptations. We shall next consider how far this may be extended to other ages, writers, genres and media.



## Chapter 6: Summary

This chapter draws together general points raised in the previous five chapters, and from them extrapolates certain definitions and theories concerning the process of adapting a Shakespeare play into a modern play.

The five categories of adaptation distinguished so far are reduced to two categories, one comprising those plays with a Shakespearian context (collages and reorientations) and the other comprising those plays with another context (transpositions, domestications and transformations). The choice of context determines several factors such as characters and language. Theme too is affected in that Shakespearian-context adaptations are more concerned with interpreting the Shakespeare play while other-context adaptations concentrate on illuminating another (usually contemporary) society. In many of these adaptations the emphasis is either personal or political, rarely both. This emphasis too influences characters, location and language. Consequently context and theme are the most influential parameters in determining the type of play.

We then suggest that for a modern play to be an adaptation of a Shakespeare play, the following four conditions are necessary and sufficient:

1. The adaptation must provide, however obliquely, an interpretation of the Shakespeare play; the particular Shakespeare play chosen must be integral, not incidental, to the new play.

2. There must be structural similarity between the adaptation and Shakespeare's play; this can be based on either the network of character interrelationships or plot sequence.
3. There must be some proof, based on features other than 'the same story', that the source for the adaptation is primarily Shakespeare's play; this is necessary only where the possibility of a common source arises.
4. The adaptation must work as a metaphor for Shakespeare's play and, optionally, for contemporary society. In the first case, Shakespeare's play is the tenor (that which is being described), the adaptation is the vehicle (the analogous image representing the tenor) while the ground for comparison varies from play to play, but is usually based on one or two kinds of similarity between the Shakespeare play and the adaptation (e.g. state of mind of the characters; political manoeuvrings/systems; mental activity/physical movement identity; same events). The figurative meaning lies in the alterations made to Shakespeare's play, the interpretations of which meaning is restricted by the Shakespearian context. In the second case, Shakespeare's play becomes the vehicle used to describe the tenor of contemporary society.

These conditions can be seen in terms of variant and invariant features. Invariant features are the structure, the non-structural proof and the interpretation; variant features are the change in reference (adaptations being



analogous and not identical to the Shakespeare plays) and the different themes. We can then distinguish a director's interpretation of a Shakespeare play from an adaptation (the latter contains the variant features) and an adaptation from a totally new play (the former contains the invariant features).

The role of the director is briefly discussed, and we conclude that the director alters the received text for practical reasons only, while the adapter alters it for thematic and aesthetic reasons.

Some definitions of other commentators are discussed but seen to be unsatisfactory for various reasons.

Adaptations allow a complex response from the spectators because of the double focus - we see the play both as Shakespeare's play and as a new play, and consequently compare and contrast the two. We list eight techniques in which the adapters use a spectator's knowledge of the Shakespeare play, and suggest that though the comparison of the two plays (Shakespeare's and the adapter's) gives one a double focus, nevertheless there is a sense in which the adaptation replaces Shakespeare's play because we see unfolding before us the lives of certain characters, and each character has only one life if we consider him to be a real person rather than a stage character.



Notes

1. Tom Stoppard, Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth (Faber, London, 1980.)
2. Joy Anderson, Poor Mr Shakespeare! (New Plays Quarterly, no.60, pp.2-19)
3. There are several famous examples of plays with Shakespearian resonance. For example, Chekhov's The Seagull and Ibsen's Ghosts both owe something to Hamlet, and Strindberg's The Father is related to Othello. However, the structural similarities are not extensive enough to warrant the term 'adaptation'. Rather, these writers are alluding to the Shakespeare plays as a means of enriching their own.
4. Published in David Pownall, Motocar and Richard III Part Two (Faber, London, 1979.)
5. Although Pownall's play is not an adaptation, it would be foolish to suggest that Shakespeare's play had no influence on it, and indeed it is quite possible that the play was written as a reaction against Shakespeare's version of Richard's life (a version which has been largely disproved by modern historians).
6. Paul Foster, Marcus Brutus (John Calder (Playscript 77), London, 1977.)
7. See Horace White (translator), Appian's Roman History Volume III (Heinemann, London, 1913.) See in particular pp.423-515.
8. The following analysis and description of metaphor has been borrowed from Geoffrey Leech who sets out the method in A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (Longman, London, 1969.) See Chapter 9, pp.147-165.

9. Murray Carlin, Not Now, Sweet Desdemona: A Dialogue for Black and White within the Realm of Shakespeare's "Othello" (Oxford University Press, Nairobi, 1969.)
10. A fuller discussion of this issue can be found in Chapter 8 of this thesis.
11. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.) pp.3-4
12. Christopher Spencer, Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1965.) Introduction p.7
13. Benedict Nightingale, 'Shakespeare is as Shakespeare's done', pp.154-168 in Theatre '71 edited by Sheridan Morley (Hutchinson, London, 1971.) pp.164-165
14. Richard France is one example:  
 Welles's editing and production 'were enough to qualify it as a new work for the theatre.'  
 Richard France, 'Orson Welles's modern dress production of Julius Caesar' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.V,no.19, September - November 1975, pp.55-66.) p.60

## CHAPTER 7: MORE GENERAL APPLICATIONS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter we set out four conditions which an adaptation must fulfil: interpretation of the original text; structural similarity; non-structural proof of source; metaphorical application. We saw these in terms of variant and invariant features, and suggested that an adapter makes alterations for thematic and aesthetic reasons (rather than for pragmatic reasons). In the five preceding chapters we described five distinct categories of adaptation, each category being distinguished by the particular process used to adapt a Shakespeare play. In this chapter the aim is to consider how far this analysis of adaptation, based on post-1956 adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, can be applied to artistic endeavour outside these narrow limits.

The first stage of this attempt at generalisation is to consider plays based on sources other than Shakespeare, in particular, the classical Greek and Roman dramatists. Many writers throughout the ages have been inspired to write their own versions of the classical plays, and writers as diverse as Jean Racine and Robinson Jeffers have written 'reorientations' of the Hippolytus story based on Euripides' Hippolytus and/or Seneca's Phaedra (itself based on Euripides' version). In fact it does appear that adapters of the classics do use the same processes of adaptation as Shakespearian adapters, with choices of context and theme being crucial, and we shall now consider some examples.



## Collage

We should recognise at the outset that this type of adaptation presents special difficulties when the source is not in English. How can we uphold the assertion that most of the language is taken straight from the original (though rearranged) if the original is in Latin or Greek (or French or German) and the adaptation is in English? We are here at the mercy of the translators, and it is difficult to know whether to categorise the translated phrase as 'the original language' or as a 'paraphrase', 'equivalent' or some such other term. Certainly if we are strict, an English collage can be created from an English-language source only. However, non-English plays are presented in this country in translation, so within our own culture at least the translation becomes 'the original play'. This does not have the authority of the play in its original language because translations vary, and so such collages are based on ideas and images rather than specific words. Nevertheless, there is one classical adaptation which should be seen as a collage, and that is Ted Hughes' version of Seneca's Oedipus (1968)<sup>1</sup>.

Hughes' play follows Seneca's very closely in terms of plot development, and the context is the same as Seneca's, but there are significant changes which suggest that this play is an adaptation (not just a translation) and a collage. The aim of the adaptation was, according to Hughes, 'to make a text that would release whatever inner power this story, in its plainest, bluntest form, still has, and to unearth, if we could, the ritual possibilities within it.'<sup>2</sup> Hence actions are seen symbolically so that

the patterns of cause and effect, sin and punishment, can clearly be seen. The most interesting feature of Hughes' play, however, is the language. It appears to have been created by stringing together the key ideas and images in Seneca's text, omitting many of the mythological allusions which would not be understood today. Punctuation is mostly absent, only spacing, and capital letters for proper nouns, being used. The text, consequently, becomes timeless - there are no external references. Despite such alterations, however, the two texts (Seneca's and Hughes') are very similar, as seen in the following two passages, each spoken by Oedipus:

a) Seneca (Act V):<sup>3</sup>

All's done - well done - my father is repaid.  
This darkness is my peace. To what god's mercy  
Owe I this blackness that enshrouds my head?  
By whose decree are all my sins forgiven?

Hughes (Act Five):

all is well      I have corrected all the mistakes  
and my father has been payed what he was owed  
I like this darkness      I wonder which god it is  
that I've finally pleased      which of them has  
forgiven me for all that I did

Other brief pairs of examples taken from throughout the text will show that the above example is typical and not a carefully selected instance:

b) Seneca (Act I): Oedipus

The night is at an end; but dimly yet  
The Lord Sun shows his face - a dull glow rising  
Out of a dusky cloud.



Hughes (Act One): Chorus

night is finished but day is reluctant  
the sun drags itself up out of that filthy cloud

c) Seneca (Act II):

OEDIPUS: What fear could keep you from your pious  
duties?

CREON: Fear of the Sphinx and her dread voice  
of doom.

Hughes (Act Two):

OEDIPUS: what terror could prevent you mourning  
a King

CREON: terror of the sphynx and her threats  
her riddle stupified us

d) Seneca (Act IV):

OEDIPUS: Tell me, how old was Laius at his death?  
Young, lusty, on the day he died - or  
ageing?

JOCASTA: Not old, not young; nearer to age than  
youth.

Hughes (Act Four):

OEDIPUS: Jocasta tell me this when Laius died  
how old was he

JOCASTA: at the end of middle age

It is this similarity of language (in terms of ideas and images) which establishes Hughes' play as a collage - most differences can be accounted for either by differences of translation or by Hughes' rearrangement of language (a typical collage technique).

Another example of a collage adaptation based on classical drama is John Barton's 1980 production The Greeks (Aldwych Theatre, London). Barton and Kenneth Cavander



together have created three plays as a cycle which is based on ten Greek plays by Euripides, Sophocles and Aeschylus. Barton himself has also added some dialogue, specifically in the section portraying the Trojan war.<sup>4</sup> Like Hughes, Cavander concentrated on ideas and images; his brief was to create 'something sharp, terse, no measured statements but rather quick stabs of meaning.'<sup>5</sup> The resulting plays are collages because the original context is maintained and the text derives from the original texts in terms of specific speeches (as opposed to just plot or character relationships), and the restructuring leads to the creation of new meanings. The need to make a coherent narrative out of so much material necessitates emphasis on certain major themes, themes which may not be apparent in individual plays (for example, the moral sensibilities of the women as opposed to either men or gods) at the expense of other, perhaps more personal, themes.

As already suggested, the translation problems preclude many plays from being considered collages and for the most part, where adapters preserve the original context, they create reorientations.

### Cultural transposition

There are no inherent problems (as there are with the collages) in applying this category to translated works, and classical stories, like Shakespeare's stories, have been transposed into different cultures.

The Gods are not to Blame (1968) by Ola Rotimi<sup>6</sup> places the Oedipus story in an African tribe. The plot is very

similar to Sophocles' plot, both being highly political, but the Greek king Oedipus becomes Odewale, the Yoruba king of Kutuje. Other Greek characters have their African equivalents, and the action incorporates the music, mime, chanting and drumming typical of African culture.

One interesting feature of this play is that the new setting is not a modern society, unlike most of the Shakespearian transpositions. In fact, it works in two different ways, according to its audience. Western audiences are aware of the way the adapter has used a Greek story and transposed it into an African context, and this known story gives them access to African folk-history as portrayed in the adaptation. African audiences, on the other hand, who are unaware of the Greek story, adopt Rotimi's characters as part of their own folk-history.

Another example of this type of adaptation is John Bowen's The Disorderly Women (1969)<sup>7</sup> in which Euripides' The Bacchae is transposed to a modern, civilised, democratic country (though still ostensibly Thebes) with departmental secretaries, a welfare state and drug-taking hippies. Bowen has tried to show the conflict between the different desires of man: understanding, power, instinct. Pentheus is far more sympathetic than in Euripides' play; he has created a democratic city in direct contrast to his father's autocratic rule, and his chief motive for spying on the women on the mountain is to understand them. Pentheus, then, represents the understanding of man, and is opposed by Dionysus and the women who follow their instinctive desires. Power resides in the civil servants



who are searching for appropriate laws by which to punish Dionysus and the women. Ultimately, as in Euripides, the uncontrolled instinct prevails over understanding and Pentheus is torn to pieces. In a Foreword to the printed text, Bowen has explained why he chose the hippies to represent the Bacchae:

I needed an equivalent to the Bacchae which should both fit the myth and be recognizably a part of our own world in 1969, and the philosophy of the hippies is private, is interior, is anti-social and anti-logical, and does include an approval of the hallucinatory drugs. (p.14)

This points to the relationship between the classical original and the adaptation - the myth remains the same, but is shown to be relevant to the modern world (even to Britain).

### Domestication

The classical domestication of most significance is a tragedy (unlike the Shakespearian domestications). It is Eugene O'Neill's trilogy Mourning Becomes Electra (1932)<sup>8</sup>, a Freudian tragedy adapted from The Oresteia of Aeschylus. Like other domestications it takes place in, and just outside, the house (only one scene takes place outside the Mannon estate), and political characters become non-political, though they are rich and famous. Ezra Mannon (the modern Agamemnon figure) is about to return from the civil war to his wife, Christine (Clytemnestra), who has a lover, Brant (Aegisthus), and hates her husband. Lavinia (Electra) hates her mother and is convinced, when her father dies, that Christine is



responsible - indeed, she soon finds proof. The story follows Aeschylus with Orin (Orestes) returning and having to be convinced of his duty to kill Brant. Eventually Orin and Lavinia do kill Brant, but unlike Orestes, Orin does not kill his mother - on learning of Brant's death, she kills herself. From this point, O'Neill diverges from Aeschylus for Orin feels guilty of his mother's death and finally, taunted by Lavinia (who grows more like Christine every day) commits suicide. Lavinia realises that a normal life is not for her and she goes into the vast, dark house and shuts herself in - she must expiate the curse on the Mannon family by her suffering. One major change in the play is the introduction of Peter and Hazel who are used to extend the network of personal relationships (typical of domestications). Peter loves Lavinia and Hazel loves Orin, and the development of these relationships provides an illustration of the effect on Lavinia and Orin of the family curse in general and their actions in particular. O'Neill places much more emphasis on the mother's adultery, and proofs of it, than Aeschylus does, for he is interested in the effect this has on Orin - Orin in fact is greatly disturbed by Christine's adultery, and then distressed at her death, feeling that he is responsible. He has obviously been totally dominated by Christine, and the thought of her adultery is abhorrent to him. However, after killing Brant, his earlier love for, and dependence on, his mother reassert themselves, leading to his guilt - Orestes, on the other hand, resists the guilt embodied in the pursuing furies.

This domestication, then, appears to have a far more serious purpose than those based on Shakespeare's plays, but it seems unlikely that there is any fundamental significance in this - O'Neill is just a far better writer with a more serious purpose than, for example, Robin Maugham.

### Reorientation

Of all the classical adaptations which I encountered, the reorientations were by far the most numerous, and possible reasons for this will be discussed later in this chapter. Principally, any adaptation which preserves the original classical context is most likely to be a reorientation. (We have already discussed above reasons for the scarcity of collages.) All the adaptations in this category use the original context and major characters, and many keep very close to the original plot; however, although the situation in the adaptation is consistent with that presented in the classical play, we are shown more of that situation in the adaptation.

It would be tedious and unnecessary to describe many plays in this category, so we shall consider only three.<sup>9</sup> Jean Anouilh's Antigone (1942)<sup>10</sup> covers the same period as Sophocles' play, but the characters are more fully described and developed. The first obvious change is the opening Chorus in which we are told much of the background to the situation, and it is clear from the tone that the audience's knowledge of the final outcome is assumed. (Nevertheless, we are told all we need to know.) This speech also stresses that what we are to see is a play - the actors are about to portray Antigone's story - and



later in the play the Chorus emphasises the inevitability of tragedy. As the play progresses we are shown the major characters in situations not portrayed by Sophocles - Antigone describes her fears to her nurse; Creon tries to explain to Antigone the political necessity for his actions, and also describes the vile nature of Antigone's brothers. There are some plot changes (for example, Creon attempts to conceal Antigone's crime) but these have little effect on the overall development of the action. The play was first produced in Paris in 1942 against a background of war and political manoeuvring, and though the setting of the play owes nothing to this situation, the themes had a particular relevance for society at that time. The Chorus creates a bond with the audience which is shown that the story is not only about the Greeks but about an individual whose self-respect demands that she resists a tyrant. Consequently, Antigone's motivation has changed from wishing to be dutiful to the gods to political resistance.

Just as the Chorus in Anouilh's play frames the action by emphasising that we are watching a play, so Cocteau's The Infernal Machine (1934)<sup>11</sup> employs a framework, created in the first speech, in which the action is seen to portray the machine 'constructed by the infernal gods for the mathematical destruction of a mortal.' (Act I) Consequently we see the rest of the play as a vain attempt by Oedipus to escape his destiny. The play is divided into four acts, and the events of Sophocles' play are crammed into the final act - the previous three acts portray some of the events leading to Oedipus' tragic situation. Act I begins soon after the death of Laius, and Laius'



ghost appears to some soldiers on the ramparts of the castle. He is trying to communicate a warning to Jocasta, about Oedipus, but his powers fail. However, though the other characters do not understand, the audience (knowing the story) does, and the sense of inevitability and doom is reinforced. Act II introduces Oedipus. He has arrived in Thebes determined to conquer the Sphinx, and we see his encounter with this strange creature who first appears as a young girl. Oedipus is brash and confident, and as the Sphinx (relenting because she loves him) tells Oedipus the answer to the riddle, he cannot be given credit for solving that either. In fact, he does not even thank the Sphinx but leaves immediately to report his success and claim his reward - Jocasta and the kingdom. Act III shows Oedipus and Jocasta on their wedding night. There are several omens and warnings suggesting that their marriage is doomed, but they ignore these; Oedipus even boasts about how he has escaped the fate predicted for him by the gods. By now we feel that Oedipus deserves whatever is coming. In Act IV his situation is discovered and his predicted fate fulfilled - the gods have completed their task.

