

THE OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR AND
HIS FUNCTIONS IN THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE:
AS YOU LIKE IT, ROMEO AND JULIET,
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA, KING LEAR, AND OTHELLO

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PREFACE

Few remarks are needed to introduce the genius of William Shakespeare. As study of his work is further pursued, scholars are just beginning fully to appreciate the scope of his talent. A careful examination of Shakespeare's plays reveals that he has provided his readers and his audience with a built-in device that determines the meanings of his plays. In each of his plays, at least one character provides some kind of commentary to direct the reader in an understanding of the play. This particular character has been designated as the "objective commentator" in this present study. More specifically, since objective commentators are of various types and perform various, and sometimes overlapping, functions, they have been named and described in relation to their importance to the play. In order to recognize fully the many functions which the objective commentator may perform, five of the specific objective commentators have been selected and described at length, including the melancholic, the scoffer, the protector, the Fool, and the informer.

This study attempts to explore these various characters in their functions as commentators, suggesting, at all times, that they are particularly important for this special function that they perform. Each commentator is also important because of the way in which he is related to the audience. It is for the audience's benefit, in other words, that Shakespeare created the objective commentator. The recognition of such a commentator increases full comprehension of the play as Shakespeare intended it.

Works of particular help to this study were relatively limited. Few critics, apparently, have spent much time in dealing with this relatively new facet of Shakespearean criticism. However, two works were of some value: Dean Frye, "Commentary in Shakespeare: The Case of Coriolanus," in Shakespeare Studies: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews, edited by J. Leeds Barroll; and Elkin Calhoun Wilson, "Shakespeare's Enobarbus," in Joseph Quincey Adams Memorial Studies, edited by James G. McManaway, Giles E. Dawson, and Edwin F. Willoughby.

Deep gratitude is expressed to Dr. Charles E. Walton for his suggestion of this topic and for his scholarly

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR	1
II. THE SCOFFER AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR: MERCUTIO IN <u>ROMEO AND JULIET</u>	39
III. THE PROTECTOR AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR: ENOBARBUS IN <u>ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA</u>	72
IV. THE FOOL AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR: THE FOOL IN <u>KING LEAR</u>	100
V. THE INFORMER AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR: IAGO OF <u>OTHELLO</u>	121
VI. THE OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR AND HIS IMPORTANCE	149
BIBLIOGRAPHY	158

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION

OF SHAKESPEARE'S OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR

William Shakespeare's characterizations are the source of many problems in Shakespearean scholarship, if only because of the complexity of his characters. Often, for instance, a character performs more than one function, particularly if he is an "objective commentator" who is, in general, " . . . some character or group of characters, through whose eyes the events of the play must be seen, if they are to be seen in the right perspective."¹ Although the general term, objective commentator, may be divided into more specific facets, which include the melancholic, the scoffer, the protector, the Fool, and the informer, in this present study, one chooses to explore the generalities fully before defining the more specific functions of this device.

One of the foremost functions of Shakespeare's objective

¹Elkin Calhoun Wilson, "Shakespeare's Enobarbus," in Joseph Quincey Adams Memorial Studies, pp. 151-152.

commentator coincides with the classic duty of the chorus. In the classical dramas of ancient Greece, the chorus that commented upon the action was an integral part of the play. The Greeks used the chorus to mediate between the actors and the spectators, " . . . bespeaking attention, interpreting events, and guiding the feelings" of the audience.² In Sophocles's Oedipus Rex,³ for instance, the action opens upon Oedipus's speaking to members of the general assembly, who, according to stage directions, " . . . lie in various attitudes of despair."⁴ In the play, a priest speaks for the people, telling Oedipus of the hardships that the citizens of Thebes are undergoing. After Oedipus swears to allay the sufferings of his people and leaves the scene, the chorus first speaks, describing the powers of the Delphic Oracle, and next giving a resumé of the disasters that have occurred in Thebes, supplying a direct and presumably accurate view of the situation existing in the

²Loc. cit.

³Sophocles, "Oedipus Rex," in Literary Reflections. Pp. 670-714. All future references to this work will be from this edition.

⁴Ibid., p. 671.

city, as follows:

Now our afflictions have no end,
Now all our stricken host lies down
And no man fights off death with his mind;

The noble plowland bears no grain,
And groaning mothers can not bear--

.

The plague burns on, it is pitiless,
Though pallid children laden with death
Lie unwept in the stony ways.⁵

The Greek chorus, thus, presents the Theban situation in graphic terms. Coleridge⁶ and Morgann⁷ early noted that Shakespeare had apparently incorporated these choric features in some of his characters, causing them to function in a role very much like the chorus in the ancient classical drama. Shakespeare's commentator, the " . . . purveyor of information, a creature and agent of a complex expository technique,"⁸ speaks of the action of the play in the same

⁵Ibid., p. 676.

⁶Olive Mary Busby, Studies in the Development of the Fool in the Elizabethan Drama, p. 38.

⁷Leo Kirschbaum, "Shakespeare's 'Good' and 'Bad,'" RES XXI (April, 1945), 136.

⁸Arthur Colby Sprague, "Shakespeare's Unnecessary Characters," Shakespeare Survey, XX (1967), 75.

manner as does the chorus, explaining to the audience those movements that may be beyond the realm of their immediate knowledge. For instance, the Sampson-Gregory team in Romeo and Juliet⁹ function in this manner as they inform the audience of the long-standing feud between the Montagues and the Capulets:

Sam. A dog of that house shall move me to stand:
I will take the wall of any man or maid of
Montague's.

.

Sam. . . . therefore I will push Montague's
men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.
Gre. The quarrel is between our masters and us
their men.

(I. i. 13-28)

Thus, in this interchange of clown prose between one informed man and one uninformed man, Shakespeare informs his audience exactly of what the immediate situation in Verona happens to be, as Sophocles indicates the conditions of Thebes in Oedipus Rex.

