







tion of *Richard II*. "In that final line with 'every thing is left at six and seven' if you keep the original fourteen-syllable version you find in the sixth metrical unit is the word 'six' and in the seventh is the word 'seven.'"

Not only is it an instance of the jeweled clockwork of Shakespearean verse, not only is it another instance, he suggests, in which one imagines that Shakespeare may have overseen the printing in order to ensure that the expressive irregularity of the meter was preserved in the lineation, just as with the expressive mispunctuation of Peter Quince's Prologue. But also, as Andrews points out, "It accounts for everything that precedes that speech." He argues the irregularity is a deliberate expression of a disordered mind. At Yale the New Critics used to call this the fallacy of imitative form—disordered verse expressing a disordered mind. But here disorder is both expressed and captured by a higher order.

Impressed as I was by Andrews's arguments, even more by such instances of his attentiveness to Shakespeare's language, I was, I admit, reluctant to concede that in effect I'd been "doing it wrong" all my life, by reading Shakespeare in modern spelling editions. And yet I found myself not alone in seeing some merit in Andrews's arguments. Peter Ackroyd's a true believer. The *OED*'s Jesse Sheidlower, no inconsiderable student of language, felt impassioned on the question. It's not for nothing that Stephen Booth and Helen Vendler both include facsimile unmodernized versions of the Sonnets in their editions. And shortly after interviewing Andrews I was visiting one of the most erudite nonacademic writers I knew, Daniel Kamin, who writes art criticism for venues that range from *Harper's* to the *New Criterion*. The grandson of a poet, he had studied pre-seventeenth-century poetry as a graduate student at Columbia with a legendary Shakespearean teacher, Ted Taylor; he knew his Shakespeare and he knew his metrics. He was skeptical about Peter Hall's end-stopped line structure argument. And at first when I reviewed for him John Andrew's arguments for unmodernized spelling editions, he was incredulous.

"What do you mean?" he said. "I haven't been reading Shakespeare in the original?" I took out my copy of Andrews's Everyman edition of *Hamlet* and handed it to him. He looked it over for some time and then got up and dug out his copy of Harold Jenkins's Arden edition of *Hamlet*, and started comparing passages.

"I can't believe this," he finally said. "I feel cheated"—cheated out of an authentic Shakespearean experience by modernization and conventionalizing of spelling and capitalization.

So where does that leave us? Frankly it convinced me that in my next round of rereading Shakespeare I'd do it in the original spelling editions.\* In the original tongue of flame, so to speak, before the "transposition."

That is of course in addition to reading it *aloud* in the Hall-Edelstein line-structure method. Originalist arguments can make great demands. And offer great rewards.

\* And why not in this book? It was not an easy decision, but since it's not an edition of the plays, but a book that cites passages, I thought the interest in making the quotations more accessible to more readers outweighed the alternative. That it was better to familiarize readers before presuming to de-familiarize them with the passages in question. But I would encourage readers to seek out unmodernized editions for their next rereading of the plays.

when the tragic end has already been triggered, but the news has not yet reached Juliet, who is ardently awaiting Romeo's visit so she can consummate their surreptitious marriage. It is the moment just before she learns that Romeo has killed her cousin Tybalt, initiating a concatenation of events that will lead to their deaths in the Capulets' tomb.

But for the moment she is expressing impatience with the night for not hurrying and bringing Romeo and consummation with him. Here it is again. Read it through Leggatt's lens and see if you feel there's an orgasm in there, see if Leggatt's reading makes sense to you.

*Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,  
Give me my Romeo, and, when I shall die,  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night,  
And pay no worship to the garish sun.*

Where is the orgasmic identity exchange? Leggatt locates it vaguely and obscurely in "the collapsing of Romeo's death into hers." Something he points to as happening in the conspicuously unusual original version that has Juliet saying "when I shall die" rather than "when he shall die." Making it about her sexuality, rather than his death. . . . And the collapsing? Perhaps in the traces of the death—Romeo's—we expected her to speak of? The result of Juliet somehow collapsing her death into the expected death of Romeo? Or conjuring up another kind of death, a sexual "death," a *petite mort* for herself? I think that's what he's saying.

But what about "the wiping out of consciousness and individual identity in a moment of love-making"? Is this Leggatt getting into a fond reverie, or is he persuasive in reading into the text a moment of imagined (very special) orgasm?

In Leggatt's defense I could cite a markedly similar moment of identity exchange later in the same speech of Juliet.

When she speaks of having been married, but not having consummated the marriage, Juliet says:

*O, I have bought the mansion of a love,  
But not possess'd it, and though I am sold,  
Not yet enjoy'd.*

There is that same identity switch—confusion, dissociation, doubleness, whatever you want to call it—in these lines. She is both buyer and object bought: she bought the mansion, then she is the mansion bought. So, metaphorically, she's possessor of Romeo's body but also the body to be possessed, arguably both at the same time. Both, simultaneously, the same mansion. A collapsing of identity, or rather perhaps a *cohabiting* of identity.

Russ McDonald perceptively pointed out, in a 1994 introduction to an essay on the revival of close reading, that the term "undecidability" had replaced "ambiguity" in Shakespeare studies, in literary studies in general. I'm not sure I'm happy with the replacement.

"Undecidable" carries more than a trace of the failed imperative to decide, as if deciding should be the goal, as if decidability were preferable to undecidability. As opposed to "both/and" ambiguity, entertaining both possibilities without deciding. Entertaining in the sense of both giving and taking pleasure in the possibilities. Allowing both to exist simultaneously, changing each other's identity in a pulsating fashion if you follow Stephen Booth's recurrent metaphor.

All of which is to say I think Leggatt's conjecture probably should remain in the new realm of "undecidability," textual purgatory for a while. I'd like to see other responses to it.

Despite some reservations I might have about his specific readings, Leggatt is the kind of scholar I admire, one with an instinct for particularly resonant passages. Who causes us to look closer at moments like Lear's last words, and Juliet's . . . whatever happened to her in that passage.

Another thing I liked about Leggatt's paper was the emphasis he put on "surprise." In fact he called his paper "The Pleasure of Surprise," and the element of surprise figures prominently in his account of Shakespearean pleasure. It's akin to Kermode's evocation of the experience of being on the "threshold of comprehension" of something new. The brink of surprise and the brink of surmise. The brink of amazement. The brink of a maze.

And Leggatt's conclusion was a frank challenge: "A good deal of Shakespeare criticism makes us feel we have had the meaning but missed the experience; we need to start recovering the experience." Recovering: John Andrews seeks to recover the original spelling for the deeper experience of the Shakespearean spell, Steven Berkoff the original emotive spell. I thought of Berkoff doing the Garrick gesture, that signature gesture of Shakespearean surprise: Hamlet's seeing his father's ghost. What I find over and over in Shakespeare is that, on his level or another, I'm throwing up

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