Amphitryon (1929)<sup>12</sup> by Jean Giraudoux is based on Plautus' Amphitryo and, like Cocteau's play, shows some of the action leading to the initial situation of the classical play. Plautus' play opens with Jupiter (disguised as Amphitryo) in bed with Alcmena while Mercury (disguised as Amphitryo's servant Sosia) describes the situation. Giraudoux, however, begins with a lovesick Jupiter longing to look into Alcmena's bedroom (as he could easily do with his divine vision) but at the same time dreading what he

might see. Mercury has no scruples and uses his divine vision, describing to Jupiter what is happening. The central plot follows Plautus, but Giraudoux adds to it by extending Jupiter's activities to a second night of love, this time with everyone's knowledge. We see much preparation, and Alcmena's thoughts on the matter - none of this is in Plautus' version which ends after Alcmena and Amphitryo have accepted Jupiter's perpetration of adultery.

Giraudoux's play contains some beautifully comic scenes, such as when Mercury is adjusting Jupiter's mortal dress, or when Alcmena unfavourably compares her night with Jupiter (assuming he is Amphitryo) with other nights they have shared. Jupiter's pride is wounded but he has now really fallen in love with Alcmena, and wants her to accept him knowingly and willingly. His choice is broadcast, and everyone considers this a great honour for Alcmena except the lady herself who loves her husband and has no wish to commit adultery, even with a god. She tries various machinations to escape the task, including persuading Leda (a previous conquest of Jupiter's) to take her place.

(Unfortunately the two women are too clever, being convinced that the real Amphitryo is Jupiter in disguise, so unwittingly both Alcmena and Amphitryo have committed adultery by the end of the play.) Alcmena is almost resigned to her fate, but when she is alone with Jupiter she manages to persuade him to accept friendship instead of love. In order to keep people happy and preserve the legend, Alcmena and Jupiter appear in public together, but they know that adultery has not taken place (except that Jupiter and the



audience know that it has, though not with Alcmena's knowledge). Alcmena and Amphitryon appear much more noble here than in Plautus' play where characters are far less fully developed. Jupiter is humanised, his 'mortal dress' incorporating mortal feelings as well as appearance. This points to one of the main themes of the play - the differences between human and divine viewpoints; each viewpoint is ridiculed by the way others see them.

It is notable that all these plays concentrate on character development to a far greater extent than the original plays, and this is also typical of the Shakespearian reorientations - if we are shown the missing parts of people's lives, we come to know more about them.

### Transformation

Though I do not claim that my investigation of adaptations of the classics has been at all comprehensive, it has been reasonably extensive. Nevertheless, I have not come across a play which I would term a transformation. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that there are also fewer examples of Shakespearian transformations than of the other categories. The only explanation I can offer is that the category forms a borderline - if adapters want to use another play as a basis for their own, they normally use it more extensively than is typical of the transformations.



We have now indicated that adaptations of classical Greek and Roman plays can be usefully categorised in much the same way as the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. The fact that a play can be fitted into one of these categories implies that it also fulfils the four conditions necessary for an adaptation.<sup>13</sup> Thus the theoretical framework holds so far.

Before progressing further in the main argument we should pause here to consider the implications of a play such as T.S.Eliot's The Cocktail Party (1949)<sup>14</sup>. The story concerns the marriage of Lavinia and Edward, and the efforts of Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, their self-appointed marriage counsellor, to bring them together again after Lavinia has walked out. Eliot maintains that he took his plot from Euripides' Alcestis in which Alcestis dies and then is returned to her husband by Heracles. There is a slight equivalence of situation, but Eliot also maintains that he was determined that the Greek origins should not be detected:<sup>15</sup>

I was still inclined to go to a Greek dramatist for my theme, but I was determined to do so merely as a point of departure, and to conceal the origins so well that nobody would identify them until I pointed them out myself. In this at least I have been successful; for no one of my acquaintance (and no dramatic critics) recognized the source of my play in the Alcestis of Euripides. In fact, I have had to go into detailed explanation to convince them - I mean, of course, those who were familiar with the plot of that play - of the genuineness of the inspiration. But those who were at first disturbed by the eccentric behaviour of my unknown guest, and his apparently intemperate habits and tendency to burst into song, have found some consolation in having their attention called to the behaviour of Heracles in Euripides' play.

Eliot's play differs from all the others which we have considered by not making the origins obvious<sup>16</sup>. This leads us to consider the effect of the source, and of the writer's treatment of the source, on the final play experience.

All the plays which have been studied so far in this thesis are based on well-known plays, and make apparent the existence of such source material. Eliot, on the other hand, though he uses a well-known source, obscures his indebtedness.

Let us first consider the issue of the source play. This play can either be familiar or unfamiliar to an audience. In the case of Shakespeare's plays, or even the plays of the classical dramatists, the writer can assume general familiarity (though obviously in some particular cases this will not be warranted), but this is not always the case. Many of Shakespeare's plays were based on stories which the average Elizabethan playgoer would not be familiar with. The question of degree of familiarity with the source governs the audience's responses to the adaptation, for if they recognise the source spectators can compare and contrast the adaptation with the source - this is not possible where the source is not recognised.

The other issue we are concerned with here is the way the writer treats the source. We have distinguished five processes which the writer can use to change the source, and these apply whether or not the source is familiar i.e. the adaptive processes are the same. Nevertheless, a writer can in addition determine whether to make apparent the use of his source, or to obscure it. Eliot chooses to obscure his use of Euripides<sup>17</sup>, and this produces a very different



theatrical experience from that of the adaptations where the source is apparent. By obscuring the source the audience is forced to respond as if there were no source i.e. as if it were an entirely new play.

The conflict in question, then, is as follows:

- a) If a writer fulfils the four conditions of adaptation (as outlined in Chapter 6) in respect of a source play, whether or not the source play is familiar to the audience, then the resultant play is an adaptation.
- b) If the source play is not apparent to the spectator, either because it is unfamiliar to the audience or because the writer has chosen to suppress evidence of its existence, then he cannot respond as if to an adaptation.

It is clear from this that the audience response of comparison and contrast is possible only where the source is familiar and apparent; in all other cases the audience responds as if to a new play.

This dichotomy forces us to distinguish two types of adaptation, perceived and unperceived. This thesis is principally concerned with perceived adaptations which use the double focus for dramatic effects. Adaptations which remain unperceived until the author reveals and explains his sources have little interest beyond that of any new play whose influences and sources are revealed (whether these be source plays or the writer's personal experiences). Nevertheless, we must classify these plays as adaptations because the same creative, adaptive processes are used as in the perceived adaptations.



We return now to the main theme of this chapter by considering the work of Bertolt Brecht. Brecht spent much time adapting the plays of other writers, including Shakespeare. He wrote radio adaptations of Hamlet and Macbeth, and stage adaptations of Coriolanus and Measure for Measure. The texts of these are not available in English, but there are descriptions in books by Willett and Esslin, and Carlson has published an interview with the Berliner Ensemble about Brecht's version of Coriolanus.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps more interesting is Brecht's The Threepenny Opera (1928)<sup>19</sup> based on John Gay's ballad-opera The Beggar's Opera. Brecht's aim appears to be to show the fragility of personal relationships in times of stress -- expedience (usually in terms of money) governs actions far more than love, loyalty or friendship. Gay's play was set in London's Soho of the early 18th century, and Brecht's version uses the same setting. The plot of Brecht's play follows the original very closely, and there are several verbal correspondences, but we are shown some scenes which Gay only describes (such as the wedding of Polly and Macheath) and some additions to the plot are made. One such addition is the friendship between Macheath and Tiger Brown (the police commissioner). The two men are shown to have a mutual respect, and help one another accordingly. However, during the course of the play, Brown is persuaded by Peachum to arrest Macheath, who sees this as a betrayal. Jenny also betrays Macheath (as in Gay's play) and to emphasise the point, Brecht first shows Mrs Peachum bribing Jenny, and then incorporates a song by Jenny and Macheath in which they reminisce about the good times they

had together. In this way Brecht makes Jenny's betrayal more unforgivable. In Gay's play, Polly sincerely loves Macheath and supports him to the end. This is not so in Brecht's version for by the end she is only simulating grief for Macheath's imminent death. When Macheath was arrested he put Polly in charge of his business (mainly thieving), and she commands the respect of the gang members. However, she plans to run a bank as a means of robbing the public on a large scale (a plan devised by Macheath) and feels that to have a notorious criminal (Macheath) on the board would undermine confidence, so she does all she can to prevent his return. Thus when he needs money to bribe his jailors to allow him to escape, she pretends she cannot acquire any (pleading liquidity problems) and the gang members do the same. They desert Macheath, who has treated them well, because it would be against their financial interests for him to return. All these instances of betrayal (except Jenny's) are added by Brecht to create a far more sordid society than the one shown by Gay, though as the plot (i.e. what actually happens) is not altered (only motivation) the action remains consistent with Gay's. We conclude, therefore, that Brecht's play is a reorientation of Gay's, and despite the ballad-opera form, we can still talk about the plays in the same terms as the other adaptations so far discussed.



The Beggar's Opera incorporates popular songs within the narrative framework, and Brecht adopted the same form. Musical adaptations tend to differ slightly from Brecht's adaptation in that they are often based on situations or plays which have no music; the music becomes a major feature of the adaptation. Despite this, it has little effect on the method of analysis pursued in this thesis. A large number of musicals have been based on Shakespeare's plays. Many of them are trivial entertainments with little of significance added and much lost; many of them merely add songs to the original stage production; some are true adaptations, in the sense used in this thesis. A notable example of a musical which is also an adaptation is West Side Story (1958)<sup>20</sup>. In this musical the antagonism in Verona between the Capulets and Montagues is transposed to gang warfare in New York City between the Sharks (Puerto Ricans) and the Jets (Americans). The adapters use many plot details from Romeo and Juliet: Maria (Puerto Rican) and Tony (American) fall in love at first sight; Maria's brother Bernardo kills Riff (leader of the Jets) in a 'rumble' which Tony has tried to prevent; Tony, incensed, kills Bernardo (cf. Tybalt and Mercutio); Tony learns, mistakenly, that Chino (Maria's Puerto Rican betrothed) has killed Maria; Tony looks for Chino so that he too can be killed, and Chino finds him just as Tony discovers Maria, alive - Tony dies in Maria's arms. The ending differs from Shakespeare in that Maria does not die - she uses the situation to try to unite the two gangs. Thus the plot, characters and themes are based on Shakespeare, but the reference is contemporary, made obvious



by the context and language. We are shown much more of the gangs themselves than in Shakespeare, and gain a fuller understanding of their particular problems than Shakespeare gives of his antagonists (in fact, Shakespeare hardly provides any motivation for the enmity). West Side Story, in the terms of this thesis, can be seen as a cultural transposition - it exhibits all the necessary characteristics (e.g. similar plot, character equivalences, different culture, political, public) and the fact that it is a musical (i.e. song and dance are an integral part of the production) has no effect on the analysis.

One point which is worth emphasising here and elsewhere in the chapter is that the genre is far less important than the adaptive processes in determining whether a work of literature is an adaptation of another story. Thus the song and dance in West Side Story help to determine the genre (musical) but have little effect on the adaptive processes.

So far in this chapter we have considered specific plays adapted from other specific plays, and established that the theoretical framework derived from a study of modern Shakespeare adaptations is a useful way of analysing adaptations in general. We should now take the conclusions a step further. Are plays the only sources which can be adapted? Of course, if the adaptation is for stage presentation the obvious source is another play in as much as the genre then remains unchanged. However, there is no necessity for this. Any story which is generally known can be used as the basis of an adaptation<sup>21</sup>, and such

stories can come from a variety of sources: drama, the Bible, history, legend, myth, fairy tales etc.. The Greek tragedies were based on legend and ancient history; the medieval miracle plays used the Bible; chronicle plays purport to represent history. When analysing such adaptations certain problems may arise, but there is no essential difference between the creative processes of these plays and of the other adaptations discussed in this thesis (though to be considered adaptations the double focus should be used to dramatic effect). The main problem which arises concerns the identity of the source. 'History' is rather wide in its scope; even 'every account of a certain period in history' is too wide for close textual comparison between source and adaptation. Generally, however, this does not really matter. Only collage adaptations become impossible without a specific text as source.

Let us consider Robert Bolt's play A Man for all Seasons (1954). This traces the struggle which Thomas More had with Henry VIII over the question of Henry's divorce. More is the central character; the historical conflict is seen from his point of view (for example, we see him at home with his family); the context is 16th century; characters have the names of historical figures. The play bears all the characteristics of a reorientation - we are shown dramatically another part of a world picture of which we already have some knowledge (our general knowledge of the period) and with which it is consistent. The fact that we have no specific source



with which to compare Bolt's play does not make it any less an adaptation. Of course, when considering this slightly weaker sense of adaptation then the condition specifying 'non-structural proof of source' is not appropriate. History, myth and legend become part of an individual's cultural heritage which, as a writer, he may use without verifying sources and facts. The spectator will have the same heritage (in very broad terms) and will easily differentiate between the generally accepted story and what the writer has contributed.

Not only are the sources of adaptations numerous; the resultant works of art also vary greatly in terms of form. So far we have considered only adaptations which are also plays (though these have included ballad-opera and musical). However, this kind of adaptation process can be employed by any narrative form: drama, novel, film, radio, television.

Let us here briefly deal with one confusion which may arise when discussing different media. One often speaks of 'a novel being adapted for television' or 'a film adaptation of a play'. Usually in such cases the so-called adaptation (which to avoid confusion we shall term 'transference' - from one medium to another) is being made for practical reasons (cf. the stage director). The aim is to provide a version of the original work of literature in the new medium. Alterations are made in method of presentation, but not in the original author's spirit and intention (as far as that can be determined). That is,



no thematic alterations are made. We are not shown Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice transposed to an African tribe, or John Osborne's Look Back in Anger rearranged as a collage. These transferences are generally straight versions of the original literary works, using another medium. However, such transference does not preclude the thematic adaptation discussed in this thesis, and we shall now consider various genres which have used the processes of adaptation here described.

To begin with it should be noted that Bowen's Heil Caesar! was first commissioned for television, and Rubinstein's Shylock's End was first broadcast on radio, so even the adaptations discussed so far are not only stage plays. We have also referred to<sup>22</sup> The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines by M.V.Cowden-Clarke<sup>23</sup> in which the author has written a series of short stories purporting to be accounts of the early lives of such characters as Lady Macbeth and Ophelia. These are reorientations just as much as stage versions of events leading to the action shown in Shakespeare's plays. Staying with adaptations of Shakespeare's plays for the moment, let us consider Akira Kurosawa's film version of Macbeth, The Castle of the Spider's Web (1957)<sup>24</sup>. This is not just a transference to another medium but an adaptation, in fact, a cultural transposition. Characters and context are changed so that the action takes place in ancient Japanese society. Shakespeare's language is not used (even in translation), and in fact there is very little dialogue, the film being highly visual. Characters have status equivalent to their

Shakespearian counterparts (though their names and titles change) and the plot closely follows that of Macbeth, but the references are essentially Japanese. Kurosawa has said:<sup>25</sup>

During the period of civil wars in Japan, there are plenty of incidents like those portrayed in Macbeth. They are called 'ge-koku-jo'.

and Manvell has added a note to this last phrase:<sup>26</sup>

'Ge-koku-jo' means that a retainer murders his lord and deprives him of his power. The age of civil wars, lasting for about one hundred years from the 1460s, is so named, and 'ge-koku-jo' became characteristic of what happened in many areas of Japan.

The parallel with Macbeth is obvious, but we realise that the story has its own roots in Japanese society, not just in Shakespeare. There is, however, one interesting addition to the plot. After Washizu (Macbeth) and Asaji (Lady Macbeth) acquire power, Asaji announces that she is pregnant, but soon after the messenger arrives announcing that Miki (Banquo) is dead and his son has escaped, Asaji's child is born dead. In this way the death of the child and consequent lack of an heir is seen to be a direct punishment for their crimes, and it is just that Miki's heirs instead should later form a dynasty.

Manvell recognises the unique quality of this film, realising that it is not merely a transference:<sup>27</sup>



The Castle of the Spider's Web, therefore, is a transmutation, a distillation of the Macbeth theme, not an adaptation. It is by far the most complete and satisfying of its kind; it is, in fact, unique. It is the work of a man who is a film-maker first and last

Thus the processes of adaptation described in this thesis can be applied to film, and to radio and television too.