Moreover, when the chorus speaks in the Greek drama, it often summarizes the action, clarifying and commenting

⁹William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet. In The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, editor. Pp. 393-425. All future references to this work will be from this edition.

upon what action has already occurred in the play, and thereby giving the audience both perspective and a momentary rest:¹⁰

The Delphic stone of prophecies
Remembers ancient regicide
And a still bloody hand.
That killer's hour of flight has come.
He must be stronger than riderless
Coursers of untiring wind,
For the son of Zeus armed with his father's thunder
Leaps in lightning after him;
And the Furies follow him, the sad Furies.¹¹

In this manner, the chorus summarizes the prophecy of the Oracle of Delphi and repeats that the killer of their former king shall be hunted down without mercy. Shakespeare's objective commentator often performs the same kind of service in summarizing the action. For example, the gravediggers in Hamlet¹² summarize the events surrounding Ophelia's death, as follows:

First Clo. Is she to be buried in Christian burial
that willfully seeks her own salvation?

¹⁰Martha Hall Shackford, Shakespeare, Sophocles: Dramatic Themes and Modes, p. 33.

¹¹Sophocles, op. cit., p. 684.

¹²William Shakespeare, Hamlet. In The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, editor. Pp. 898-943. All future references to this work will be from this edition.

Second Clo. I tell thee she is; and therefore
make her grave straight: the crowner hath sat
on her, and finds it Christian burial.

First Clo. How can that be, unless she drowned
herself in her own defense?

Second Clo. Why, 'tis found so.

(V. i. 1-8)

Once again employing the device of having one informed clown talk to an uninformed clown apprising the audience of events that have transpired, at the same time, Shakespeare summarizes and clarifies the action that has occurred. Obviously, the clowns believe that Ophelia has committed suicide by drowning, and they reiterate this idea throughout the rest of their dialogue. Consequently, Sophocles's and Shakespeare's audiences are given nonpartisan accounts of important "off-stage" events.

In addition to summarizing the action, the chorus, upon occasion, gives prophetic voice to action that it anticipates in the immediate future. Realizing that events suggest that Oedipus, the cause of his city's previous fortune, is also the cause of her present pain, the chorus describes what happens to those who defy the Gods:

Haughtiness and the high hand of disdain
Tempt and outrage God's holy law;
And any mortal who dares hold
No immortal Power in awe

Will be caught up in a net of pain:
 The price for which his levity is sold.
 Let each man take due earnings, then,
 And keep his hands from holy things,
 And from blasphemy stand apart--
 Else the crackling blast of heaven
 Blows on his head, and on his desperate heart;
 Though fools will honor impious men,
 In their cities no tragic poet sings.¹³

Moreover, the prophetic voice of the chorus is shown to be true as Oedipus, whose tragic flaw of pride is detected and pointed to by the chorus itself, discovers that he is, indeed, the cause of his city's pain. Shakespeare's commentators also possess a prophetic voice. For example, Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra¹⁴ is particularly clairvoyant regarding Antony's passion for Cleopatra. In talking with Mecaenas and Agrippa about Antony's forthcoming marriage to Octavia, Enobarbus alludes to Cleopatra, of whom Mecaenas says:

Mec. Now Antony must leave her utterly.

Eno. Never; he will not:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
 Her infinite variety: other women cloy
 The appetites they feed; but she makes hungry

¹³Sophocles, op. cit., p. 696.

¹⁴William Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra. In The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, editor. Pp. 1071-1108. All future references to this work will be cited from this edition.

Where most she satisfies: for vilest things
 Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
 Bless her when she is riggish.

(II. ii. 238-245)

Thus, the Shakespearean objective commentator is, like the Greek chorus, able to see into the future.

Moral pronouncements also come naturally to the Greek chorus. For example, fulfilling his ironic proclamation to destroy the city's cause of evil days, Oedipus blinds himself with his mother-wife's brooches and banishes himself from the city. At the end of the play, the chorus moralizes, at great length, about Oedipus' downfall in the following manner:

Alas for the seed of man.

What measure shall I give these generations
 That breathe on the void and are void
 And exist and do not exist?

Who bears more weight of joy
 Than mass of sunlight shifting in images,
 Or who shall make his thought stay on
 That down time drifts away?
 Your splendor is all fallen.

O naked brow of wrath and tears,
 O change of Oedipus!
 I who saw your days call no man blest--
 Your great days like ghosts gone.¹⁵

¹⁵Sophocles, op. cit., p. 704.

The chorus informs the audience of the importance of the lesson of Oedipus, thereby presenting the reason for the tragedy. In the same way, many of the objective commentators in Shakespeare's plays make moral pronouncements. For example, Prince Escalus of Verona in Romeo and Juliet utters the following remarks after the story of the two dead lovers is presented by Friar Laurence:

Prince.
 Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague!
 See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
 That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.
 And I for winking at your discords too
 Have lost a brace of kinsmen: all are punish'd.
 (V. iii. 291-295)

Therefore, both the Greek chorus and the objective commentator function alike in this aspect.

Because of the very nature of the classical drama, the chorus remained essentially impersonal and dispassionate, retaining an objectivity necessary as well for the objective commentator.¹⁶ For instance, in the passages already cited from Oedipus Rex, emotion is revealed, but the sorrow of the chorus in Oedipus's downfall is necessarily different

¹⁶Barry B. Adams, "The Prudence of Prince Escalus," ELH, XXXV (March, 1968), 33.

from the emotions of Oedipus, Iocaste, or even Creon. Thus, although functioning in an interpretative manner,¹⁷ the chorus remained a somewhat detached portion of the drama.¹⁸ In addition, although the chorus was of prime importance as a key to character revelation,¹⁹ by retaining its objectivity in its interpretation of the play, it is the first "character" of the play to detect Oedipus's tragic flaw, so important to the play itself. Obviously, then, the chorus was valuable and unique, because it was in such a position that it could reveal character objectively and interpret the action at the same time.²⁰ The objective commentator also possesses similar generalizing and abstracting tendencies that reveal his pre-eminent rationality, reflecting a detached position similar to that of the chorus.²¹ The

¹⁷Muriel Clara Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 113.

¹⁸Howard Baker, Induction to Tragedy: A Study in a Development of Form in Gordoduc, The Spanish Tragedy and Titus Andronicus, p. 143.

¹⁹Shackford, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁰William Witherle Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, p. 209.

²¹Adams, op. cit., p. 33.

necessity that such a personage of this quality possess these characteristics is virtually self-evident. Obviously, an audience needs an authority upon whom it may rely for an interpretation of the events. A detached point of view, of course, ordinarily confers authority upon the objective commentator.²² Dispassionate as he is, the commentator may easily be seen as an interpreter, because the authority denoted by his point of view may be extended to judgments affecting others in the play.²³ This commentator, then, becomes a significant vehicle for character revelation in the manner of the ancient chorus. The importance of

²²Robert B. Heilman, "The Criminal as Tragic Hero: Dramatic Methods," Shakespeare Survey, XIX (1966), 13.