We turn now to the novel, for the same method of analysis applies there too. The novel is a narrative form, and so questions concerning plot, character, context and so on still make sense. One adaptation is James Joyce's Ulysses (1922). In this novel Joyce transforms Homer's Ulysses to Leopold Bloom, an Irish Jew wandering through Dublin. Ulysses is essentially a domestication though, unlike the dramatic domestications, it ranges beyond the living-room. However, this is inevitable in a novel, and it does not range beyond Dublin - in this it exhibits a marked contrast to the Odyssey which incorporates a wide variety of places. Also, although characters discuss politics and are aware of political events, they are not caught up in them in the way the characters of the cultural transpositions tend to be. Our interest is focused on the characters' attitudes, not the consequences of their political actions. Thus, as in other domestications, the personality and beliefs of the characters, and their interrelationships, form the central interest. Unlike dramatic characters, they are not compelled to talk before we can understand them



for the novelist can show us a character's thoughts, and Joyce makes considerable use of the interior monologue. S.L. Goldberg writes about the effects of using the Odyssey as a metaphor for Bloom's day, and these effects are very similar to those we have perceived in relation to the Shakespearian adaptations:<sup>28</sup>

The superimposed analogy of the Homeric world thus adds to the material, the range of reference, of the action. It helps define modern values and the particular ways in which the modern individual is related to his society, by offering the contrast with another age, while at the same time it draws our attention to the recurrences and continuities of human experience.

We have noted that sometimes, characters in the domestications perceive a parallel between their own situations and those of the Shakespearian protagonists. Goldberg makes the point that this is not the case in Ulysses where 'the Homeric parallel is outside the characters' consciousness altogether.'<sup>29</sup>

We saw earlier in this chapter that various sources, including history, could be used as the basis for adaptations. Perhaps this should be more fully explained here as the term 'adaptation' is usually applied in cases where there is a literary source. The argument for using, not only literary sources but also other narratives, is that whatever the narrative source, the processes of changing that source into an adaptation will be the same (or within the same narrow range). Any story, including those from history, is subject to interpretation, and the adapter

chooses, for various reasons, the dramatic method of interpretation. To divide those adaptations which are based on literary sources from those which are not is to make an arbitrary division for it obscures the essential similarity of the creative processes involved in superficially different spheres of activity. Consequently we can regard all historical novels as adaptations, usually reorientations. The novelist is constrained by a context and series of events which are already fixed. He may create new characters and events, but these are set within the existing context and are consistent with what is fixed. Robert Graves in I, Claudius (1934) retold part of the history of the Roman Empire from one specific viewpoint, that of the aging Claudius. Our view of the characters is coloured by Claudius' view, and though Graves includes much personal detail which he has obviously invented (in particular, dialogue) it does not contradict the fixed and known historical facts.

It is this interest in historical and biblical figures which creates a large number of reorientations. Much popular literature (novels, and television, radio and film drama) explores the personal life and attitudes of well-known figures whose motivations, thoughts, fears and hopes we can only guess at. All such investigations are reorientations for we see a series of known events from this speculative new viewpoint.

In this chapter we have seen that the framework created in the thesis for analysing adaptations can be applied to a variety of media and genres. What is necessary is that the artistic work under consideration be narrative. Given this we can make the appropriate comparisons of plot, character, context and so on and determine whether the work is an adaptation and, if so, what kind. The media and genres themselves have little direct influence on the issue. In the next chapter we shall examine some of the implications, benefits and problems of adapting.



## Chapter 7: Summary

The aim of the chapter is to determine the extent to which the theoretical framework for analysing adaptations can be applied to other writers, sources, ages, genres and media.

We begin by considering adaptations of the classical Greek and Roman dramas, and though collage adaptations present problems because the sources are non-English, generally the classical adaptations can be categorised in the same way as the Shakespearian adaptations.

The plays of T.S. Eliot, though based on classical stories, tend to obscure the source play so that although Eliot's plays must be classified as adaptations (because they use the same creative processes) they are unperceived adaptations in that they do not employ the techniques of comparison and contrast which the perceived adaptations use.

Brecht's The Threepenny Opera and Sondheim and Laurents' West Side Story are cultural transpositions, suggesting that the introduction of music has little effect on the analysis.

We next consider possible sources for adaptation, for drama is only one of many, others being history, the Bible, myth, legend, fairy tales and so on. Although collage adaptations are not possible without a specific text, other types of adaptation require only a generally accepted story.

Finally we conclude that the adaptations themselves need not be dramatic; provided that they are narrative. Various genres and media can use the same processes of adaptation, notable examples being Kurosawa's film The Castle of the Spider's Web (cultural transposition),

James Joyce's Ulysses (domestication) and Robert Graves'  
I, Claudius (reorientation).

Notes

1. Ted Hughes, Seneca's Oedipus (Faber and Faber, London, 1969.)
2. Introduction to the published text, pp.7-8
3. These passages are from the translation by E.F.Watling, Four Tragedies and Octavia (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966.)
4. Bernard Crick writes:  
  
 No Greek drama covers the seige of Troy itself. So John Barton fills the gap. I don't think Homer should stir. Barton produces a good 40-minute filler, staying close to the blind bard's original story-line. It is dramatically necessary, as is the simple language of Kenneth Cavander's actual translations.  
  
 (Times Higher Education Supplement, 15 February 1980, p.10.)
5. Kenneth Cavander, 'Saturday review: The Greeks' (The Times, 5 January 1980, p.5.)
6. Ola Rotimi, The Gods are not to Blame (Oxford University Press, London, 1971.)
7. John Bowen, The Disorderly Women (Methuen, London, 1969.)
8. Eugene O'Neill, Mourning Becomes Electra (Jonathan Cape, London, 1932.)
9. Examples of other reorientations are given below:
  - a) Robinson Jeffers, The Cretan Woman  
 (in From the Modern Repertoire Series 3 edited by Eric Bentley, Indiana University Press, London, 1956.)
  - b) Jean Racine, Phedre  
 (in The Best Plays of Racine translated by Lacy Lockert, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1964.)



- c) Jean-Paul Sartre, The Flies  
(in Jean-Paul Sartre: Altona, Men Without Shadows, The Flies, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962.)
- d) Wole Soyinka, The Bacchae of Euripides  
(Eyre Methuen, London, 1973.)
- 10. Jean Anouilh, Antigone (Methuen, London, 1960.)
- 11. In Carl Wildman (translator), Jean Cocteau: Orpheus, Oedipus Rex, The Infernal Machine (Oxford University Press, London, 1962.)
- 12. In Roger Gellert (translator), Jean Giraudoux Plays. Volume II (Methuen, London, 1967.)
- 13. To a large extent I am relying on the assurances of the adapters themselves, and on other scholars, when considering the condition specifying non-structural proof of source. Two books of particular help have been the following:
  - a) A.E.Haigh, The Tragic Drama of the Greeks  
(Oxford University Press, London, 1896.)
  - b) Philip Whaley Harsh, A Handbook of Classical Drama  
(Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1944.)
- 14. T.S.Eliot, The Cocktail Party (Faber and Faber, London, 1940.)
- 15. In an essay by Eliot, 'Poetry and drama', in T.S.Eliot, On Poetry and Poets (Faber and Faber, London, 1957.) p.85
- 16. It should be noted that one of Eliot's earlier plays, The Family Reunion (1939), did make obvious its indebtedness to a classical story, in this case, The Eumenides of Aeschylus.

17. Eliot believed that good poets needed to acquire a historic sense, and he describes this in his essay 'Tradition and the individual talent':

the historic sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. As it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.  
(p.14, in Selected Essays by T.S.Eliot, Faber and Faber, London, 1932.)

One manifestation of this historic sense is Eliot's use of Greek drama as a source for his plots, but the mythic effect works on the spectator's unconscious mind and the audience is neither expected nor required to recognise the original source.

18. These descriptions are to be found in two major books about Brecht's work:

a) Martin Esslin, Brecht: A Choice of Evils

(Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1959.)

b) John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht

(Methuen, London, 1959.)

See also Harry G. Carlson, 'Dialogue: Berliner Ensemble'

(The Drama Review, T37, Fall 1967, pp.112-117.)

19. Bertolt Brecht, The Threepenny Opera (Methuen, London, 1973.)

20. Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim, West Side Story (Heinemann, London, 1959.)



21. In fact it is not even necessary that the story be well known for the same creative processes to be used, but if the original story is obscure then the adaptation will be received as if it were a new play; as no comparison between source and adaptation can occur, spectator responses will differ greatly from those elicited where the source is known.
22. See Introduction, p.20, note 19.
23. 3 vols (Dent, London, 1906. orig. pub. 1850-1852)
24. The English title is Throne of Blood.
25. In Roger Manvell, Shakespeare and the Film (Dent, London, 1971.) p.102
26. Manvell, p.113, note 3.
27. Manvell, p.107. In this passage Manvell uses the term 'adaptation' in the sense that I would use 'transference'. Manvell also makes the point that Shakespeare films made in the English language are somewhat limited by the need to use Shakespeare's language. He suggests that non-English films have more freedom to experiment with different ways of presenting the essential meaning of the Shakespeare play.
28. S.L.Goldberg, The Classical Temper: A Study of James Joyce's "Ulysses" (Chatto and Windus, London, 1961.) p.151
29. Goldberg, pp.151-152



## CHAPTER 8: CONTEXTUAL AND EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR ADAPTATIONS

This final chapter has three main tasks:

1. To place the modern Shakespeare adaptations within their theatrical and political contexts, with a view to explaining their existence and their form.
2. To examine the validity of the practice of adaptation, reviewing the wide range of opinion on the topic.
3. To establish criteria by which we can evaluate individual adaptations.

We begin with the contextual framework, and as a preliminary we should consider the chronology of the adaptations which we have studied.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Type</u>
1955	Instruments of Darkness	reorientation
	Juliet in Mantua <sup>1</sup>	reorientation
1956	Mister Lear	domestication
	Romanoff and Juliet	transformation
1957	Cato's Daughter	reorientation
1958	Return to Dane's Hill	domestication
	The Hamlet of Stepney Green	domestication
	Cue for Passion	domestication
	Mistress Bottom's Dream	reorientation
1963	The Wars of the Roses	collage
1964	<i>17th of August</i>	<i>collage</i>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Type</u>
1965	The Marowitz Hamlet	collage
1966	MacBird!	transposition
	A Play for Prospero	collage
1967	Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead	reorientation
1968	William Shakespeare's 'Naked' Hamlet	collage
1969	A Macbeth	collage
1970	Shylock's End	reorientation
1971	Hamlet ESP	collage
	Lear	transformation
1972	An Othello	collage
	Measure for Measure (Brenton)	transposition
1973	A Place Calling Itself Rome	transposition
	The Shrew	collage
1974	Heil Caesar!	transposition
	Dick Deterred	transposition
	Samlet	transposition
	King John	collage
1975	Measure for Measure (Marowitz)	collage
1976	The Merchant <sup>2</sup>	reorientation
1977	Ophelia	reorientation

Two significant facts are immediately apparent from this table:

1. Most obvious is the gap of six years, from 1959 to 1964, when only Barton's The Wars of the Roses (1963) was produced. This is significant given that adaptations appeared in every other year from 1955 to 1977. We shall refer to this six-year period as the 'watershed'.

2. Before the watershed, only domestications and reorientations were written (there are not enough transformations to generalise about, so these will be ignored); after the watershed, collages and transpositions dominate, and though again there are some reorientations, there are no domestications.

These facts raise two immediate questions:

1. Why does the watershed exist? (i.e. what circumstances were discouraging the practice of dramatic adaptation?)
2. Why does the type of adaptation change after the watershed? (i.e. by which new forces were writers being influenced?)

Though each of these questions refers to a different time, the issues are so intertwined that it is impossible to keep them completely separate in the discussion which follows.

Let us begin, however, with a consideration of the reasons for the watershed. If we look at the adaptations which preceded this period we find that not only are they domestications and reorientations, but they are also naturalistic and middle-class. They show members of polite society talking rationally about their problems in middle-class surroundings.<sup>3</sup> Only in Wood's one-act plays is there a real sense of impending doom - in the other plays we sense correctly that there will be a comfortable ending.<sup>4</sup> However, playwrights began to be dissatisfied with comfortable conclusions for this did not fit in with their view of their changing environment. In consequence



they rejected the naturalistic, middle-class methods of adaptation, but failed, in the short term, to put anything in its place. Instead, other dramatic forms were experimented with, for new young playwrights were being greatly encouraged in the British theatre at that time (1956 - 1962).<sup>5</sup>

Writers like Pinter, Osborne, Wesker, Arden, Behan, Orton, Shaffer and Bolt all first came to the notice of the general public in this period, and only later did some of them turn to Shakespearian adaptation.

To summarise, then, the adaptations written in the years 1955-1958 tended to be outworn forms, and in the revitalised theatrical climate writers tended not to use Shakespeare's plays as frameworks for their own, possibly because Shakespeare was regarded as part of the bourgeois high culture which these writers were rejecting.

Except for The Wars of the Roses, the next Shakespearian adaptation to appear was Marowitz's first collage in 1965. This was a complete change of style for Shakespearian adaptations, and was followed by other collages, transpositions and non-realistic reorientations. These plays were stylised and episodic, often involving rapid and frequent changes of location. The reasons for this change of style can be largely accounted for by the changing theatrical climate, which we shall now examine.

There were four main influences on this climate: the theatre of the absurd, Brecht, Artaud and Kott. In 1955, Beckett's Waiting for Godot was presented at the Arts theatre club, becoming a commercial success, and in 1956 Ionesco's plays The Bald Prima Donna and The New Tenant also achieved success there<sup>6</sup>. These are examples

of what later became known as Theatre of the Absurd, a genre in which the absurdity of the human condition is exposed, often raising existential issues. 1956 was further remarkable, not only for the emergence of Osborne's Look Back in Anger, but also for the first visit to London of the Berliner Ensemble which introduced Brecht's work (in German) to the British public. The plays made a great impact<sup>7</sup>; in particular, the company's stage design, lighting and use of music became an important influence on subsequent British productions. Brook's Lear (1962) with Paul Scofield was Brechtian in decor and acting style, and John Bury (designer of Barton's The Wars of the Roses (1963)) was also influenced by the German company's use of texture in stage design. Writers, though little influenced by the themes of Brecht's plays, did begin to incorporate his staging and acting techniques into their own work, resulting in such plays as Arden's Serjeant Musgrave's Dance (1959), Bolt's A Man for all Seasons (1960), Osborne's Luther (1961), Whiting's The Devils (1961) and Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun (1964). Joan Littlewood was influenced not only by the acting and decor but also by the use of music, resulting in several plays with songs including Behan's The Hostage (1959).

We can see, then, that the Brechtian influence really took hold during the years of the watershed, and this affected the style of the adaptations which later appeared. There were, however, other influences at large, notably the growing interest in the ideas of Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty. Artaud did most of his writing during the 1920s and 1930s, but his book of essays,



The Theatre and its Double, was not published until much later. An American translation emerged in 1958<sup>8</sup>, and in late 1963 Peter Brook and Charles Marowitz formed a group of actors to explore Artaud's ideas<sup>9</sup>. Several theatrical pieces resulted from this in 1964, notably Peter Weiss's play Marat/Sade and, of particular relevance, The Marowitz Hamlet (the original 28-minute version). Artaud's concept of 'cruelty' as a dramatic force appealed to writers who would also be influenced by the ideas of Jan Kott.

Kott's collection of essays, Shakespeare Our Contemporary<sup>10</sup>, was published in Britain in 1965. Kott takes a very dark view of Shakespeare's plays, concentrating on the cyclical nature of the power struggle, the erosion of moral order, animal lust, the decay brought about by time, Shakespeare's disgust of nature and the universal cruelty of the world. In this way Kott made apparent the contemporary appeal and relevance of Shakespeare's plays to this uncomfortable modern world, and so paved the way for a new series of adaptations; thus Kott's criticism reflected the change in world view which was then further manifested in the adaptations.

We can see, therefore, that there are several different spheres of influence in operation at this time. Brecht's productions contributed most in terms of style and technique while Artaud's ideas were concerned with interpretation of themes and world view; Kott, though similar to Artaud in some ways, was more academic in his application of such ideas to Shakespeare's plays in particular. Taken together these account, at least in part, for the epic, stylised, symbolic, cynical plays which were written.



Let us now take a closer look at the changing world view which seems to have accompanied the changing theatrical climate. In the adaptations which were written before the watershed, traditional values were still asserted: loyalty, honesty, love, honour, faithfulness, tolerance and forgiveness all bring the highest personal rewards and govern the conduct of the characters as they inhabit their small, enclosed communities. The post-watershed adaptations look out into the world, and find little comfort there. Uncertainty pervades these plays in a variety of different ways, in relation to many spheres of our existence - religious, moral, political, psychological. We shall now examine this more closely.

In the post-watershed adaptations there is no affirmation of God's existence, and man fails or succeeds by his own efforts. Bond is specific about this when his Lear says:

If God had made the world, might would always be right, that would be so wise, we'd be spared so much suffering. But we made the world - out of our smallness and weakness.  
(III,3,p.84)

Man must therefore take responsibility for his actions. Moreover, even within the world there are few certainties left. The monarch no longer acquires his authority from God, so other origins of power are sought - violence and democracy. Bowen's Brutus tries to establish a democracy, but uses violence as a means to this end; Barton's Edward IV acquires power through war; Bond's characters all see violence as the only means of survival - kill or be killed. But

violence is self-perpetuating, and further excuses for torture and bloodshed are always found. The other sanction of power is democracy, the will of the people, but this fares little better in the adaptations, for those people elected to power are shown to misuse their position.

Dick Deterred (1974) and MacBird! (1966) both show corrupt leaders of a democracy, and Brenton's Measure for Measure (1972) also illustrates the misuse of power (though the political structure is unclear - the Duke gives Angelo the power). Osborne's play, A Place Calling Itself Rome (1973), also set in a democracy, exposes the 'public relations' aspect of political life: appeasement, conciliation, fair words are all required in order to please the fickle public, and this can lead to the deception, scheming and corruption at which Richard III (of Barton's play) is so expert.

So, divine right is no longer applicable; violence is destructive and self-perpetuating; democracy is violated by corruption and misuse. What can we trust? Are there any values which are generally upheld? It would appear not. Even justice is no longer an ultimate goal: in Ophelia (1977), Taylor shows how some unjust acts (e.g. killing the sheriff and his wife) are politically necessary, and Marowitz too (in Measure for Measure (1975)) seems to be exploring the same theme. By substituting 'political necessity' for love, truth, justice and other such humane values, the adapters are advocating survival values rather than quality-of-existence values. Consequently there are few rules governing personal conduct which are valid for all persons in all circumstances;



there is no recognised absolute morality. This can lead to tolerance and understanding, judging each case on its merits, but it also leads to anarchy and the right of the individual to say of his actions (whatever they are): for me it was a good thing to do. Such an attitude, generally held, would soon lead to the disintegration of society.

Religious, political and moral uncertainty are manifested in social terms; we can also, however, be uncertain about the validity of our perceptions. The parts of the collages which attempt to portray the workings of the mind (e.g. in Hamlet ESP (1971), An Othello (1972), A Macbeth (1969)) show exactly what the individual is perceiving at a given moment and, knowing Shakespeare's play, we can contrast this with the objective reality - the two are not always the same. We can know what our perceptions are, but we cannot necessarily give them credence (and when Othello does trust them he is destroyed).

The post-watershed adaptations portray, then, an uncertain world. The following list of words gives an impression of the significance we attribute to certainty: balance, conformity, continuity, convention, expectation, invariability, law, normality, predictability, regularity, routine, stability, standard, status quo. Without expectations and standards we become disorientated, and our aims have little chance of fulfilment; this view of life as futile encourages the adapters to explore the whole question of existence (e.g. Stoppard (1967), Barton in King John (1974)). They suggest at times that if the



only certain thing is death, there is little point in attempting anything else.

We have established that there was a watershed, after which the style and content of adaptations was significantly different from earlier adaptations. This difference stems from the increasing<sup>in</sup> security experienced by the adapters, and we shall now consider why this happened during the period 1959-1964.

The reasons behind this increased uncertainty of individuals were largely political and economic. By the end of the Second World War, Britain no longer had sufficient finances to be a world power, mainly as a result of the declining industry<sup>11</sup>. Power was wielded instead principally by America and Russia:<sup>12</sup>

In the end it was two largely extra-European Powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, continental in extent, gigantic in population and resources, which sealed the Allied victory and then faced each other as the chief states of the day.

The British people took a long time to find and adjust to a new role in which they no longer had an Empire, and where they could not command the military strength to carry out their policies alone. It was during the late 1950s and early 1960s that the declining significance of Britain's world role became obvious: the Suez crisis of 1956 made apparent Britain's lack of military strength<sup>13</sup>; after Ghana's independence in 1958, the Empire quickly broke up<sup>14</sup>; in 1962 the Cuba missile crisis arose and was resolved between America and Russia, and the rest of the

world including Britain could do little more than observe and speculate on their fate<sup>15</sup>. This searching for a new role for Britain created a general uncertainty among the people, and this was emphasised by the overall context of the nuclear threat. By 1962 Britain had bought four Polaris submarines from America, and so though the country was a nuclear power, it was heavily dependent on America which had acquired a British base from which Moscow could be reached.<sup>16</sup> The Cuba missile crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war, and the reality of the nuclear threat became apparent. Consequently people were not only uncertain about their national status but also about their very existence, for whole cities could now be demolished at the press of a button. If politicians could destroy the world it is necessary that they should be seen to be responsible, but the adaptations show how many may abuse their power, and this may add to our feeling of insecurity.

For all these reasons, then, the watershed period saw a change in people's attitudes, a change which manifested itself in the type of adaptations which were written in the following years.

We have now indicated some of the factors which are likely to have contributed to the existence of the watershed and the change in the type of adaptation.

However, one further question demands an answer:

3. Why, in 1965, did writers again turn to Shakespeare's plays as frameworks for their own?



There is no easy answer to this, and I merely put forward some suggestions:

- a) Shakespearian productions were becoming increasingly prevalent and influential

The Royal Shakespeare Company, under the direction of Peter Hall, was becoming increasingly successful and therefore influential. Interesting productions of Shakespeare's plays were being staged regularly, at both Stratford and London, and also in the new provincial repertory theatres. An increased interest in Shakespeare's plays was thus being created, and writers could use this interest and knowledge for their own purposes in the adaptations. Unlike the Restoration adapters, they did not want to improve, and therefore replace, the Shakespeare plays, but rather place their adaptations alongside Shakespeare's plays.

- b) Self-conscious interest in the theatrical process led to the plundering of theatrical resources

Writers were becoming interested in the nature of the theatrical experience, and one way of investigating this was to use theatrical resources such as well-known plays. As interest in Shakespeare's plays was being generated, writers could assume a general knowledge of the stories and major characters. They could count on these being recognised, even in experimental forms, and Shakespearian associations would constitute the features which a spectator could immediately grasp, even if other features were muddled, meaningless or obscure. The double focus can then be used to thematic advantage.



c) Shakespeare was being increasingly regarded as a contemporary writer

After the Shakespearian criticism of Kott, writers began to regard Shakespeare's plays as having much to tell us about the world in which we live. This was particularly true of politically-conscious writers. By the mid-1960s, the innovations made by Osborne, Pinter and their contemporaries had become established and accepted, and the next generation of writers, a very politically-aware generation, was looking around for new ways of expressing its (mainly political) themes. Walter Laqueur emphasises this, referring to Osborne's generation as 'angry young men':<sup>17</sup>

Most of the angry young men subsequently made their peace with the world but the still younger generation, those who appeared on the scene after them, adopted radicalism with a vengeance. They put themselves into deliberate opposition to the unpolitical fifties; for them the 'end of ideology' was over. They were unhappy about Britain's internal crisis, shocked by the nuclear threat, by Rhodesia, Greece and Vietnam. Their protest manifested itself in demonstrations against the government of the day, and, on a different level, in a flowering of satire in the theatre, television, and the press.

Satire, parody and travesty are closely related forms often used for political effects, and adaptation can employ the same kind of techniques. Shakespeare's plots are often highly political, and the structures change so much from play to play that there is usually one to fit a contemporary situation. For this reason, writers turned to the canon of Shakespeare plays for their plots; Shakespeare's interests reflected their own.

- d) Shakespeare portrays an ordered world which provides a dramatic contrast with the insecure world portrayed by modern adapters

In Shakespeare's society, the individual's view of the world was in terms of order, hierarchy, the chain of being, corresponding planes of existence and so on<sup>18</sup>. Each object, animate and inanimate, existed in a certain fixed relation to all the others; each person had a place in the social hierarchy, with the King (or Queen) at the top. Man was important because he was the link between God and animals (possessing not only the animal faculties of existence, life and feeling but also the divine faculty of understanding); this was accentuated by the Elizabethans' belief in the Ptolemaic, earth-centred view of the universe. These assumptions and certainties governed the individual's view of the world, and the adapter can expose our contemporary insecurity by forcing the spectator to contrast these two societies.

For these, and possibly other, reasons, Shakespearian adaptation again became popular in the mid-1960s, and soon afterwards the debate began concerning the legitimacy of adapting Shakespeare's plays. This debate is often confused and confusing because no one is very clear as to what constitutes an adaptation and what standards it should be judged by. We shall now try to clarify these topics.



Critics and directors of modern Shakespeare productions may be divided into two types:

- a) those who wish to see Shakespeare's plays in conditions approximating as closely as possible to the circumstances of their original production;
- b) those whose primary concern is to expose and emphasise the contemporary relevance of various aspects of Shakespeare's plays.

These views constitute two extremes of a spectrum of opinion, but nevertheless the dichotomy is a real one. Productions conforming to (a) are necessarily interpretations; productions conforming to (b) may be interpretations (particularly if the text remains unaltered) or may be adaptations. Critical confusion arises when adaptations are evaluated as if they were interpretations - the objectives of each kind of production are different and this should be recognised.

Let us, then, review some of these extreme views in an attempt to discern where confusion arises.

Margaret Webster concentrates on the contextual aspect of the production (i.e. the setting), and scorns the need of making Shakespeare meaningful.<sup>19</sup>

... we shall not have to dress Hotspur in the uniform of the I.R.A. in order to invest him with life; we shall not be both our author and our audience in supposing that we can only be dragged into accord by distorting the plays to the image of General Franco; slyly suggesting that there have been abdications of the English throne more recent than that of Richard II; or shouting with gleeful shouts that Enobarbus is an early Adolf Hitler. The truth of the plays is not in their external circumstances, and the similarity of external circumstances no more than a fortuitous, though poignant, reminder that the returning paths of the world have been trodden by many feet.



The next two critics also consider that to use modern dress for Shakespeare's plays is absurd, because it is incongruous with Shakespeare's language. W.Bridges-Adams stresses the incongruity between modern dress and grand gestures which go with grand lines, suggesting that the text would also have to be rewritten.<sup>20</sup> Herbert Farjeon agrees:<sup>21</sup>

Human nature may remain constant, but manners and customs and habits of thought change with history.

He is making the point that Shakespeare's language permeates his play with the values and assumptions of the Elizabethan world, and to keep this language while changing the period is absurd and anachronistic. In fact, these two comments support the case for adaptation where textual alteration does take place - interpretations, of course, all use Shakespeare's language. Benedict Nightingale cites a specific interpretative reason why a non-Shakespearian context should not be used:<sup>22</sup>

... the effects of selecting a very particular period as milieu is to give the social mores of that period inevitable, unnatural emphasis and so limit the meaning (and relevance) of the play.

It is clear from these quotations that the critics want to see Shakespeare plays presented straight, with the spectators making their own perceptions as to the relevance of what they see. According to this view, seeing Shakespeare's (or anyone else's) plays straight also means being presented with only the original author's words.

Bernard Levin is very scornful of the textual alterations made by Peter Barnes to Jonson's Volpone:<sup>23</sup>

[The play was] marred by feeble concessions to the groundlings, modern words being substituted for many of Jonson's ancient ones in case somebody in the audience might otherwise be obliged to think.

It is here, however, that the issue becomes blurred because most eminent critics, whichever view they take, would acknowledge that in many cases some degree of textual alteration is necessary. Here are some examples:

a) Trevor Nunn<sup>24</sup>

When you approach the text of Hamlet, the cutting virtually is the production. What you decide to leave in is your version of the play.

b) Kenneth Muir<sup>25</sup>

I don't object to cuts of passages which a modern audience would not understand and of passages which are no longer necessary (e.g. because they apply only to the conditions of the Elizabethan stage).

c) Peter Barnes (of his version of The Devil is an Ass)<sup>26</sup>

Adapting an old play is much like restoring an old painting. Time renders certain areas opaque, and words, like protective varnish, go dead... These obsolete words have to be replaced by others of equal precision, beauty and force, but whose meaning is clear. The opaque areas have to be cut or retouched. I have added certain speeches and scenes in the interest of clarity ... The only question to ask is, is it true to the original, and is it theatrically alive?



A warning, however, is sounded by Stanley Wells who makes the point that though one may begin by having perfectly good pragmatic reasons for textual alterations, those alterations may become increasingly extensive while reasons become less convincing:<sup>27</sup>

The door to textual adaptation is opened by sheer theatrical necessity...

Once textual adaptation has started, it is likely to spread till it extends far beyond anything that may be justified on purely practical grounds. There may be good reasons for omitting passages of topical reference, or ones that are textually corrupt. There may be good commercial, if not artistic, reasons for omitting passages that are difficult to understand, or that seem dated (such as some of the elaborate word-play in the earlier comedies), or that demand resources beyond those of a particular theatre ... Gradually reasons dwindle into excuses. Some of the plays are exceptionally long. The last train leaves at half-past-ten, so another two hundred lines must be sacrificed. Various kinds of censorship may operate.

Most critics, then, will condone a small degree of textual alteration (principally cutting) for pragmatic reasons.

However, the 'contemporary relevance' school goes further and allows alterations in the text for interpretative reasons:

a) Jonathan Miller<sup>28</sup>

Each generation tends to regard certain lines as the crucial ones, but that is because that generation has decided to focus upon one particular plane of interest or meaning within the play, and within that plane certain lines obviously assume a dazzling precedence. Another generation will focus on another plane within which a different set of lines will assume a precedence.



b) Peter Hall<sup>29</sup>

When I or anybody else abuse a text, it's not abused for ever, like painting out a chunk of the Mona Lisa. I think we're perfectly at liberty to do it ... the text is still there when we've finished.

In addition, as Wells points out, the effect of pragmatic alterations is also, to some degree, interpretative:<sup>30</sup>

It is not easy to distinguish between cuts made for practical reasons, and ones made with interpretative intent; nor to discern the interpretative effect of omissions made for no other than practical reasons. Inevitably omissions reduce a play's potential complexity.

It is in this way that the issue becomes blurred for the Shakespeare purists can argue that specific pragmatic alterations should not have been made because the meaning is changed.

Other commentators have noted that, just as a certain degree of textual alteration is usually necessary, so a certain amount of contemporary relevance is inevitable in any modern production:

a) Peter Brook<sup>31</sup>

... however hard a producer or a designer may strive to mount a classic with complete objectivity, he can never avoid reflecting a second period - the one in which he works and lives ...

b) John Gielgud<sup>32</sup>

The world goes so fast that at each decade there is a sort of different note in the air. One must find it. When the actor has found it, he reinterprets the text.

c) Benedict Nightingale<sup>33</sup>

A director is always going to have to impose some more or less controversial shape on any given work -- and should we not rejoice if he chooses one that also embodies, or at least reflects, concerns that are close to our experience, perhaps even our own everyday lives? That are, in the approved expression, 'relevant'? We should indeed.

d) Paul Siegel<sup>34</sup>

It is true that every age has its own angle of vision as well as its own mode of analysis in interpreting Shakespeare ... Different angles of vision reveal new patterns hitherto only partially or dimly perceived ...

At the extreme end of our spectrum we have those critics who do not rely on the inevitability of a contemporary portrayal but who prefer a more positive approach, an approach in which new forms are created:

a) Antonin Artaud<sup>35</sup>

Masterpieces of the past are good for the past: they are not good for us. We have the right to say what has been said and even what has not been said in a way that belongs to us, a way that is immediate and direct, corresponding to present modes of feeling, and understandable to everyone.

b) Charles Marowitz<sup>36</sup>

A collage technique, for good or ill, is an attempt to capture the rhythm of our age.



c) John Ahart<sup>37</sup>

In all the years since Shakespeare wrote Macbeth there has been no impact on the drama so profound as that of motion pictures and television ...

In Another Macbeth we built a play on the fact that today no significant event is seen only once. If it is of consequence it is filmed and broadcast and usually repeated ... It is commented on, analyzed, researched and made the subject of special broadcasts ...

One of the basic assumptions about our audience and the theme of the play was that ... we have developed an immunity to the reality of killing. Constant exposure to regular violence through media reportings has resulted in killing and death becoming a kind of half-experience which often remains only a partial reality even when we are participants in a real-life act of violence. The effect of our production depended on challenging these views.

It is this positive approach which leads to the adaptations.

It appears, then, that contemporary relevance and textual alteration are inevitable features of any modern Shakespeare production, and an evaluation of any such production must take into account the degree to which these features are present, the manifestation of these features and the objectives of the production. For example, if the objective is to present Shakespeare's play, then Shakespeare's language will be used and there will be restrictions on how far the text and context can be altered in order to emphasise the contemporary relevance of the play. (Precise criteria for interpretations are beyond the scope of this thesis.) On the other hand, if the objective is to adapt Shakespeare's play, and encourage comparison between the adaptation and the adapted play, then there are fewer (if any) restrictions on textual and contextual alterations.



One of the main problems to date has been the failure of some critics to realise that they are judging adaptations as if they were interpretations; they have been using the wrong criteria. A corollary of this approach is that the adapted play is held up as a standard of dramatic excellence by which the adaptation should be judged. For example, Kenneth Muir comments:<sup>38</sup>

I don't even object on principle to adapting the plays, provided that the adaptation is more effective than the original. But when we look at the adaptations of previous centuries (even Dryden's) it is obvious that they have so far been inferior to the originals; and it is rather improbable that where Dryden failed a modern producer will succeed.

Such comments completely miss the point. The adaptation should not be judged by comparing it qualitatively with the play Shakespeare wrote. We accept (generally) that Shakespeare is the greatest playwright and cannot expect others to equal his achievement. The adaptation is an autonomous (though derived) work of art, and must be judged by the standards of any new play embodying its own themes and values, although as an adaptation it may be required to fulfil other criteria in addition. This point (the autonomous values of the adaptation) has been made by several critics. Brian Parker<sup>39</sup> suggests that when past art is used for modern purposes the process should not be parasitic but recreative, with extensive rewriting, and John Weightman<sup>40</sup> stresses that reliance on the source of a play to give it value is not good enough - the value should lie in the new 'autonomous creation' which embodies new values.