²³Alfred Harbage, As They Liked It: An Essay on Shakespeare and Morality, p. 110. Harbage, of course, disagrees implicitly with the bestowal upon one character of any positive voice of authority. On the above cited page, he expresses his disagreement in the following words: "Whenever in a play by Shakespeare there is a commentator on the worth of the other characters or the significance of the action, there is always something about him to prevent our relying too implicitly upon his words." Harbage's statement may be easily refuted merely by referring to one character, Enobarbus, in Antony and Cleopatra, who will be treated as an objective commentator in a later chapter. Furthermore, this paper will refute his statement in greater detail in regard to each category of objective commentator, also discussed in later chapters.

detachment for both the Greek chorus and the Shakespearean commentator cannot be too highly stressed because of the significance that these devices have in influencing audience interpretation.

Furthermore, other functions of the Greek chorus and the objective commentator are similar. As the chorus indicates the extended passage of time,²⁴ so does the commentator.²⁵ The chorus also emphasizes the connective link between the episodes in the play,²⁶ and Shakespeare's objective commentator provides the same service.²⁷ Moreover, as would be expected, the audience occupies basically the same position toward the chorus and toward the commentator. One of the few modern critics to take the matter of the commentator in Shakespeare under direct consideration, Frye explains:

Like any other dramatist, Shakespeare must provide

²⁴Raymond Chapman, "Double Time in Romeo and Juliet," MLR, XLIV (July, 1949), 372; and Shackford, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁵Chapman, op. cit., p. 372; and Brents Stirling, The Populace in Shakespeare, pp. 49-50.

²⁶Baker, op. cit., p. 143.

²⁷Ibid., p. 142.

a set of assumptions, ethical as well as factual, in order to make his play work, and the most important means of doing so are to see that no one questions these assumptions, and, perhaps, that someone states them.²⁸

Frye indicates that at least one character in a Shakespearean play states the assumptions that Shakespeare himself wishes to convey in the drama. Kirschbaum supports this view, saying that Shakespeare is too careful a dramatist to let the audience merely assume a certain judgment; instead, he establishes definite guidelines for the audience to follow.²⁹ It is clear that these same assumptions may be applied to the chorus. The commentator, thus, must be evident in the play in order to give the spectator the correct viewpoint and to avoid the confusion which would occur in an uninterpreted scene.³⁰ What the audience understands, in other words, must be what Shakespeare or Sophocles intends.³¹

²⁸ Dean Frye, "Commentary in Shakespeare: the Case of Coriolanus," in Shakespeare Studies: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews, II, 106.

²⁹ Kirschbaum, op. cit., p. 136.

³⁰ Busby, op. cit., p. 38.

³¹ Carroll Camden, Jr., "Shakespeare on Sleep and Dreams," Rice Institute Pamphlet, XXIII (April, 1936), 107.

The audience must be early aware of what the author is attempting to do in order to perceive it fully as the writer intends. The audience is, of course, also influenced by circumstances and by characters and their incidental dialogue,³² but it still needs a commentator or chorus upon whom it can rely without doubt.

Although the objective commentator or chorus understands more in the play than any other character, the audience is in a position to understand even more than the most knowing of the characters.³³ This aptitude is necessary, of course, for dramatic irony, because only when the audience is in possession of knowledge that is withheld from some of the characters in the play is it possible for this device to operate.³⁴ Moreover, a commentator or chorus is necessary to a play, since the testimony of the characters provides

³²Frye, op. cit., p. 105; and Levin L. Schücking, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays: A Guide to the Better Understanding of the Dramatist, p. 30.

³³Adams, op. cit., p. 49.

³⁴Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 186; and Robert Boies Sharpe, Irony in the Drama: An Essay on Impersonation, Shock, and Catharsis, p. 186.

the source of the dramatic meaning.³⁵ In order to establish the dramatic meaning, a playwright must establish the correct audience response, very naturally an important ingredient in any dramatic production.³⁶ The commentator may establish this kind of response by direct self-characterization or by repeated comment from the other characters in the play.³⁷ Through both the chorus and the commentator, the sympathies of the audience are distributed by the comments of the characters within the play on situations and other characters.³⁸ Kirschbaum, once again, substantiates this idea by explaining that

. . . normally, in each Shakespeare play we are informed--more or less exactly, according to the dramatic necessity--how to take each character and event.³⁹

By virtue of his existence and through the variety of his

³⁵Frye, op. cit., p. 117.

³⁶Ibid., p. 106.

³⁷William Rosen, Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy, p. 1.

³⁸Frye, op. cit., p. 107; and Kirschbaum, op. cit., p. 136.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 136-137.

functions, the commentator may do anything from heightening the intensity of emotion which the reader experiences at certain moments during the drama⁴⁰ to merely offering witty comments that are intended only for the amusement of the audience.⁴¹

In addition to the very definite relationship of the objective commentator to the ancient Greek chorus, the soliloquy, a convention of the stage which makes the audience an eavesdropping agent,⁴² also has a direct relationship to the objective commentator. The soliloquy, an instrument of direct revelation by one of the characters, provides information that is needed for the audience in order to follow the action of the play and to explain events that would not be otherwise stated clearly.⁴³ In addition,

⁴⁰ Booth, op. cit., p. 197.

⁴¹ Busby, op. cit., p. 38.

⁴² Nevill Coghill, Shakespeare's Professional Skills, p. 129. Coghill does an exceptionally good job of classifying the soliloquy and of establishing its functions in the chapter entitled, "Soliloquy."

⁴³ Bernard Spivack, Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villains, p. 5.

the soliloquy gives a character a closeness to the audience not obtained in any other way.⁴⁴ As the speaker steps out of his general character to make this expository utterance, he speaks not for his own particular perspective, but for the perspective of the play in general.⁴⁵ Used not only as a means for telling a story,⁴⁶ the soliloquy is also a theme-bearing speech in the play.⁴⁷ Since it exposes the innermost workings of a character's mind, the soliloquy is expected to contain revelations of truth. Coghill describes the importance of the soliloquy, as follows:

. . . in Shakespeare, a man who addresses the audience directly when he is alone is not embellishing the casual pattern of the dialogue . . . but is directing his hearers' attention to some important matter in the story. He is speaking for a purpose.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Coghill, op. cit., p. 154.

⁴⁵Robert Langbaum, "Character Versus Action in Shakespeare," SQ, VIII (Winter, 1957), 57.

⁴⁶Harley Granville-Barker, "Shakespeare's Dramatic Art," in A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, p. 68.

⁴⁷Nevill Coghill, "Shakespearean Soliloquy," New Theatre Magazine, V (1964), 33.

⁴⁸Coghill, Shakespeare's Professional Skills, p. 133.

Thus, the Elizabethan soliloquy is markedly dramatic and a reliable source of important information. The soliloquy is, therefore, the ideal vehicle for the objective commentator, although its mere use does not automatically identify an involved character as an objective commentator.

Because of its convenience and flexibility as a convention,⁴⁹ the soliloquy may serve several functions. Suggesting that it corresponds to the chorus in a Greek play,⁵⁰ Langbaum notes that it also serves an especially important purpose, because it always expresses the truth, thus making it a reliable source of information for the audience. It exposes the inner workings of the character's mind to the audience,⁵¹ which, in turn, uses this valuable information in determining its reaction to the play.⁵² It also aids the audience in adjusting to the general tenor of the play.⁵³ In addition, it is often used as a statement

⁴⁹Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 68.

⁵⁰Langbaum, op. cit., p. 57.

⁵¹Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 68.

⁵²Daniel Seltzer, "Elizabethan Acting in Othello," SO, X (Spring, 1959), 205-206.

⁵³Coghill, "Shakespearean Soliloquy," p. 33.

for a highly developed moral.⁵⁴ Shakespeare also utilizes it as a connective device in his habit of jumping from strong-point to strong-point, and, consequently,

. . . often seems to feel the need to consolidate the narrative structure by confirming what has happened and suggesting what is to come.⁵⁵

This intimate and potent discourse⁵⁶ thus turns the character into something very much like a chorus,⁵⁷ the foremost characteristic of the objective commentator.

Dramatic asides are very much like soliloquies in that they are direct or partially direct revelations to the audience, in many cases that of explanation.⁵⁸ Such remarks are usually self-explanatory and serve to make the feelings of the character explicit.⁵⁹ They often reveal that the character is thinking the opposite of what he says,⁶⁰ and,

⁵⁴Bradbrook, op. cit., p. 124; and Langbaum, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵⁵Coghill, Shakespeare's Professional Skills, p. 133.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 130-131.

⁵⁷Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 68.

⁵⁸Bradbrook, op. cit., p. 122; and Seltzer, op. cit., p. 206.

⁵⁹Bradbrook, op. cit., p. 121.

⁶⁰Sharpe, op. cit., p. 185.

of course, they may be used in this sense as a further means of character development. The aside may be conventionally audible only to the character to whom the remark is addressed and to the audience, or it may be audible only to the audience.⁶¹ The various uses of the aside are not so extensive as are those of the soliloquy, but it functions in basically the same manner. The aside, of course, is particularly effective in conveying dramatic irony. Perhaps its most important function, however, particularly with relevance for the objective commentator, is its bridging effect between dialogue and soliloquy.⁶²

However, for one to understand the basic concept of the objective commentator and its relationship to other techniques used in the drama, the device must be shown in its other categories, and, in turn, described fully, as has been its general nature. Probably one of the most obvious examples of the use of an objective commentator is the prologue. Its function is, of course, to inform the

⁶¹Samuel Leslie Bethell, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, p. 88.

⁶²Bradbrook, op. cit., p. 121.

audience about the opening of the play. Sometimes, as in the prologue to Romeo and Juliet, a capsule picture of the whole narrative is revealed. Furthermore, the prologue may present the background necessary for the play, because it is at this point, upon occasion, that Shakespeare introduces the dramatis personae in brief, indicating their status, the place, and the action of the play:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
 In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
 A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
 Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
 Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
 The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
 Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
 Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
 The which if you with patient ears attend,
 What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

(Prologue)

Remembering the guidelines earlier established for the determination of an objective commentator, one sees that this prologue to Romeo and Juliet does, indeed, fulfill at least some of the requirements. For instance, it conveys information that otherwise cannot be obtained. It crystalizes the problems to be dealt with in the play and acts as a prophet, foretelling the deaths of the two lovers of

the opposing households. Moreover, it is obviously detached, since it has no "character," thus giving assurance of its statements. It helps shape audience attitude, suggesting that the feud is obviously looked upon with disfavor.⁶³ In other words, it serves as a chorus for the general interpretation of the play.⁶⁴ Other Shakespearean prologues, including the one affixed to Henry V, have basically these same characteristics, thereby justifying the designation of Shakespeare's prologues as a subdivision of the objective commentator.

Objective commentary, however, does not imply mere characterization, as revealed in the use of the prologue as commentator. On the contrary, a group of characters can function together and obtain the effect of a single commentator. This type of commentator is the "mirror commentator."⁶⁵

⁶³ Georges A. Bonnard, "Romeo and Juliet: A Possible Significance?" RES, II (October, 1951), 327.

⁶⁴ Baker, op. cit., p. 142; and Rosen, op. cit., p. 109.

⁶⁵ Hereward T. Price, "Mirror Scenes in Shakespeare," in Joseph Quincey Adams Memorial Studies, p. 101. The term "mirror commentator" was suggested by this article written by Price.

Price defines the "mirror scene" as a " . . . kind of contrast to the general run of action, outstanding because of its tone or implication."⁶⁶ It is a scene that is created in such a way as to mold significant incidents into a symbol in order to reflect the main theme of the drama and to enlarge the audience's knowledge of the central thought.⁶⁷ These scenes are, then, those which do not advance the plot, but which add, nevertheless, to the understanding of the theme.⁶⁸ Ironically, although the scene may bring the ideas of the play into focus, the audience will not miss the scene if it is cut entirely out of the play. These scenes are " . . . apparently loose detachable scenes, so-called episodes" which affect the plot by keying down or keying up the suspense.⁶⁹ Several of Shakespeare's plays have mirror commentators in them. For instance, Antony and Cleopatra, because of its episodic

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 102.

⁶⁷Loc. cit.

⁶⁸Paul J. Aldus, "Analogical Interpretation in Shakespeare's Plays," SQ, VI (Fall, 1955), 400.