Here are some other comments:

a) Stanley Wells<sup>41</sup>

As a rule, the more drastic the adaptation, the more easily we will be able to accept it in its own right. Indeed, the more likely it is to have validity in its own right - to be a transmutation of the original; a distinct if indebted creation ... The adaptation does not need to be better than the original. But it needs to have its own form, its own *raison d'être*.

b) Robert Brustein<sup>42</sup>

If new values are not unearthed by a new approach, then the whole effort is worthless; and if these new values are merely eccentric or irresponsible, then it is careerism rather than art that has been served.

c) John Barber<sup>43</sup>

... such reworkings of classic texts are justified only when fresh values are created. They must not recall Rossini's comment on a tyro's composition: "There is much here that is new and valuable. But what is valuable is not new, and what is new is not valuable."

d) Frank W Wadsworth<sup>44</sup>

There is nothing wrong with adapting a classic, or even in going further and merely "basing" one's own effort on a classic. But the result will have to carry its own weight and not expect to hobble along on the achievement of the original author.

e) Eric Salmon (of The Marowitz Hamlet)<sup>45</sup>

But it is as an original work, a new play, that The Marowitz Hamlet must stand or fall, not as a piece of dramatised dramatic criticism. It must establish, transmit, illuminate and make vivid its own sense of the world ... It must have a recognisable posture, entity, persona whose relation to reality is perceivable.



It would appear, then, that although comparison with the original classic is usually necessary for the full significance of the adaptation to be appreciated, it is not valid to compare the two texts qualitatively. Rather, the adaptation should be approached with the same lack of prejudice which accompanies any new play.

If we are to judge an adaptation as a new play, it follows that we must be able to perceive that a given play is an adaptation, not an interpretation, before we can judge it. We have here outlined ways of distinguishing adaptations but in some cases (e.g. Barton's plays) close textual study is needed, or at least familiarity with Shakespeare's text. This is not always instantly available to a spectator who may not perceive that the original classic has in fact been adapted. Consequently his theatrical experience will differ from that aimed at by the adapter. It is in these less obvious cases of adaptation that some indication, external to the play, is required explaining what has been done to the classic:

a) Stanley Wells<sup>46</sup>

It seems to me that we have a right to expect producers to be honest about what they have done. We cannot expect every theatre programme to list each cut that has been made; but if major alterations have been made, and especially if they have been made with the intention of 'slanting' the play in a particular direction, we should be told so.

b) Benedict Nightingale<sup>47</sup> (in reference to obvious adaptations)

There is no pretence that anyone is actually witnessing a play by Shakespeare. It is only when this pretence is indeed a pretence that there can be strong grounds for objection;



Margaret Webster is not content with these criteria (i.e. perceiving the play as an adaptation and judging accordingly in its own right). She makes a distinction between adapting for the stage and for another medium:<sup>48</sup>

Even in the theater there are still producers and directors who appear to think that they can easily improve on Shakespeare. Many of our critics have no compunction about encouraging this, as it seems to me, enviable but naive notion ...

... It is, surely, perfectly legitimate to take Shakespeare's librettos, most of which he himself lifted from somebody else in the first place, and translate them into another medium, whether into opera, as Verdi did in *OTELLO*, or into musical comedy like the highly entertaining *KISS ME KATE*. But if we are pretending to play Shakespeare in the medium for which he himself wrote, it appears to me neither sensible nor honest to substitute our notions for his on the assumption that we know his job better than he did or that our audiences are too stupid to know a fine play when they see one.

This passage of commentary is very confused. Webster is perfectly ready to accept adaptations into another medium and enjoy them on their own terms, and it is surely sentimental to feel that the same process for stage presentation somehow desecrates Shakespeare's position. She also appears to assume that stage adaptations are dishonest, but this is rarely (and, as we have seen, should never be) the case. There seems no reason why we cannot accept stage adaptations of Shakespeare's plays on their own terms. Her final comments suggest that she sees the adaptations replacing Shakespeare's plays, but as this thesis has shown they are today written to appear alongside the original, not instead of it.

This problem of 'honesty' raises a question which has already been suggested in Chapter 4 (p.268). If the adaptations are, to a greater or lesser degree, interpretations of the adapted plays, how far can the accepted interpretations of those plays be distorted? If Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are normally seen as calculating time-servers, is it dishonest to Shakespeare's play to portray them as genial, confused cogs in a wheel? In absolute terms the charge of dishonesty cannot really be upheld because the Shakespearian text itself is always available for those who wish to know exactly what the Bard said. However, it is worth making the point that if the interpretation of the Shakespeare play presented in the adaptation has little support from the Shakespeare text, then the point of using the process of adaptation is greatly reduced and consequently the effectiveness of the adaptation itself is diminished.

Given that we are faced with a perceived adaptation and that we are prepared to judge it on its own terms and as a play in its own right, are there any further criteria for judging the excellence of an adaptation? We have already seen that the creation of fresh values is necessary, but this is true of any new play. There are five other general criteria which have been cited by various commentators:

1. The adaptation should preserve, as far as possible, the language of the original text.

a) Guido Almansi<sup>49</sup> seems to suggest (though he is not explicit) that Marowitz's adaptations are superior because they use only Shakespeare's lines.



b) Gareth Lloyd Evans<sup>50</sup> lists the 20th century versions of Macbeth which have drastically interfered with the text, and asserts that they have all been unfavourably received because of "the depredations inflicted on the poetry."

2. Related to (1) is the anachronism between Shakespeare's language and modern dress - a good adaptation should be contextually consistent. (See comments above by Bridges-Adams and Farjeon, p.416.)
3. The plot/character equivalence between the Shakespeare play and the adaptation should be extensive and significant.

a) Charles Marowitz:<sup>51</sup>

For about three hundred years now, actors and producers have been using Hamlet to tell other stories. The stories have always been based on and filtered through Shakespeare's, but they have differed widely. The successful ones have been those where the kernel of the 'new story' has been contained in the original play; the unsuccessful ones, where one story has been arbitrarily laid upon the other... The producer then has two alternatives; either he finds a story that can be told through the original, or he fiddles about with the original in order to make it fit the story he wants to tell. (I personally believe both courses to be legitimate and that today distortion is simply another tool available to the artist.)

b) Paul Siegel:<sup>52</sup>

... the critic has to look steadily at the dramas to make sure that he is not imposing a pattern on them that is not there.



- c) Robert Brustein<sup>53</sup> condemns the superficial, 'jollyng up' approach to Shakespeare's plays, and praises Brecht for his method:

... what Brecht proved through his own example was the possibility of refreshing the past by fortifying it with a new vision, the possibility of rejuvenating a classical idea by discovering for it a strong modern equivalent.

4. The adapter purporting to have social and political ideals should use his factual material responsibly. Richard Gilman<sup>54</sup> criticises Garson both for presenting pure fiction as truth (because she was 'stuck' with the plot of Macbeth) and for her lack of moral commitment to her work:

"I can assure you," she told an interviewer, "I didn't write a play that made me suffer ... I didn't disturb myself in the least. It was easy."

5. The adaptation should work theatrically. Judith Cook<sup>55</sup>, in a review of Barton's King John, comments:

The strongest test of any adaptation is whether it works on the stage.

Most of these criteria are unexceptionable, though the superiority of Shakespeare-language (i.e. collage) adaptations is very dubious. However, they are merely a collection of separate opinions and as such have no coherence. Below I propose five criteria by which to evaluate adaptations. These criteria are derived from a study of the texts of adaptations.

1. The structural equivalence between the original play and the adaptation (and the real world where relevant) should be extensive. (Though up to a point this contributes to our definition of an adaptation, the more extensive the equivalence, the more effective the adaptation, especially where the real world is also included e.g. in the simulations.)
2. Alterations of the original text should be significant, not arbitrary.
3. The assumptions of knowledge made by the adaptation should lead to economy and precision, for example, concise dramatic exposition and rapid spectator responses.
4. The adaptation should use the spectator's assumed ability to compare and contrast it with the original play to significant dramatic effect.
5. The spectator should be struck by the truth or significance of the equivalence between the original play and the adaptation.

The advantage of using these criteria is that they are complementary and they emphasise the significant connection between the adapted play and the adaptation. Each criterion is intended to guide one's perception of the adaptation to possibilities and opportunities presented by this specific genre so that one can evaluate how well the adapter has exploited that genre.



The most important of these criteria is the first - the others may or may not apply significantly, but if several of the criteria are not applicable to a specific play then that play will not be a good adaptation.

MacBird! fails because the structural equivalence is insufficient and strained; several of the domestications are inadequate because their use of the Shakespeare play seems rather insignificant and unilluminating (e.g. The Hamlet of Stepney Green). Adaptations which do fill the criteria, and which are consequently effective, are Dick Deterred and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.

This thesis has suggested that adaptations can be divided into categories on the basis of the process by which a source is altered, and has defined five major categories. The thesis also offers criteria by which an adaptation can be distinguished from an interpretation and from a new play. Furthermore it shows that as the process is central to the analysis, the concept of adaptation is not limited by media and genres. Finally it asserts that the process of adaptation is a valid exercise, and suggests criteria by which individual adaptations may be evaluated. The reader may not agree with all the conclusions drawn; however, it is hoped that at least the problems and issues relating to adaptations have been clarified, and judgements can be made using more suitable criteria than have been hitherto available.



## Chapter 8: Summary

This chapter has three tasks:

1. To explain the existence and form of adaptations by examining their theatrical and political contexts.
2. To examine the validity of adapting plays, reviewing the range of opinion on the topic.
3. To establish criteria by which we can evaluate individual adaptations.

A chronological list of the modern Shakespeare adaptations exposes the fact that from 1959 to 1964, the only adaptation produced was Barton's The Wars of the Roses. Before this period (termed the 'watershed'), middle-class, naturalistic adaptations were written (domestications and reorientations) whereas after the watershed styles were less naturalistic, episodic, symbolic (collages, transpositions and reorientations). This change of style was largely a result of the influence of such figures as Beckett, Ionesco, Brecht, Artaud and Kott, whose work became prominent during the watershed. Values also changed so that a world in which humanity was rewarded was replaced by a world in which nothing but death is certain - religious, moral, political and psychological values are all in question. This picture of an uncertain world reflects the insecurity felt by modern writers. During the watershed, Britain became aware of her declining significance as a world power, and the nuclear threat became more apparent. These factors account for the writers' themes but not for their use of Shakespeare's plays. There are four possible reasons for

such use:

1. Shakespearian productions were becoming increasingly prevalent and influential.
2. Self-conscious interest in the theatrical process led to the plundering of theatrical resources.
3. Shakespeare was becoming increasingly regarded as a contemporary writer, especially by politically-aware writers.
4. Shakespeare portrays an ordered world which provides a dramatic contrast with the insecure world portrayed by the adapters.

We next turn to the debate concerning the validity of adapting classical plays. Critics and directors of Shakespeare productions are divided into those who wish to see the plays staged as they were originally, and those who emphasise the plays' contemporary relevance. The Shakespeare purists scorn the manipulation of the contextual framework (e.g. modern dress), but though they want to hear only Shakespeare's words, they admit that usually some textual alteration is necessary for pragmatic reasons. The 'contemporary relevance' school go further in that they allow textual alteration for interpretative reasons, and extremists wish to create entirely new forms in their attempts to make the plays appear relevant - these tend to be the adapters.

When judging a Shakespeare production we must know what we are judging (adaptation or interpretation) if our criteria are to be suitable. Sometimes adaptations are judged as interpretations, and are even compared

qualitatively with Shakespeare's play; this should not be so for the adaptation has different objectives and should be approached with the same lack of prejudice as any new play. If it is not obvious that a play is an adaptation, there should be some external reference to the fact (e.g. in the programme), so that the correct kind of response can be made.

The chapter ends with a list of criteria for evaluating adaptations. Various critics have given their opinions, but they form no coherent framework. The following five criteria are derived from a study of the adaptations:

1. Extensive structural equivalence between original play, adaptation and (where relevant) the real world.
2. Alterations should be significant, not arbitrary.
3. Assumptions of knowledge made in the adaptation should lead to economy and precision.
4. The spectator's ability to compare and contrast the adaptation with the original play should be used to significant dramatic effect.
5. The truth or significance of (1) should be apparent.

These criteria are complementary and emphasise the significant connection between the adapted play and the adaptation.

This thesis has offered an analytical framework for adaptations, and though the reader may not agree with all the conclusions, at least the issues have been clarified and criteria offered which may begin to form a more secure foundation for future judgements.



Notes

1. 1955 is the first copyright date we have for this play, but as we are given two others (1965 and 1966) it is not absolutely clear what form the play took at the earlier date.
2. The British première of The Merchant was in 1978, but there have been earlier productions in other countries. As far as I can discover, 1976 was the earliest of these - there is a reference in Shakespeare Quarterly (vol.28, no.4, Autumn 1977, p.428) to a review of the play in Stockholm, where the opening night was 1 October 1976. (Esther Edelstein, 'Shylock bi-Stockholm', Ma'ariv (Tel Aviv), 1 November 1976.)
3. Even Kops' play, set in a Jewish East End home, uses these same superficialities.
4. John Russell Taylor describes the drama of the early 1950s in Anger and After (Methuen, London, 1962), and it is apparent that much of it fits into the same middle-class, realistic pattern as the early adaptations. We can therefore see these adaptations as belonging dramatically to the earlier era.
5. For commentary on this period of theatrical history see the following:
  - a) William A. Armstrong (ed.), Experimental Drama (Bell, London, 1963.)
  - b) Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, Contemporary Theatre (Edward Arnold, London, 1962.)
  - c) John Russell Taylor, Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama (Methuen, London, 1962.)

6. See Taylor, p.17
7. For an account of the influence of Brecht on British drama, see Martin Esslin, 'Brecht and the English theatre' (Tulane Drama Review, vol.11, 1966-67, pp.63-70.)
8. Translated from the French by Mary Caroline Richards (Grove Press, New York, 1958.)
9. For an account of these experiments see Charles Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty' (Tulane Drama Review, vol.11, 1966-67, pp.152-172.)
10. Jan Kott (translated by Boleslaw Taborski; preface by Peter Brook), Shakespeare Our Contemporary (Methuen, London, 1967. Originally published 1965.)
11. See Peter Calvocoressi, The British Experience 1945-75 (The Bodley Head, London, 1978.) p.199
12. F.S.Northedge, Descent from Power: British Foreign Policy 1945-1973 (Allen and Unwin, London, 1974.) p.17
13. Walter Laqueur, Europe Since Hitler (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1970.) p.316
14. Northedge, p.219
15. Northedge, p.263
16. For details of Britain's increasing reliance on America for nuclear weapons, see Calvocoressi, pp.206-213
17. Laqueur, p.244
18. Details of Shakespeare's world are to be found in The Elizabethan World Picture by E.M.W.Tillyard (Chatto and Windus, London, 1943.)
19. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (editors), Directors on Directing: A Source Book of the Modern Theatre (Peter Owen and Vision Press, London, 1964.) pp.419-420

20. W.Bridges-Adams, Looking at a Play (Phoenix House, London, 1947.) p.26
21. Herbert Farjeon, 'Macbeth with tabs on' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.I, no.3, July - September 1971, pp.41-42) p.41
22. Benedict Nightingale, 'Shakespeare is as Shakespeare's done', pp.154-168 in Theatre '71 edited by Sheridan Morley (Hutchinson, London, 1971.) p.156
23. Bernard Levin, 'The ungentle art of doctoring Jonson' (Sunday Times, 8 May 1977.)
24. Ralph Berry, On Directing Shakespeare: Interviews with Contemporary Directors (Croom Helm, London, 1977.) p.71
25. Gareth Lloyd Evans, 'How far can we improve Shakespeare?' (Guardian, 26 November 1964, p.8.)
26. Quoted by Bernard Levin
27. Stanley Wells, 'Elusive Master Shakespeare' (Forum (Houston), vol.11, no.ii/iii, pp.6-10, 1973/74) pp.8-9
28. Berry, p.39
29. Charles Marowitz (interview with Peter Hall), 'The director and the permanent company', pp.148-159 in Theatre at Work: Playwrights and their Productions in the Modern British Theatre edited by Charles Marowitz and Simon Trussler (Methuen, London, 1967.) p.152
30. Wells, p.9
31. Cole and Chinoy, p.420
32. Cole and Chinoy, p.405
33. Nightingale, pp.155-156
34. Paul N.Siegel, Shakespeare in His Time and Ours (University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.) Preface p.2



35. In the essay 'No more masterpieces' in The Theatre and its Double, p.74
36. Charles Marowitz, 'Salmon out of season' (Wascana Review, vol.VII, no.1, pp.5-11) p.11
37. John Ahart, 'Another Macbeth' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.I, no.3, July-September 1971, pp.50-51,53) p.50
38. Evans
39. Brian Parker, 'Richard III and the modernizing of Shakespeare' (Modern Drama, vol.XV, no.3, December 1972, pp.321-329) p.328
40. John Weightman, 'Art versus life' (Encounter, vol.43, September 1974, pp.57-59.)
41. Stanley Wells, 'Shakespeare's text on the modern stage' (Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Heidelberg), 1967, pp.175-193.) pp.191-192
42. Robert Brustein, 'No more masterpieces' (Yale/Theatre, vol.1, no.1, 1968, pp.10-19) p.18
43. John Barber, 'Revival of the fittest' (Daily Telegraph, 1 August 1977.)
44. Frank W.Wadsworth, 'Those sacred texts again: A comment on Robert Brustein's "No more masterpieces"' (Yale/Theatre, vol.3, no.2, pp.30-37) p.32
45. Eric Salmon, 'Why Mr Marowitz is wrong: A comment on the Marowitz versions of Hamlet and Macbeth' (Wascana Review, vol.6, pp.16-25) p.22
46. Wells, 'Shakespeare's text on the modern stage' p.190
47. Nightingale, p.160
48. Margaret Webster, Shakespeare Today (Dent, London, 1957.) p.112

49. Guido Almansi, 'An alchemist skilled in dramatic transmutation' (Times Higher Education Supplement, 8 July 1977, p.11)
50. Gareth Lloyd Evans, 'Macbeth in the twentieth century' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.I, no.3, July-September 1971, pp.36-37,39)
51. Review of Hamlet, pp.106-110 in Charles Marowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971 (Eyre Methuen, London, 1973.) p.107
52. Siegel, Preface p.2
53. Brustein, p.14
54. Richard Gilman, 'MacBird! and its audience' (New American Review, 1967, no.1, pp.123-134) p.132
55. Judith Cook, 'King John Barton' (Plays and Players, June 1974, pp.24-27) p.27

APPENDIX 1: DETAILS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR EACH MODERN  
SHAKESPEARE ADAPTATION

Notes on organisation

1. The plays are dealt with in alphabetical order of author. (Where the author has written more than one adaptation they are placed in alphabetical order of title.)
2. For each play, details of author, title, first performance and publication are given.
3. The secondary material is divided into two sections:  
a) criticism and comment, b) reviews.
4. The criticism and comment aims to be comprehensive; it is listed in alphabetical order of author (and then of title).
5. The reviews are not comprehensive but a representative selection; they are listed in chronological order (and then, if several appeared on the same day, in alphabetical order of author).