⁶⁹Price, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

nature, is full of mirror scenes.⁷⁰ One of these events occurs in II. vii., as the triumvirate boards Pompey's galley in order to celebrate the proposed treaty. The scene itself may be dispensed with, because no real action occurs. It does, however, give evidence of the character of each of the main personages in the war. For example, as Lepidus is carried off as the first of the triumvirate to succumb to his cups, Enobarbus laughs about the servant who is strong enough to carry a third of the world on his shoulders. Antony, too, shows his spirit as he says:

Come, let's all take hands,
Till that conquering wine hath steep'd our sense
In soft and delicate Lethe.

(II. vii. 113-115)

Caesar, as well, reveals his character in the following words:

. . . . Pompey, good night.
Good brother
Let me request you off: our graver business
Frowns at this levity.

(II. vii. 126-128)

The musicians in Romeo and Juliet, in IV. v., also appear in a mirror scene, adding to the horror of Juliet's "death"

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 110.

and to the suspense of the play.⁷¹ In addition, the dumb shows in Hamlet, Macbeth, and Richard III, achieve the effect, too, of epitomizing the overall theme. In speaking of the chorus, Heilman describes the mirror commentator well:

[It] is never a flat statement which comes up with a two-plus-two-equals-four about the figures on the stage. It needs to be integral with the design, and wholly unselfconscious, and for that reason it comes best as a speech which belongs primarily to its own dramatic context but which, by its identification with the pattern of which the reader has become aware, transcends the context and becomes an imaginative commentary upon the whole world of the drama.⁷²

Therefore, the mirror commentator, in serving as a chorus in this manner, is yet another relative of the objective commentator.

Another Shakesperean objective commentator is the famous clown, the rustic, who serves as a comic chorus.⁷³ In general, these clowns, although realistic,⁷⁴ function

⁷¹Ibid., p. 108.

⁷²Robert B. Heilman, This Great Stage: Image and Structure in "King Lear," pp. 62-63.

⁷³Busby, op. cit., p. 38.

⁷⁴John W. Draper, Stratford to Dogberry: Studies in Shakespeare's Earlier Plays, p. 12.

more in the capacity of a deus ex machina;⁷⁵ that is, they serve in specific and limited functions rather than as actual characterizations. Despite the fact that Shakespeare's clown is a minor character, he is important, because it is his early appearance and commentary that allow the audience to learn facts that they could not otherwise know.⁷⁶ This function is particularly important to a drama if a prologue is not a part of the play. When a clown speaks early in the play, Shakespeare's audience has an opportunity to become oriented to the action, thereby understanding plot, making judgments, and distributing sympathies.⁷⁷ Using these often grotesque figures to comment upon the action,⁷⁸ Shakespeare causes them to function as objective commentators as they convey information. As shown earlier, Sampson

⁷⁵Herbert Weisinger, "A Shakespeare All Too Modern," Arizona Quarterly, XX (1964), 310.

⁷⁶Booth, op. cit., p. 169; Draper, op. cit., p. 25; Frye, op. cit., p. 108; Harbage, op. cit., p. 112; and Sprague, op. cit., p. 75.

⁷⁷Draper, op. cit., p. 25; and Frye, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

⁷⁸Frederick Morgan Padelford, "Gothic Spirit in Shakespeare," SAQ, XV (July, 1916), 236.

and Gregory perform in this way in Romeo and Juliet, at the same time establishing the audience point of view respecting the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. Mood is particularly reflected in the speeches of Sampson, who gives the impression of haste.⁷⁹ Their patter also hints at what is to come in the plot.⁸⁰ These not important characters, who are, nonetheless, perfectly discriminated, serve to heighten the interest of the audience, even as they make their puns, particularly when the servingmen of the Montagues enter the scene.⁸¹ The clown gravediggers in Hamlet also function in the same manner. They comment upon Ophelia's death, and bring to light the truth that Ophelia has committed suicide.⁸² As suggested earlier, they clarify the events of Ophelia's death. Moreover, since they are detached from the actual action, they are convincing

⁷⁹Brents Stirling, Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy: The Interplay of Theme and Character, p. 10.

⁸⁰Milton Crane, Shakespeare's Plays, p. 137.

⁸¹Hardin Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 44.

⁸²Allen H. Gilbert, "Scenes of Discovery in Othello," PQ, V, (April, 1926), 129.

in their exposure of truth. The gravediggers also function as objective commentators in that their special brand of wit provides comic relief.⁸³ These clownish objective commentators also may be messengers, servants, minstrels, or watchmen, but whatever their names or occupations, they function as objective commentators who may " . . . listen to confidences, run errands, amuse idle moments, and comment as a chorus."⁸⁴

Another type of objective commentator of somewhat more importance than the clown is one designated as the "incidental character perceiver." This commentator is a relatively minor character, usually not even specifically named in the dramatis personae. Closely related to the clown commentator, this incidental character perceiver lacks the witticisms that distinguish the other type of commentator. His function is somewhat more limited, too, for his duty, as his title indicates, is to comment upon

⁸³Leon Prager, "The Clown in Othello," SQ, XI (Winter, 1960), 94.

⁸⁴Austin K. Gray, "Robert Armine the Foole," PMLA, XLII (September, 1927), 673.

the other characters in the play, although in doing so, he necessarily comments upon the action of the play. His commentary is usually short, but it is quite truthful, because he is not directly involved with the person about whom he is speaking, but is close enough to obtain a true picture. Often, he anticipates and prefigures the later entrance of the hero, thus giving the audience a preconceived attitude toward the central figure.⁸⁵ It is the incidental character perceiver who also helps to create the character of the central figure in the play,⁸⁶ and it is he who tells the audience how it should react to any character of importance.⁸⁷ This type of commentator is particularly predominant in Coriolanus⁸⁸ and Antony and Cleopatra. For example, the citizens discuss Coriolanus on several occasions, always

⁸⁵Rosen, op. cit., p. 1.

⁸⁶Frye, op. cit., p. 105.

⁸⁷Francis G. Schoff, "King Lear: Moral Example or Tragic Protagonist?" SQ, XIII (Spring, 1962), 157.

⁸⁸William Shakespeare, Coriolanus. In The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, editor. Pp. 1108-1147. All future references to this work will be from this edition.

pointing to the man's pride:

Sec. Cit. Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

All. Against him first: he's a very dog to the commonalty.

Sec. Cit. Consider you what service he has done for his country?