AUTHOR: PAUL BAKER

TITLE: HAMLET ESP: AN ADAPTATION BY PAUL BAKER OF  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

FIRST PERFORMED: DALLAS, TEXAS, 1970

PUBLICATION DETAILS: DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.,  
NEW YORK, 1971

Criticism and Comment

1. Paul Baker, 'Director's notes' to the published text,  
pp.5-10
2. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots  
(Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.) pp.225-227

Reviews

None known

AUTHOR: JOHN BARTON

TITLE: KING JOHN

FIRST PERFORMED: ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, STRATFORD-  
UPON-AVON, MARCH 1974

PUBLICATION DETAILS: NOT PUBLISHED

All references are to the 1974

Prompt Book held at The Shakespeare  
Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon.

### Criticism and Comment

1. Ronald Bryden, 'Lost properties' (Sunday Times,  
7 April 1974)
2. Judith Cook, 'King John Barton' (Plays and Players,  
June 1974, pp.24-27)
3. Programme for King John (Royal Shakespeare Theatre,  
Stratford-upon-Avon, 1974)
4. R.L.Smallwood, 'Shakespeare unbalanced: The Royal  
Shakespeare Company's King John, 1974-5'  
(Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Heidelberg), 1976, pp.79-99)

### Reviews - Stratford-upon-Avon

1. J.C.Trewin (Birmingham Post, 21 March 1974)
2. John Barber, 'King John made into facetious pageant'  
(Daily Telegraph, 22 March 1974)
3. Michael Billington (Guardian, 22 March 1974)
4. Irving Wardle, 'Getting over the message' (The Times,  
22 March 1974)
5. Frank Marcus, 'In all directions' (Sunday Telegraph,  
24 March 1974)

6. Shiela Bannock, 'King John comes first at RST'  
(Stratford Herald, 29 March 1974)
7. J.C.Trewin, 'How not to direct' (Birmingham Post,  
30 March 1974)
8. Harold Hobson (Sunday Times, 31 March 1974)
9. Robert Cushman (Observer, 24 May 1974)
10. Garry O'Connor (Plays and Players, May 1974, pp.38-40)

#### Reviews - London

1. J.C.Trewin (Birmingham Post, 10 January 1975)
2. John Barber, 'Misguided approach to King John'  
(Daily Telegraph, 11 January 1975)
3. Irving Wardle (The Times, 11 January 1975)
4. Robert Cushman (Observer, 12 January 1975)
5. J.C.Trewin, 'Directors in a mingled yarn'  
(Birmingham Post, 18 January 1975)
6. Harold Hobson (Sunday Times, 19 January 1975)
7. Garry O'Connor (Plays and Players, March 1975, pp.29,31,32)



AUTHORS: JOHN BARTON and PETER HALL

TITLE: THE WARS OF THE ROSES: ADAPTED FOR THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY FROM WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VI, PARTS I, II, III AND RICHARD III

FIRST PERFORMED: ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE,  
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, 1963

PUBLICATION DETAILS: BBC, LONDON, 1970

### Criticism and Comment

1. John Barton, 'The making of the adaptation' in the published text, pp.xv-xxv
2. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.4-7
3. Gillian Mary Day, The Hall-Barton "Wars of the Roses": A textual and critical study (M.A.thesis, University of Birmingham (Shakespeare Institute), September 1976)
4. Gareth Lloyd Evans, 'How far can we improve Shakespeare?' (Guardian, 26 November 1964, p.8)
5. Peter Hall, 'Introduction' to the published text, pp.vii-xiv
6. Barbara Hodgdon, 'The Wars of the Roses: Scholarship speaks on the stage' (Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Heidelberg), 1972, pp.170-184)
7. Charles Marowitz and Simon Trussler (eds), Theatre at Work: Playwrights and productions in the modern British theatre (Methuen, London, 1967) pp.151-152, in an interview with Peter Hall

8. Programmes for The Wars of the Roses (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1963, 1964)

#### Reviews

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2. 'Disappointing finale of Roses cycle' (The Times, 21 August 1963)
3. J.W.Lambert, 'A good year for Roses' (Sunday Times, 25 August 1963)
4. George Seddon, 'This is the way to see the Wars' (Observer, 25 August 1963)
5. Robert Kee (Queen, 28 August 1963)
6. Edmund Gardner, 'The bloodstream of history' (Stratford-upon-Avon Herald, 30 August 1963)
7. Mervyn Jones, 'Epic vision of history' (Tribune, 30 August 1963)
8. Mary Holland, 'Country matters' (Vogue, September 1963)
9. Charles Marowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971 (Eyre Methuen, London, 1973) pp.79-83

AUTHOR: EDWARD BOND

TITLE: LEAR

FIRST PERFORMED: ROYAL COURT THEATRE, LONDON,

SEPTEMBER 1971

PUBLICATION DETAILS: EYRE METHUEN, LONDON, 1972

Criticism and Comment

1. Edward Bond, 'A discussion with Edward Bond  
(Gambit, vol.5, no.17, 1970, pp.5-38)  
pp.24-27, Bond describes his attitude to King Lear  
while writing his adaptation
2. Edward Bond, 'Author's preface' to the published text,  
pp.v-xiv
3. Edward Bond, 'Drama and the dialectics of violence'  
(Theatre Quarterly, vol.II, no.5, January-March 1972,  
pp.4-14) Interview with Bond
4. Edward Bond, 'Production casebook no.5: Edward Bond's  
Lear at the Royal Court' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.II,  
no.5, January-March 1972, pp.20-32)  
Account of planning and rehearsals
5. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton  
University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.254-266
6. Tony Coult, The Plays of Edward Bond: A Methuen  
Theatrefile (Eyre Methuen, London, 1977)
7. Joseph E.Duncan, 'The child and the old man in the  
plays of Edward Bond' (Modern Drama, vol.XIX, no.1,  
March 1976, pp.1-10)
8. Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, Edward Bond: A  
Companion to the Plays (TQ Publications, London, 1978)



9. Uli Imig, Interview with Edward Bond (Unpublished, Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, April 1977.)
10. Oleg Kerensky, The New British Drama: Fourteen Playwrights since Osborne and Pinter (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1977) pp.21-23
11. Charles Marowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971 (Eyre Methuen, London, 1973) pp.197-200
12. Horst Oppel and Sandra Christenson, Edward Bond's "Lear" and Shakespeare's "King Lear" (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, 1974)
13. John Russell Taylor, The Second Wave: British Drama for the Seventies (Methuen, London, 1971) pp.92-93, some comments on Bond's ideas for Lear during the writing process
14. Simon Trussler, Edward Bond, Writers and their work no.249 (Longman Group Ltd., published for the British Council, 1976) pp.22-26
15. Marta Wisznowska, 'Elizabethans on modern stage. Shakespeare and Marlowe versus Marowitz and Bond' (Studia Anglica Posnaniensia, vol.8, 1976, pp.157-166) pp.164-165
16. Katharine Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama (Bell, London, 1972) pp.177-186

Reviews

1. Judith Cook (Birmingham Post, 30 September 1971)
2. John Barber, 'Modern Lear dour and painful'  
(Daily Telegraph, 1 October 1971)
3. Nicholas de Jongh, 'Bond's Lear' (Guardian,  
1 October 1971)
4. Irving Wardle, 'Uncompromising vision'  
(The Times, 1 October 1971)
5. Helen Dawson, 'Human bondage' (Observer,  
3 October 1971)
6. J.W.Lambert, 'Bond's Lear' (Sunday Times,  
3 October 1971)
7. Frank Marcus, 'Court cruelty' (Sunday Telegraph,  
3 October 1971)
8. John Holmstrom (Plays and Players, November 1971,  
pp.42-45,53)
9. Margaret Tierney, 'He that plays the king'  
(Plays and Players, November 1971, p.18)

Interview with Harry Andrews who played Lear in the  
original production.

AUTHOR: HOWARD BRENTON

TITLE: MEASURE FOR MEASURE

FIRST PERFORMED: NORTHCOTT THEATRE, EXETER, 1972

PUBLICATION DETAILS: NOT PUBLISHED

All references are to a copy  
obtained from Brenton's agent:

Rosica Colin Ltd.,

4, Hereford Square,

London,

SW7 4TU.

#### Criticism and Comment

1. Tony Mitchell (compiler), 'Howard Brenton: Checklist'  
(Theatrefacts, vol.II, no.1, 1975, TF5) pp.5-6

#### Reviews

1. Nicholas Cottis (Guardian, 22 September 1972)
2. John Peter (Sunday Times, 24 September 1972)
3. Rosemary Say, 'Modern Measure' (Sunday Telegraph,  
24 September 1972)
4. Irving Wardle (The Times, 27 September 1972)



AUTHOR: JOHN BOWEN

TITLE: HEIL CAESAR!

FIRST PERFORMED: MIDLAND ARTS THEATRE, BIRMINGHAM, 1974.

PUBLICATION DETAILS: SAMUEL FRENCH, LONDON, 1974.

Criticism and Comment

1. John Bowen, 'Introduction' to Heil Caesar!  
(BBC Publications, London, 1974) pp.7-18

Reviews

1. Eric Shorter, 'Shakespeare rewritten by Mr Bowen'  
(Daily Telegraph, 27 April 1974)
2. Eric Shorter (Drama, Summer 1974, pp.60-61)
3. 'Lessons of Julius Caesar up-to-date'  
(Daily Telegraph, 22 October 1974)

Television version

AUTHOR: IAN DAVIE

TITLE: A PLAY FOR PROSPERO: A SHAKESPEAREAN EXTRAVAGANZA

FIRST PERFORMED: AT A BOY'S SCHOOL (UNSPECIFIED, THOUGH  
IN ENGLAND), 1964

PUBLICATION DETAILS: COLLINS, LONDON, 1966

Criticism and Comment

1. Ian Davie, 'Preface' to the published text, pp.7-9

Reviews

None known

AUTHOR: ASHLEY DUKES

TITLE: RETURN TO DANES HILL: A TRAGIC COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known

PUBLICATION DETAILS: SAMUEL FRENCH, LONDON, 1958

### Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.194-196
2. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968) pp.225-233

### Reviews

1. (Times Literary Supplement, 20 June 1958, p.350)  
Review of published text



AUTHOR: DAVID EDGAR

TITLE: DICK DETERRED: A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

FIRST PERFORMED: BUSH THEATRE, LONDON, FEBRUARY 1974

PUBLICATION DETAILS: MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS, NEW YORK  
and LONDON, 1974

### Criticism and Comment

1. Clive Barker and Simon Trussler (interviewers),  
'Towards a theatre of dynamic ambiguities'  
(Theatre Quarterly, vol.IX, no.33, Spring 1979,  
pp.3-23) especially pp.11-12  
Interview with Edgar
2. Simon Trussler (compiler), David Edgar  
(Theatre Checklist, no.20, 1979)

### Reviews

1. Michael White, 'Horse laughter' (Guardian,  
15 February 1974)
2. Michael Billington (Guardian, 27 February 1974)
3. Victoria Radin (Observer, 3 March 1974)
4. John Elsom, 'Edgar's goat' (Listener, vol.91,  
7 March 1974, p.316)

AUTHOR: BARBARA GARSON

TITLE: MACBIRD!

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known, but probably the West Coast  
of America in 1965 or 1966

PUBLICATION DETAILS: PENGUIN, HARMONDSWORTH, 1967

(Originally published in the United  
States by the Grassy Knoll Press  
in 1966)

### Criticism and Comment

1. Clive Barker, 'Contemporary Shakespearean parody in  
British theatre' (Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Weimar), 1969,  
vol.105, pp.104-120)  
On Joan Littlewood's version
2. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton  
Univeristy Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.78-81
3. Richard Gilman, 'MacBird! and its audience'  
(New American Review, 1967, no.1, pp.123-134)
4. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names:  
Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of  
Wisconsin, 1968) pp.287-288

### Reviews

None known

AUTHORS: JEREMY GEIDT and JONATHAN MARKS

TITLE: THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

FIRST PERFORMED: The play has been performed but no  
details are known (possibly a college  
production)

PUBLICATION DETAILS: YALE THEATRE (WATERGATE CLASSICS:  
SPECIAL ISSUE) vol.5, 1974, pp.24-51

Criticism and Comment

None known

Reviews

None known



AUTHOR: MARION JAY (devised by ALISON GRAHAM-CAMPBELL)

TITLE: MISTRESS BOTTOM'S DREAM: A ONE-ACT PLAY FOR WOMEN

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known

PUBLICATION DETAILS: EVANS BROS, LONDON, 1958

Criticism and Comment

1. Marion Jay, 'Production notes' in the published text,  
pp.2-3

Reviews

None known

AUTHOR: GEORGE KAUFFMAN

TITLE: HAMLET, INCORPORATED: A SAN FRANCISCO VERSION  
IN ONE ACT

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known

PUBLICATION DETAILS: HAMLET, INCORPORATED: A SAN FRANCISCO  
VERSION IN ONE ACT AND FOUR OTHER  
PLAYS IN VERSE

by GEORGE KAUFFMAN, THE KEPT PRESS,  
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, 1965, pp.1-29

Criticism and Comment

None known

Reviews

None known

AUTHOR: BERNARD KOPS

TITLE: THE HAMLET OF STEPNEY GREEN: A SAD COMEDY WITH  
SOME SONGS

FIRST PERFORMED: PLAYHOUSE, OXFORD, 1958

PUBLICATION DETAILS: NEW ENGLISH DRAMATISTS

PENGUIN, HARMONDSWORTH, 1959, pp.97-171

### Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.190-192
2. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968) pp.268-278
3. Bernard Kops, 'Production note' to The Hamlet of Stepney Green (Evans Brothers, London, 1959) pp.4-5
4. John Russell Taylor, Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama (Methuen, London, 1962) pp.170-173

### Reviews

1. 'Enter a new playwright at the Oxford repertory' (The Times, 20 May 1958)
2. 'Poison into love potion' (The Times, 16 July 1958)
3. Caryl Brahms, 'Hamlet 1958' (Plays and Players, September 1958, p.9)
4. Donald Malcolm (New Yorker, vol.XXXIV, 22 November 1958, p.103)
5. Tom F.Driver, 'Tragedy into comedy'. (Christian Century, vol.LXXVI, 21 January 1959, p.83)



AUTHOR: CHARLES MAROWITZ

TITLE: A MACBETH: FREELY ADAPTED FROM SHAKESPEARE'S  
TRAGEDY

FIRST PERFORMED: HESSISCHES STAADSTHEATER, WIESBADEN, 1969  
(followed by Open Space, London, May 1969).

PUBLICATION DETAILS: CALDER AND BOYARS, LONDON, 1971

Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.81-83
2. Eric Forsythe, The Poetics and Praxis of Charles Marowitz (PhD thesis, Carnegie-Mellon University, April 1973) pp.307-311
3. Charles Marowitz, The Act of Being (Secker and Warburg, London, 1978) Included photographs of the production
4. Charles Marowitz, 'Introduction' to the published text, pp.7-32
5. Charles Marowitz, 'Salmon out of season' (Wascana Review, vol.7, no.1, pp.5-11)  
Reply to article by Eric Salmon (see below)
6. Eric Salmon, 'Why Mr Marowitz is wrong: A comment on the Marowitz versions of Hamlet and Macbeth' (Wascana Review, vol.6, pp.16-25)
7. Elizabeth N.Smith, 'On directing a collage of Shakespeare's Macbeth' (Shakespeare Newsletter, vol.XX, no.1/2/3, February-May 1970, pp.2-3)

8. Marta Wisznowska, 'Elizabethans on modern stage.  
Shakespeare and Marlowe versus Marowitz and Bond'  
(Studia Anglica Posnaniensia, vol.8, 1976, pp.157-166)  
pp.159-162

#### Reviews

1. Ian Woodward, 'A three-headed Macbeth' (The Times,  
15 May 1969) Preview
2. J.C.Trewin (Birmingham Post, 21 May 1969)
3. Nicholas de Jongh (Guardian, 22 May 1969)
4. Henry Raynor, 'A literary game' (The Times,  
22 May 1969)
5. Eric Shorter, 'Marowitz's "Macbeth" irksome'  
(Daily Telegraph, 22 May 1969)
6. (Sunday Telegraph, 25 May 1969)
7. Martin Esslin, 'Dramatic ironies: Old illusions,  
new directions' (Encounter, vol.37, July 1971, pp.74-78)  
Review of published text

AUTHOR: CHARLES MAROWITZ

TITLE: THE MAROWITZ HAMLET

FIRST PERFORMED: AKADEMIE DER KUNSTE, BERLIN, 1965

(followed by Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre,  
London, May 1966)

PUBLICATION DETAILS: THE MAROWITZ HAMLET AND THE TRAGICAL  
HISTORY OF DR FAUSTUS: A COLLAGE  
VERSION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY AND A  
FREE ADAPTATION OF MARLOWE'S PLAY  
by CHARLES MAROWITZ, PENGUIN,  
HARMONDSWIRTH, 1970  
(Originally published by Allen Lane,  
The Penguin Press in 1968)

#### Criticism and Comment

1. Peter Ansorge, 'The memoirs of Marowitz' (Plays and  
Players, October 1972, pp.20-22)
2. Albert Baiwir, 'Alas, Poor Hamlet!' (Revue des Langues  
Vivantes, vol.XXXVII, pp.373-387)
3. John Russell Brown, Theatre Language: A Study of  
Arden, Osborne, Pinter and Wesker (Allen Lane, London,  
1972) pp.248-249
4. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton  
University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.218-221
5. Eric Forsythe, The Poetics and Praxis of Charles  
Marowitz (PhD thesis, Carnegie-Mellon University,  
April 1973) See pp.211-267 for a detailed analysis  
of the play



6. Phyllis Hartnoll, 'Letters' (Plays and Players, July 1964, p.6)  
Reply to article by Charles Marowitz, 'On taking liberties' (see below)
7. Louis Marder, 'Shakespeare in the theatre of theatrical discontinuity' (Shakespeare Newsletter, vol.XX, no.1/2/3, February-May 1970, p.2)
8. Charles Marowitz, The Act of Being (Secker and Warburg, London, 1978)  
Includes photographs of the production
9. Charles Marowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971 (Eyre Methuen, London, 1973) pp.106-110
10. Charles Marowitz, 'Introduction' to the published text, pp.9-42
11. Charles Marowitz, 'On taking liberties' (Plays and Players, May 1964, pp.22,48)
12. Charles Marowitz, 'Salmon out of season' (Wascana Review, vol.7, no.1, pp.5-11)  
Reply to article by Eric Salmon (see below)
13. Charles Marowitz, 'Theatre news' (Time Out, 21-27 April 1972)
14. Willian Nicholas, 'Letters' (Plays and Players, July 1964, pp.6,15) Reply to article by Charles Marowitz, 'On taking liberties' (see above)
15. Eric Salmon, 'Why Mr Marowitz is wrong: A comment on the Marowitz versions of Hamlet and Macbeth' (Wascana Review, vol.6, pp.16-25)

16. Evelyn Thal and John Pilling, 'Marowitz on Marowitz and others' (Prompt, 1969, no.13, pp.19-20)
17. Marta Wisznowska, 'Elizabethans on modern stage. Shakespeare and Marlowe versus Marowitz and Bond' (Studia Anglica Posnaniensia, vol.8, 1976, pp.157-166) pp.159-162

### Reviews

1. Michael Stone (Guardian, 3 February 1965) Berlin
2. J.C.Trewin (Birmingham Post, 9 May 1966) London
3. 'Frivolous stage exercise' (The Times, 10 May 1966) London
4. Harold Atkins, 'Shakespeare burlesque has its moments' (Daily Telegraph, 7 August 1975) London revival
5. Irving Wardle (The Times, 7 August 1975) London revival

AUTHOR: CHARLES MAROWITZ

TITLE: MEASURE FOR MEASURE: AN ADAPTATION

FIRST PERFORMED: OPEN SPACE THEATRE, LONDON, 1975

PUBLICATION DETAILS: PLAYS AND PLAYERS, JUNE 1975, pp.41-50

### Criticism and Comment

1. Charles Marowitz (Guardian, 28 May 1975)
2. Charles Marowitz, 'Measures taken: Playtext introduction' (Plays and Players, June 1975, pp.38-39)

### Reviews

1. Nicholas de Jongh (Guardian, 30 May 1975)
2. Jeremy Kingston (The Times, 30 May 1975)
3. (Sunday Times, 1 June 1975)
4. Benedict Nightingale (New Statesman, 6 June 1975, p.761)
5. (Sunday Telegraph, 8 June 1975)
6. Robert Cushman (Observer, 15 June 1975)
7. Catherine Itzen (Plays and Players, July 1975, pp.26-27)
8. J.W.Lambert (Drama, Autumn 1975)



AUTHOR: CHARLES MAROWITZ

TITLE: AN OTHELLO

FIRST PERFORMED: OPEN SPACE THEATRE, LONDON, 1972

PUBLICATION DETAILS: OPEN SPACE PLAYS

selected by CHARLES MAROWITZ,  
PENGUIN, HARMONDSWORTH, 1974

Criticism and Comment

1. Peter Ansorge, 'The memoirs of Marowitz' (Plays and Players, October 1972, pp.20-22)
2. John Burgess (compiler), 'Production casebook no.8: Charles Marowitz directs An Othello' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.II, no.8, October-December 1972, pp.68-81)  
  
This article is also reprinted in The Act Of Being by Charles Marowitz (Secker and Warburg, London, 1978) Appendix 4. This book includes photographs of the production.
3. Eric Forsythe, The Poetics and Praxis of Charles Marowitz (PhD thesis, Carnegie-Mellon University, April 1973) pp.350-358
4. Charles Marowitz, 'The Moor the merrier' (Guardian, 8 June 1972)

Reviews

1. Michael Billington (Guardian, 10 June 1972)
2. Harold Hobson (Sunday Times, 11 June 1972)
3. Frank Marcus (Sunday Telegraph, 11 June 1972)
4. John Mortimer (Observer, 11 June 1972)
5. Irving Wardle (The Times, 12 June 1972)
6. Jenny Sheridan (Plays and Players, August 1972, p.40)
7. Alex Stuart (Plays and Players, August 1972, p.41)
8. J.W.Lambert (Drama, Autumn 1972, p.30)
9. Jules Aaron (Educational Theatre Journal, vol.XXV, pp.106-108)

AUTHOR: CHARLES MAROWITZ

TITLE: THE SHREW

FIRST PERFORMED: THE HOT THEATRE, THE HAGUE, 1973

PUBLICATION DETAILS: CALDER AND BOYARS, LONDON, 1975

### Criticism and Comment

1. Charles Marowitz, The Act of Being (Secker and Warburg, London, 1978) Includes photographs of the production
2. Charles Marowitz, 'Introduction' to the published text, pp.5-25

### Reviews

1. Nicholas de Jongh (Guardian, 3 November 1973)
2. (Sunday Telegraph, 4 November 1973)
3. Beth Hayes (Plays and Players, December 1973, p.58)
4. James Clayton (Birmingham Post, 22 May 1974)
5. Nicholas de Jongh (Guardian, 1 June 1974)
6. Irving Wardle (The Times, 29 December 1975)
7. Ned Chaillet (Plays and Players, February 1976, pp.28-29)



AUTHOR: ROBIN MAUGHAM

TITLE: MISTER LEAR: A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

FIRST PERFORMED: CONNAUGHT THEATRE, WORTHING, 1956

PUBLICATION DETAILS: ENGLISH THEATRE GUILD, LONDON, 1963

Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) p.252
2. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968) pp.41-48

Reviews

None known

AUTHOR: ROBERT NATHAN

TITLE: JULIET IN MANTUA: BEING THE ACCOUNT OF THE SOJOURN  
IN MANTUA OF ROMEO AND JULIET, AND THEIR RETURN  
TO VERONA

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known

PUBLICATION DETAILS: ALFRED A.KNOFF, NEW YORK, 1966  
(copyright as an unpublished work,  
1955, 1965)

Criticism and Comment

1. Robert Nathan, 'A note to the players' and 'Notes for the director' in the published text, pp.v,vi

Reviews

None known

AUTHOR: JOHN OSBORNE

TITLE: A PLACE CALLING ITSELF ROME

FIRST PERFORMED: No performance to date

PUBLICATION DETAILS: FABER AND FABER, LONDON, 1973

Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.22-26

Reviews

None known



AUTHOR: JOSEPH PAPP

TITLE: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S "NAKED" HAMLET

FIRST PERFORMED: NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL PUBLIC  
THEATRE, NEW YORK, 1968

PUBLICATION DETAILS: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S "NAKED" HAMLET:  
A PRODUCTION HANDBOOK

by JOSEPH PAPP, assisted by TED CORNELL,  
COLLIER-MACMILLAN, LONDON, 1969

### Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.221-225
2. Joseph Papp, 'Introduction' to the published text, pp.19-33

### Reviews

1. See 'Preface' to the published text (pp.9-16) for a summary of reviews

AUTHOR: ELMER RICE

TITLE: CUE FOR PASSION: A PLAY IN FIVE SCENES

FIRST PERFORMED: HENRY MILLER'S THEATRE, NEW YORK, 1958

PUBLICATION DETAILS: DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, NEW YORK, 1959

### Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.197-199
2. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968) pp.233-254

### Reviews

1. Frank Aston, 'Rice borrows from "Hamlet"'  
(New York World-Telegram and The Sun, 26 November 1958)
2. Brooks Atkinson, 'Elmer Rice's "Cue for Passion" arrives' (New York Times, 26 November 1958)
3. Robert Coleman, 'Windy reworking of "Hamlet" by Rice' (Daily Mirror, 26 November 1958)
4. Richard Watts, Jr., 'Hamlet in Southern California' (New York Post, 26 November 1958)

AUTHOR: HAROLD F. RUBINSTEIN

TITLE: SHYLOCK'S END

FIRST PERFORMED: As a radio play, BBC RADIO 4,

8 SEPTEMBER 1970

PUBLICATION DETAILS: SHYLOCK'S END AND OTHER PLAYS

by HAROLD F. RUBINSTEIN,

VICTOR GOLLANCZ, LONDON, 1971,

pp.78-104

Includes directions for a stage  
performance

Criticism and Comment

None known

Reviews

1. T.F. Evans (Shavian, vol.IV, p.199)



AUTHOR: TOM STOPPARD

TITLE: ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

FIRST PERFORMED: CRANSTON STREET HALL, EDINBURGH, AUGUST 1966

(This was a slightly shorter version.

The first performance of the full-length version was at The Old Vic Theatre,

London, April 1967.)

PUBLICATION DETAILS: FABER AND FABER, LONDON, 1967

Criticism and Comment

1. Michael Anderson, 'The unnatural scene: plays about plays' (New Theatre Magazine, vol.8, no.2, Spring 1968, pp.28-31)
2. Michael Anderson and others, A Handbook of Contemporary Drama (Pitman, London, 1971) pp.428-429
3. William Babula, 'The play-life metaphor in Shakespeare and Stoppard' (Modern Drama, vol.XV, no.3, December 1972, pp.279-281)
4. Clive Barker, 'Contemporary Shakespearean parody in British theatre' (Shakespeare Jahrbuch (Weimar), 1969, vol.105, pp.104-120)
5. Normand Berlin, 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead: Theater of criticism' (Modern Drama, vol.XVI, nos.3 and 4, December 1973, pp.269-277)
6. C.W.E.Bigsley, Tom Stoppard Writers and their work no.250 (Chapman Group Ltd., published for the British Council, 1976) pp.10-16
7. Victor L.Cahn, Beyond Absurdity: The Plays of Tom Stoppard (Associated University Press, London, 1979) pp.35-65

8. Anthony Callen, 'Stoppard's Godot: Some French influences on post-war English drama' (New Theatre Magazine, vol.X, no.1, December 1969, pp.22-30)
9. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.211-217
10. C.J.Giankaris, 'Absurdism altered: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead' (Drama Survey, vol.7, nos.1 and 2, Winter 1968/69, pp.52-58)
11. Julian Gitzen, 'Tom Stoppard: Chaos in perspective' (Southern Humanities Review, vol.10, 1976, pp.143-152)
12. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968) pp.288-289
13. Ronald Hayman, Theatre and Anti-Theatre: New Movements Since Beckett (Secker and Warburg, London, 1979) pp.138-140
14. Ronald Hayman, Tom Stoppard Contemporary Playwrights Series (Heinemann, London, 1977) pp.32-46
15. Oleg Kerensky, The New British Drama: Fourteen Playwrights since Osborne and Pinter (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1977) pp.149-154
16. Helene Keyssar-Franke, 'The strategy of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead' (Educational Theatre Journal, vol.27, 1975, pp.85-97)
17. Charles Marowitz, Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic: A London Theatre Notebook 1958-1971 (Eyre Methuen, London, 1973) pp.123-126
18. Randolph Ryan (compiler), 'Tom Stoppard: Checklist' (Theatrefacts, May-July 1974, TF2) pp.4-5



19. Tom Stoppard (interview), 'Ambushes for the audience: Towards a high comedy of ideas' (Theatre Quarterly, vol.IV, no.14, May-July 1974, pp.3-17)
20. Tom Stoppard (interview with Giles Gordon) (Transatlantic Review, Summer 1968, no.29, pp.17-25)
21. John Russell Taylor, Anger and After (revised edition: Methuen, London, 1969)
22. John Russell Taylor, The Second Wave: British Drama for the Seventies (Methuen, London, 1971) pp.100-102
23. John Russell Taylor, 'Tom Stoppard: Structure + intellect' (Plays and Players, July 1970, pp.16-18,78)
24. John Weightman, 'Mini-Hamlets in limbo' (Encounter, vol.39, July 1967, pp.38-40)
25. Thomas R.Whitaker, Fields of Play in Modern Drama (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977) pp.12-17
26. Thomas R.Whitaker, 'Notes on playing the player' (Centennial Review, vol.XVI, no.1, pp.1-22)
27. Robert Wilcher, 'The museum of tragedy: Endgame and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead' (Journal of Beckett Studies, Spring 1979, no.4, pp.43-54)
28. Clyde V.Williams, 'Buffalo Bill might be defunct, but the Bard isn't: An essay on relevance' (Cimarron Review (Oklahoma State University), vol.21, October 1972, pp.30-36)
29. Marta Wisznowska, 'Elizabethans on modern stage. Shakespeare and Marlowe versus Marowitz and Bond' (Studia Anglica Posnaniensia, vol.8, 1976, pp.157-166)  
p.165



Reviews

1. Philip Hope-Wallace (Guardian, 13 April 1967)
2. Irving Wardle, 'Drama unearthed from Elsinore's depths'  
(The Times, 13 April 1967)
3. J.W.Lambert (Drama, Summer 1967, pp.17-19)
4. Robert Brustein, 'Waiting for Hamlet'  
(Plays and Players, January 1968, pp.51-52)  
Review of the New York production
5. Simon Trussler, 'Second-generation London'  
(TDR, T38, Winter 1968, pp.171-176)  
Revival at the Old Vic
6. John Russell Taylor, 'The road to dusty death'  
(Plays and Players, June 1971, pp.12-15)

AUTHOR: CECIL P. TAYLOR

TITLE: OPHELIA

FIRST PERFORMED: ARTS CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK,  
OCTOBER 1977

PUBLICATION DETAILS: NOT PUBLISHED

All references are to a copy obtained  
from Taylor's agent:

Dr Jan van Loewen, Ltd.,  
81-83, Shaftesbury Avenue,  
London, W1V 8BX.

### Criticism and Comment

1. Programme for Ophelia (Warwick Arts Centre,  
October 1977)

### Reviews

1. Terry Grimley, 'The new Ophelia' (Birmingham Post,  
15 October 1977)
2. Eric Shorter (Daily Telegraph, 28 October 1977)
3. Bernard Levin (Sunday Times, 30 October 1977)
4. Victoria Radin (Observer, 30 October 1977)
5. Eric Shorter (Drama, Winter 77/78, p.71)

AUTHOR: PETER USTINOV

TITLE: ROMANOFF AND JULIET

FIRST PERFORMED: PICCADILLY THEATRE, LONDON, MAY 1956

PUBLICATION DETAILS: HEINEMANN EDUCATIONAL BOOKS,  
LONDON, 1957

### Criticism and Comment

1. Ruby Cohn, Modern Shakespeare Offshoots (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976) pp.46-47
2. Dolores Kay Gros Louis, Shakespeare by Many Other Names: Modern Dramatic Adaptations (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968) pp.125-130
3. E.R.Wood, 'Introduction' to the published text, pp.vii-xvi

### Reviews

1. Ivor Brown, Theatre 1955-6 (Max Reinhardt, London, 1956) pp.115-118
2. (The Times, 18 May 1956)
3. Anthony Hartley, 'Republic of Cockayne' (The Spectator, 25 May 1956, vol.196, p.730)



AUTHOR: ARNOLD WESKER

TITLE: THE MERCHANT

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known, though there were productions in Sweden, Denmark and New York before the British première. The first performance was probably in Stockholm in 1976.