First Cit. Very well; and could be content to give him good report for 't, but that he pays himself with being proud.

Sec. Cit. Nay, but speak not maliciously.

First Cit. I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud; which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue.

Sec. Cit. What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous.

First Cit. If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition.

(I. i. 26-47)

In the course of this discussion, the audience obviously learns about Caius Marcius. In addition, Schoff notices this same type of commentary in Antony and Cleopatra when he discusses the abundance of " . . . character guides, with clearly pointed remarks of what we see."⁸⁹ Philo and Demetrius discuss Antony's character upon several occasions

⁸⁹ Schoff, op. cit., p. 157.

during the play:⁹⁰

Phi. Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy's lust.

(I. i. 1-8)

Later, in the same scene, they re-establish their interrupted conversation:

Dem. Is Caesar with Antonius prized so slight?

Phi. Sir, sometimes, when he is not Antony,
He comes too short of that great property
Which still should go with Antony.

Dem. I am full sorry
That he approves the common liar, who
Thus speaks of him at Rome: but I will hope
Of better deeds to-morrow. Rest you happy!

(I. i. 55-62)

This prologue-like conversation of Philo and Demetrius concerning Antony is complemented later in the play by Maecenas and Agrippa, thus identifying each as incidental character perceivers.⁹¹ Each serves an important function as an

⁹⁰Paul A. Jorgensen, "Antony and the Protesting Soldiers: A Renaissance Tradition for the Structure of Antony and Cleopatra," in Essays on Shakespeare, p. 164.

⁹¹Willard Farnham, Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier: The World of his Final Tragedies, p. 1.

objective commentator, always acting in choric fashion.

Another type of objective commentator is the ghost. As a commentator, the ghost necessarily comments upon the action in the play. His main function, of course, is to relate the past to the unknowing characters and audience, thereby establishing an indicated response. In Hamlet, for instance, the ghost recounts the circumstances of his murder truthfully:

. . . Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment

(I. v. 59-64)

His appearance naturally intensifies the action in the play. Moreover, he obviously serves the function of catalyst for the ensuing action. Limited though his functions are, he is, nonetheless, an objective commentator.

The "commentator general"⁹² is also another type of objective commentator who is the controller of much of the action in the plays in which he appears. He obviously knows more than any other character in the play, and it is from

⁹²Craig, op. cit., p. 124.

him that the audience comprehends the full significance of the drama. The commentator general, of course, comments upon the action, summarizing and clarifying. He tends to make pronouncements of a moral nature, and he does his best to remain dispassionate. From him, the audience learns what point of view it should adopt. A commentator of this type is Prospero in The Tempest.⁹³ Since he is virtually omnipotent, the audience relies implicitly upon his word as he reveals to Miranda the story of her background:

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and
 She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father
 Was Duke of Milan; and thou his only heir
 And princess no worse issued.

(I. ii. 56-59)

Furthermore, Prospero's abundant use of the conventional aside marks him as a man speaking the truth, or as an objective commentator.

The objective commentator also assumes the form of the popular melancholic. This particular character is more extreme in his reactions to those around him, but, nonetheless given a suitable scrutiny, he uses his cynicism as

⁹³William Shakespeare, The Tempest. In The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, editor. Pp. 1247-1270. All future references to this work will be from this edition.

" . . . the exercise of the right and duty to rebuke evils in others"⁹⁴ in much the same fashion as the Fool. Often, his vindictiveness isolates him from the rest of the people in the play. In comedy, the satirical commentator is deliberately set apart from his prey, thus denoting detachment and objectivity.⁹⁵ However, the melancholic has a special function to serve as a corrective, because Shakespeare " . . . introduces into his plays various characters whose sole business it is to comment on, often indeed to expose, the fantastic figment of the pastoral."⁹⁶ This description of the melancholic brings Jaques in As You Like It to mind.⁹⁷ Jaques spends his entire time in the play commenting upon the foibles of the people in this pastoral romance. Hence the melancholic, then, is yet another objective commentator.

The scoffer may also be named as an objective commentator,

⁹⁴Oscar James Campbell, "The Salvation of Lear," ELH, XV (June, 1948), 102.

⁹⁵Crane, op. cit., p. 128.

⁹⁶Thomas Marc Parrott, Shakespearean Comedy, p. 168.

⁹⁷William Shakespeare, As You Like It. In The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, editor. Pp. 586-614. All future references to this work will be from this edition.

who takes great joy in revealing the follies of those around him as does the melancholic. The difference between them, though, lies in the manner in which they perform. The scoffer is not isolated and is an intrinsic part of the action, a catalyst to some extent. He does retain his objectivity, however, despite the fact that he is usually a friend of the object of his scorn. Among those who obviously fit this category is Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet. He constantly scoffs at Romeo's amorous woes in an attempt to make his cousin realize how silly his infatuation is. His brilliant wit negates the bitterness that often is produced by the melancholic. The scoffer, then, may be classified as an objective commentator.

Also the friend about whom he comments, but with a different spirit, is an objective commentator known as a "protector." He is generally older and wiser than the scoffer. His very dignity in his chorus-like office gives weight to his words, regardless of what he says. Enobarbus of Antony and Cleopatra is a protector, one who thoroughly understands his best friend, Antony. Menenius Agrippa in Coriolanus also functions as the protector. It is he who advises Coriolanus in his bid for the consulship of Rome:

Men. O sir, you are not right: have you not known
The worthiest men have done 't?

Cor. What must I say?
'I pray, sir,'--Plague upon 't! I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace:--'Look, sir, my wounds!
I got them in my country's service, when
Some certain of your brethren roar'd and ran
From the noise of our own drums.'

Men. O me, the gods!
You must not speak of that: you must desire them
To think upon you.

Cor. Think upon me! hang 'em!
I would they would forget me, like the virtues
Which our divines lose by 'em.

Men. You'll mar all:
I'll leave you: pray you, speak to 'em, I pray you,
In wholesome manner.

(II. iii. 53-68)

Meneius is constantly soothing Coriolanus with calm advice.

Both Enobarbus and Menenius, then, are protectors.

Another of Shakespeare's objective commentators is the Fool, whose origin and characteristics mark him as the most obvious of commentators. He may comment upon the action, mediating between the audience and the actor, without fear of being harmed by the truth. His voice is often that of prophecy, and he may make moral pronouncements, particularly in the form of puns. He is detached from the main action of the play and is often used to heighten emotion. That he is witty is without question. Each Fool, whether completely comic or partially tragic, may be classified as an objective

commentator. Touchstone in As You Like It, Feste in Twelfth Night, and the Fool in King Lear, all fit into this category.

The final category of the objective commentator is that of the informer, the most sinister and least-liked of all objective commentators. These dissemblers assume the guise of friendship in order to advance themselves. They insinuate themselves into everyone's good feelings, but early declare themselves, to the audience only, of course, to be villains.⁹⁸ As villains, they freely discuss their plots and reveal themselves to the audience in numerous soliloquies and asides. They are often entrusted with revelation of the virtue of their victims, which, indeed, shows villainy.⁹⁹ Commenting freely upon the action, they convey information and formulate the audience's response to the drama. For example, detached from the action, Richard in Richard III, Edmund in King Lear, and Iago in Othello serve in the capacity of informers.

Shakespeare, then, differentiates between his objective

⁹⁸Kirschbaum, op. cit., p. 138.

⁹⁹Harbage, op. cit., p. 59.

commentators to the extent that one may categorize them as prologue, mirror commentator, clown commentator, incidental character perceiver, ghost, commentator general, melancholic, scoffer, protector, Fool, and informer. Thus, equipped with a definition of the objective commentator in general and with knowledge of the more specific objective commentators, one must go even further in his investigation by conducting a minute survey of some other specific commentators. More specific investigations will be conducted of the melancholic in the form of Jaques in As You Like It; of the scoffer in the character of Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet; of the protector in the person of Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra; of the Fool in the form of Lear's Fool in King Lear; and of the informer in the character of Iago in Othello.

CHAPTER II

THE MELANCHOLIC AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR:

JAQUES IN AS YOU LIKE IT

The objective commentator is limited to neither tragedy, nor comedy, but, rather, is found in all of Shakespeare's plays. In fact, virtually every play has more than one such character, and each one's importance is designated by the functions that he performs. For instance, in As You Like It, the play in which " . . . poetry, foolery, and philosophy meet,"¹⁰⁰ Orlando functions as a clown at the beginning of the play in describing his brother's actions. In addition, Oliver (the brother and villain) assumes, in part, the functions of the informer, although he is not as villainous as a true informer. Touchstone, who is the fool in the Junior Duke's court, functions whole-heartedly as the objective-commentator fool. Moreover, others function as clowns, as incidental character perceivers, and as mirror commentators. However, the most outstanding of the

¹⁰⁰John Jay Chapman, A Glance toward Shakespeare, p. 79.

commentators is the melancholic: i. e., Jaques.¹⁰¹ His personal qualities, as well as his duties in As You Like It, classify him as the type of objective commentator known as the melancholic.

Jaques is almost universally thought of as being melancholy.¹⁰² His associates in the play often refer to him as "the melancholy Jaques," (II. 1. 26) and even the kindly Duke Senior enjoys teasing him when he is in one of his "humors:" "I love to cope him in these sullen fits, / For then he's full of matter." (II. i. 66-68) Jaques is perfectly satisfied with himself, however, and indulges in his melancholy at every opportunity:¹⁰³

Jaq. More, more, I prithee, more.

Ami. It will make you melancholy, Monsieur Jaques.

¹⁰¹ Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," in Discussions of Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies, p. 54.

¹⁰² Campbell, op. cit., p. 49; Sir E. K. Chambers, Shakespearean Gleanings, p. 44; Cumberland Clark, A Study of As You Like It, p. 55; John A. Hart, "Foolery Shines Everywhere: The Fool's Function in the Romantic Comedies," in Starre of Poets: Discussions of Shakespeare, p. 42; Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama: An Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time, p. 126; and Albert H. Tolman, "Shakespeare's Manipulations of his Sources in 'As You Like It,'" MLN, XXXVII (February, 1922), 70.

¹⁰³ Gardner, op. cit., p. 65.

Jaq. I thank it. More, I prithee, more. I can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs. More, I prithee, more.

(II. v. 9-14)

He refers to his melancholy whenever he has an occasion to do so and he always emphasizes the joy that he derives from it:

Jaq. I prithee, pretty youth, let me be better acquainted with thee.

Ros. They say you are a melancholy fellow.

Jaq. I am so; I do love it better than laughing.

(IV. i. 1-4)

His melancholy that gives him so much pleasure is caused by his contemplation of worldly folly, the result of his extensive traveling:¹⁰⁴

. . . but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

(IV. i. 16-20)

¹⁰⁴John W. Draper, "Jaques' Seven Ages and Bartholomaeus Anglicus," MLN, LIV (April, 1939), 276; Z. S. Fink, "Jaques and the Malcontent Traveler," PQ, XIV (July, 1935), 243; Frederick Morgan Padelford, "The Simple Life as Shakespeare Viewed It," Sewanee Review, XX (January, 1912), 32; and John D. Rea, "Jaques in Praise of Folly," MP, XVII (December, 1919), 465. Conventionally, the Elizabethan traveler, supposedly because of his Italian affectations, was a thoroughly polluted soul, who, having ransacked the world for novelty and happiness, could no longer find amusement in ordinary appetites and attachments, and would tend toward melancholy.

Jaques's melancholy is an attitude that is definitely in discord with that of the rest of the inhabitants of Arden.

Jaques, the melancholic, is also a cynic and a satirist. His travels which helped to produce his melancholy views also helped to produce his cynicism and sarcasm.¹⁰⁵

Utter disillusionment about the world,¹⁰⁶ the result of "many simples," (II. v. 17) has changed Jaques into a man who suggests that deflating pessimism is the best agent for cleansing a corrupt world.¹⁰⁷ At every opportunity, he attempts to cleanse his world with his caustic remarks on every event from the killing of a deer to falling in love. The most famous of his cynical tirades, of course, occurs in the Seven Ages of Man speech, described by Harris as the " . . . diseased vision of a thoroughgoing cynic."¹⁰⁸ In this speech, he describes:

¹⁰⁵Fink, op. cit., p. 250; John M. Major, "Eliot's 'Gerontion' and 'As You Like It,'" MLN, LXXIV (January, 1959), 30; and John D. Rea, "Jaques on the Microcosm," PQ, IV (October, 1925), 346.

¹⁰⁶Crane, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁰⁷Harold E. Toliver, "Shakespeare and the Abyss of Time," JEGP, LXIV (April, 1965), 240.