First British performance:

Birmingham Repertory Theatre, October 1978

PUBLICATION DETAILS: THE JOURNALISTS, THE MERCHANT, THE

WEDDING FEAST by ARNOLD WESKER,

PENGUIN, HARMONDSWORTH, 1980

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AUTHOR: MARGARET WOOD

TITLE: CATO'S DAUGHTER: A PLAY IN ONE ACT FOR WOMEN

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known

PUBLICATION DETAILS: SAMUEL FRENCH, LONDON, 1957

Criticism and Comment

None known

Reviews

None known



AUTHOR: MARGARET WOOD

TITLE: INSTRUMENTS OF DARKNESS: A PLAY IN ONE ACT

FIRST PERFORMED: Not known

PUBLICATION DETAILS: SAMUEL FRENCH, LONDON, 1955

Criticism and Comment

None known

Reviews

None known

APPENDIX 2: CHARACTER AND PLOT CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN  
RICHARD III, DICK DETERRED AND AMERICAN  
 POLITICS

Character correspondences

The following descriptions of characters are taken from the character lists in the printed plays of Shakespeare and Edgar, and from the cast of characters given by Bernstein and Woodward in their books on Watergate, All the President's Men and The Final Days.

SHAKESPEARE

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III

Lord Hastings

Duke of Buckingham

John Morton, Bishop of Ely

EDGAR

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, a corporation lawyer, later President of the United States

John, Lord Hastings, a corporation lawyer, later Attorney-General of the U.S., later Director of the Citizens' Committee to Re-elect the President

Bob, Duke of Buckingham, an advertising executive, later White House Chief of Staff

Martha, Queen of Washington, wife to Hastings

John, Bishop of Ely, Counsel to the President

WATERGATE

Richard Nixon, formerly a corporation lawyer, now President of the United States

John N. Mitchell, formerly a corporation lawyer, then Attorney-General; later, Campaign Director of CRP\*

H.R. Haldeman, assistant to the President; White House Chief of Staff

Martha Mitchell, wife to John N. Mitchell

John W. Dean III, Counsel to the President

\* Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP)

## SHAKESPEARE

Sir James Tyrrel

Sir William  
Catesby

Lord Stanley,  
called also  
Earl of Derby

Henry, Earl of  
Richmond,  
afterwards  
King Henry VII

King Edward IV

George, Duke of  
Clarence,  
Edward IV's  
brother

Sir Robert  
Brakenbury,  
Lieutenant of  
the Tower

## EDGAR

G.Gordon Tyrrell,  
a plumber, former  
member of the FBI

Sir Ron Catesby,  
Press Secretary  
to the President

Elliot, Lord  
Stanley, Attorney-  
General of the U.S.

Samuel, Earl of  
Richmond, Senator  
for North Carolina  
and Majority  
Chairman of the  
Senate Select  
Committee on  
Presidential  
Campaign Activities

Edward IV Part One,  
former President  
of the U.S.  
(does not appear)

Edward IV Part Two,  
President of the  
U.S.

Edward IV Part Three  
Vice-President of  
the U.S.

Eugene, Duke of  
Clarence, Senator  
for Minnesota

Sir John  
Brackenbury, a cop

## WATERGATE

G.Gordon Liddy,  
Finance Counsel,  
CRP; former aide on  
John Ehrlichman's  
staff; a 'plumber'

Ronald L. Zeigler,  
Press Secretary  
to the President

Elliot L. Richardson,  
Attorney-General  
of the U.S.;  
formerly secretary  
of Defense

Sam J. Ervin, Jr.,  
Chairman, Senate  
Watergate Committee;  
Senator for North  
Carolina

John F. Kennedy,  
former President  
of the U.S.

Lyndon Baines  
Johnson, President  
of the U.S.,  
formerly Kennedy's  
vice-president

Hubert Humphrey,  
Johnson's  
Vice-President

Eugene McCarthy,  
democrat who  
challenged Johnson  
in 1968; 'conscience  
of the democrats'



## SHAKESPEARE

Lady Anne, widow of Edward Prince of Wales, son to King Henry VI; afterwards married to the Duke of Gloucester

Elizabeth, daughter to Queen Elizabeth and Edward IV (does not appear but we hear of Richard's attempts to woo her)

Margaret Plantagenet Countess of Salisbury, a young daughter of Clarence

Edward, Prince of Wales, afterwards King Henry V

Richard, Duke of York

Forrest, a murderer (does not appear - see Tyrrel's account of the murder in IV,iii)

Dighton, a murderer (does not appear - see Tyrrel's account of the murder in IV,iii)

Murderer (of Clarence)

## EDGAR

Anne, a Republican

Elizabeth, a democrat

Margaret Plantagenet, daughter to Clarence, a yippie

George, Prince of Wales, Senator for South Dakota

Edmund, Duke of York, Senator for Maine

Sir James Forrest, security expert, formerly member of the CIA

Virgilio Dighton, a Cuban locksmith

Richard, a murderer, Mayor of Chicago

## WATERGATE

-

-

-

George McGovern, Senator for South Dakota, ran against Nixon as a democrat in 1972

Edmund Muskie, Senator for Maine, defeated by McGovern in democrat primaries (1972)

James W. McCord, Jr., a Watergate burglar; head of security for CRP; formerly member of the CIA; former FBI agent

Virgilio R. Gonzalez, a Watergate burglar; a Cuban locksmith

Richard Daley, Mayor of Chicago in 1968 when the democratic convention was held there - power broker

Plot correspondences (sequence based on Dick Deterred)

## SHAKESPEARE

Edward IV dies

Richard reveals that he will play the villain, and set Clarence and Edward against one another

Richard talks to Clarence who is being taken to prison - he pretends sorrow

Richard pretends sorrow when Hastings brings news of Edward's failing health

Anne laments Henry VI's death and curses Richard

Richard tries to persuade Anne to marry him, and he succeeds despite the list of accusations she propounds

Richard despises Anne for his victory

## EDGAR

Edward IV Part 1  
- deadEdward IV Part 2 -  
no chance of re-election,  
therefore retires  
and hands over toEdward IV Part 3 -  
accepts crown but  
does not wear it

Richard reveals his determination to succeed, and his plans to set Clarence and Edward against one another

Richard talks to Clarence who is being taken to Chicago by the FBI - he pretends sorrow

Richard bribes Hastings, who brings news of Edward's failing health, with a promise of the post of Attorney-General

Anne laments the state of the Republican party

Richard tries to persuade Anne that he should have the Republican nomination, and he succeeds despite the list of accusations she propounds

Richard despises Anne for his victory

## WATERGATE

Kennedy assassinated

Johnson, strongly challenged by McCarthy, decides not to seek re-election, leaving the field clear for Humphrey (Johnson's Vice-President) - fails to gain democratic nomination

Nixon wants the Presidency, and hopes to destroy the democratic opposition by setting McCarthy and Humphrey against one another

McCarthy goes to the 1968 democratic convention in Chicago

Mitchell made Attorney-General after 1968 election

(No specific correspondence)

Richard tries to persuade delegates to the Republican convention that he should have the Republican nomination, and he succeeds

(No specific correspondence)



## SHAKESPEARE

Richard tells the murderers to kill Clarence quickly

Clarence tells Brakenbury of his dream of being killed and dying

Murderers question Clarence about his misdeeds, prolonging the agony - Murderer 1 stabs Clarence and disposes of the body

Queen Elizabeth laments the death of King Edward

Buckingham and Catesby told to ascertain support for Richard, especially with regard to Hastings

## EDGAR

Richard tells the murderer to kill Clarence quickly, and the murderer gives his credentials - has used extreme violence against rioting blacks

Buckingham tells Richard that he has won the nomination

During the Democratic convention, Clarence tells Brackenbury of his terrible dream of violence - he is told it really happened

Murderer makes Clarence suffer by telling him he cannot hope to win the Democratic nomination - he then stabs Clarence

Elizabeth laments the death of Edward the King's elect, and the succession of Richard

Richard addresses the nation taking a tough line against violence

Hastings reveals his plan to ensure that Richard is re-elected: they must ensure that the least-attractive democrat wins the democratic nomination (i.e. Prince of Wales); set up CREEK\* to organise this

## WATERGATE

Richard Daley used extreme violence against rioters at the 1968 democratic convention in Chicago

Nixon wins the Republican nomination, 1968

During the Democratic convention, 1968, there was much violence and rioting

McCarthy does not win the Democratic nomination and so is out of the race

Democrats lament the victory of the Republicans

?

CRP organised sabotage and spying activities in order to ruin the chances of several democratic candidates, so that George McGovern would win the nomination



## SHAKESPEARE

Buckingham spreads slander about Edward and Woodvilles - Citizens receive the news in silence, unconvinced

## EDGAR

Buckingham and Hastings spread slander about various democratic candidates - Citizen retaliates by listing several of Richard's corrupt practices

Richard and Buckingham want to ensure that the tapping and surveillance plan does not become known, so they form the 'plumbers' to plug leaks

Hastings reveals that an illegal donation may soon be revealed - Richard and Buckingham give Hastings the task of discovering if this will happen, using the 'plumbers'

Richard ask a page if he knows someone to undertake a murder - he suggests Tyrrel

Buckingham asks Hastings if he knows someone to undertake the burglary - Hastings suggests Tyrrel

Richard commissions Tyrrel to kill the princes

Hastings commissions Tyrrell to organise burglaries of Ellsberg's psychiatrist and of Watergate

Forrest and Dighton murder the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York in the Tower

The Prince of Wales and Duke of York (democrats) are in the Watergate (democratic HQ) when Forrest and Dighton bug them and the place - the princes are yanked off-stage, and the burglars are caught

## WATERGATE

CRP smear campaign e.g. against Muskie (Canuck letter)

'Plumbers' formed to discover and plug security leaks

Mitchell, as director of CRP, organised the expedition by 'plumbers' to Watergate (burglary)

Mitchell commissions Liddy to organise the Watergate break-in

McCord, Gonzalez and others bugged and burgled the Watergate, but were then caught

## SHAKESPEARE

Tyrrel tells audience, then Richard, that the princes have been murdered

## EDGAR

Tyrrell comes to Los Angeles to tell Buckingham and Hastings that the Watergate mission has been completed and that the crooks were caught

Buckingham and Tyrrell arrange to pay for the silence of the crooks

Martha rails against Richard and threatens to reveal all she knows to the UPI - Buckingham and Hastings leave her locked up

Richard meets with his advisers:

a) he asks Ely to fetch some strawberries

b) he converses aside with Buckingham and learns that Hastings is unwilling to support Richard as King

c) Ely returns with the strawberries

e) on a slight pretext, Hastings is branded as a traitor and ordered to be executed

Richard meets with his advisers:

a) he asks Ely to fetch the contents of Tyrrell's safe

b) with Buckingham he decides that the Watergate crooks must be paid for their silence

c) Ely returns with enough evidence to prove Richard's guilt

d) Richard and his men wonder what to do with the hoard, and decide to give it to Gray (acting head of FBI)

e) Hastings is chosen to be the scapegoat if any of this cover-up becomes revealed  
N.B. Much of the meeting is taped

## WATERGATE

?

Money was found to pay for the silence of the burglars and for their defence fees

?

Nixon tended to meet separately with advisers:

a) 'political dynamite' originally in Howard Hunt's safe

b) 'hush money' arranged between Nixon and Dean (not Haldeman)

c) Dean knew about the incriminating files

d) files given to Gray (acting head of FBI) who later destroyed them

e) suggestion that Mitchell could not contribute his quota to the secret fund so they cut him loose  
N.B. Nixon had a White House taping system



## SHAKESPEARE

## EDGAR

## WATERGATE

Richard and Buckingham feel it is time to press for the crown, and with Catesby they set up a charade where Richard appears reluctant to disturb holy meditation and then is revealed to mayor and citizens with two bishops

Buckingham and Mayor persuade Richard to accept the crown -- he finally agrees

Richard ignores Buckingham's request for his reward

Buckingham is bitter at being dismissed

Catesby comments on smear tactics of the Washington Post but believes that the reporters have not given up

Richard comments that Ely is now talking

Richard decides that they must face the press, and with Buckingham and Catesby he sets up a charade where he appears reluctant to disturb important talks and then is revealed to the press as a bringer of world peace with Russian and Chinese leaders

Richard issues a series of press statements, but Buckingham and Catesby feel that they are not convincing

In final statement Richard announces resignations of Dean, Haldeman and Ehrlichman

Buckingham is bitter at being dismissed

Stanley reveals that he has chosen his son Archibald as special prosecutor

Washington Post revealed under-cover activities of White House; Ziegler stated that the Post was indulging in 'shabby journalism'

Dean, after his dismissal, talked freely

Nixon held peace talks with Brezhnev and Mao Tse-Tung

Several statements taken verbatim from Nixon's press statements

Dean, Haldeman and Ehrlichman resigned

(No specific correspondence)

Archibald Cox chosen as special prosecutor by Elliot Richardson



## SHAKESPEARE

Ratcliff, Stanley and messengers bring tidings of the war against Richmond

Elizabeth and Anne lament Richard's supremacy

Richard kills Anne

Richard wants to marry Elizabeth (Edward's daughter) and her mother finally agrees to persuade her

-

Stanley tells Richard that Richmond is coming by sea; Stanley offers to fetch men to help Richard, and Richard agrees provided Stanley leaves behind his son George as surety

Stanley sends message of support to Richmond

## EDGAR

Catesby reveals various bad tidings in the war against the Senate Watergate Committee led by Richmond e.g. Ely fled, Buckingham subpoena'd, taping system revealed

Elizabeth and Anne lament the state of the nation

Richard tries to make a deal with Anne but fails

Richard tries to make a deal with Elizabeth, who finally succumbs

Catesby gives further tidings of the war, mentioning that Spiro is dead

Stanley tells Richard that he (R) has been ordered to surrender the tapes; Stanley offers to fetch lawyers to help Richard, and Richard agrees provided Stanley leaves behind Archie as surety

Stanley suspicious of Richard, and decides to tell Richmond everything

## WATERGATE

Much information revealed in a short space of time to the Senate Watergate Committee led by Ervin: Dean testified, Cox subpoenaed recordings

Neither Republicans nor Democrats were happy with the Nixon administration

Republicans no longer support Nixon

Nixon tries to win democratic support as they now form the majority in Congress

Resignation of Spiro Agnew, Nixon's Vice-President, in 1973

Cox subpoenas White House tapes; Richardson acquiesces to compromise (Stennis) plan

Richardson increasingly unhappy about Nixon's attitude

## SHAKESPEARE

Richmond and  
Richard arrive at  
the battle field

Richmond learns  
that he has  
Stanley's support

Richard organises  
his soldiers

Ghosts appear to  
Richard and  
Richmond in  
succession (people  
killed by Richard)

Richard frightened  
by his dreams

Ratcliffe arrives  
to wake Richard and  
prepare him for  
battle

Messenger tells  
Richard that Stanley  
refuses to come -  
Richard orders  
reprisals against  
George Stanley

Catesby suggests  
that Richard  
withdraw (as battle  
is fierce) -  
Richard refuses

Richmond kills  
Richard

Richmond victorious  
takes the crown

## EDGAR

Richmond and  
Richard arrive at  
the battle field

Richmond learns  
that he has  
Stanley's support

Richard alters the  
White House tapes

Ghosts appear to  
Richard and  
Richmond in  
succession (people  
killed by Richard)

Richard frightened  
by his dreams

Catesby arrives  
to wake Richard and  
prepare him for  
battle

Catesby tells  
Richard that  
Stanley has defected  
to the enemy -  
Richard orders  
reprisals against  
Stanley and Archie,  
including sending  
the FBI to surround  
their tent

Catesby suggests  
that Richard  
resign (as battle  
is fierce) -  
Richard refuses

Richmond kills  
Richard

Richmond victorious  
reveals himself as  
another Edward

Suggestion that  
Richard is not  
yet finished

## WATERGATE

Ervin based in  
caucus room of the  
Senate; Nixon based  
at Camp David

?

Nixon altered White  
House tapes

Various people  
used by Nixon  
now talking to  
Ervin and  
implicating Nixon

-

-

Archibald Cox fired;  
Richardson and  
Ruckelshaus  
(Richardson's  
deputy) resign; Haig  
sends FBI to seal  
their offices to  
prevent files being  
removed

Against advice from  
his lawyers, Nixon  
refused to resign

Nixon resigned after  
Ervin had revealed  
much about Nixon's  
knowledge of the  
surveillance and  
cover-up

-

-



N.B.

Gaps in the Watergate story marked with question marks (?) relate to plot details which very probably do have a basis in fact, though the author of this thesis has not come across references to such incidents. Several of the other gaps are of a private nature and may or may not reflect actual feelings experienced by the characters involved.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography is divided into two main sections. Section A lists primary texts, plays which are either adaptations or use classical texts as part of the creative process in some other way. The section is sub-divided into three categories: modern Shakespeare adaptations not studied (usually because they were not published); pre-1956 Shakespeare adaptations; non-Shakespearian adaptations. The modern Shakespeare adaptations which have been studied in this thesis are listed in Appendix 1 with full performance and publication details and with all relevant secondary material. Section B is a single list of secondary material used in compiling this thesis.

## SECTION A: PRIMARY TEXTS

N.B. Although the plays listed in this section are loosely referred to as 'Adaptations', the reader should not assume that all these plays fulfil the conditions necessary for an adaptation. Most of them probably do fulfil these conditions, and all of them use another writer's play to some extent, but as I have not studied them all in detail, the term 'adaptation' cannot positively be applied. The main function of this list is to indicate the field of study and suggest possibilities for further investigation.

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- Bond, Chris, Richard III (first performed at Everyman Theatre, Liverpool, February 1978)
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Cummings, E.E., Him (in Three Plays and a Ballet by

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The Enchanted Island. A Comedy (1674)

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