¹⁰⁸Lancelot Minor Harris, "Sentimentalism in Shakespeare -- and Elsewhere," Sewanee Review, XVII (October, 1909), 441.

. . . the infant, / Mewling and puking . . . the
 whining school-boy . . . the lover, / Sighing
 like a furnace . . . a soldier, / Full of strange
 oaths and bearded like the pard . . . the justice
 . . . full of wise saws and modern instances . . .
 The sixth age . . . pipes / And whistles . . .
 Last scene of all . . . is second childishness
 and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans
 taste, sans every thing.

(II. vii. 142-166)

With these cynical words, so distasteful to those around
 him, Jaques disposes of life. Usually, if one is cynical,
 he is also satirical; so it is with Jaques. Because of his
 compounded melancholy and cynicism, he advocates the
 satirist's right to speak:¹⁰⁹

Invest me in my motley; give me leave
 To speak my mind, and I will through and through
 Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
 If they will patiently receive my medicine.

(II. vii. 58-61)

His satirical reflections, so much in contrast to those
 around him, along with his cynicism and melancholy,
 distinguish him from others in the play.¹¹⁰ Moreover, as he

¹⁰⁹ Francis Fergusson (ed.), Shakespeare's Comedies of Romance: A Midsummer-Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night, p. 203.

¹¹⁰ C. H. Carruthers, "The Shakespearean Ducdame," PQ, XII (January, 1933), 37.

complains of the futility of existence,¹¹¹ he moralizes to a great extent.¹¹² Appropriate at some times, his moralizing is often negated because of his constant railing against the follies of the world.¹¹³ Moreover, it is further affected by his misplaced sentimentalism,¹¹⁴ as, for instance, in the case of the deer that he finds bleeding beside a brook. At once, the First Lord reveals to the Duke Senior what Jaques has said. It is a speech, incidentally, that is quite characteristic of Jaques:

Duke S. But what said Jaques?
 Did he not moralize this spectacle?
First Lord. O, yes, into a thousand similes.
 First, for his weeping into the needless stream;
 'Poor deer,' quoth he, 'thou makest a testament
 As worldings do, giving thy sum of more
 To that which had too much:' then, being there alone,
 Left and abandon'd of his velvet friends,
 'Tis right,' quoth he; 'thus misery doth part
 The flux of company;' anon a careless herd,
 Full of the pasture, jumps along by him

¹¹¹Fink, op. cit., p. 250.

¹¹²John Shaw, "Fortune and Nature in 'As You Like It,'" SQ, VI (Winter, 1955), 45.

¹¹³John Russell Brown, Shakespeare and his Comedies, p. 154.

¹¹⁴H. B. Charlton, Shakespearian Comedy, p. 279; and Harris, op. cit., p. 441.

And never stays to greet him; 'Ay,' quoth Jaques,
 'Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;
 'Tis just the fashion: wherefore do you look
 Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?'

(II. i. 43-57)

Jaques's comments at this point, although admittedly sentimental, are wise and not illogical.¹¹⁵ When he speaks of the " . . . fat and greasy citizens" who pass the deer without a second glance, there is in his comments an inherent comparison with human beings. Yet Jaques's philosophical spirit is generally ignored because of his overwhelming personal characteristics of melancholy, cynicism, and sarcasm.

Jaques's qualities that place him specifically in the category of the melancholic are complemented by characteristics and functions that classify him as an objective commentator. Usually, these characteristics include his detachment from the action, a lack of emotion, and honesty. Although detachment is definitely a requirement for the objectivity of the commentator, some scholars maintain that Jaques's detachment is carried too far. In other words,

¹¹⁵Samuel A. Tannenbaum, "Emendation of 'As You Like It,' II, vii, 73," MLN, XLIV (November, 1929), 428.

Jaques is treated by many critics as an unnecessary addition to this play, one created only because Shakespeare had wanted a part for a favored actor. According to more than one scholar, Jaques has nothing to do in the play--and does it.¹¹⁶ However interesting as this theory sounds, not even its most ardent supporters can summon enough evidence to prove it. For instance, Wilcox is one who argues that Jaques has no place in the play. Yet, it is he who says that Jaques belongs to the play for the few speeches that he utters which bear no relevance to the play itself.¹¹⁷ Thus, although critics are prone to question the actual inclusion of Jaques in As You Like It, it is perhaps this feeling of "detachment" that makes him an objective commentator of some quality.

The reaction of those around him, of course, also determines the degree of Jaques's detachment and objectivity. Rosalind makes fun of him;¹¹⁸ Orlando refuses to listen to

¹¹⁶ Gardner, op. cit., p. 60; Parrott, op. cit., p. 168; Tolman, op. cit., p. 70; and John Wilcox, "Putting Jaques into 'As You Like It,'" MLR, XXXV (July, 1941), 388.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 391.

¹¹⁸ Padelford, op. cit., p. 34.

him;¹¹⁹ and Touchstone, despite Jaques's fervent admiration for him, mimics him.¹²⁰ Of course, the Duke Senior and the Lords are amused by him. Ironically, since Jaques does not realize that he is humorous to the others in the Duke's band, he is patronizing. In fact, he feels that his discontent with the world, revealed in his melancholy and cynicism, makes him superior to the others in the forest.¹²¹ This superiority, to some extent, enables him to judge life without permitting the rosy glow of romanticism to suffuse the gloom of life as it actually is. The rest of the people do not like to admit that any world but their own Robin-Hood-like world exists, despite the fact that the only reason they are in Arden is that the Duke Senior was deposed by his younger brother. Therefore, Jaques's caustic remarks often strike closer to the hearts of the Duke and his men than they would like to admit.

Jaques's detachment, then, enables him to function in

¹¹⁹Fink, op. cit., p. 251.

¹²⁰Robert Hillis Goldsmith, "Touchstone: Critic in Motley," PMLA, LXVII (September, 1953), 887.

¹²¹Richard Green Moulton, Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, p. 303.

the ways of the melancholic and the objective commentator because of his objectivity. His mere presence relieves the general tone of romanticism. His pungent comments upon those around him and on human life¹²² help keep life in the forest from being too sweet.¹²³ Jaques reminds the merry band of a world that is not even vaguely related to the way of life that they are leading. He acts, for them, as a balancing agent. He acts as a balancing agent, or mediator, for the audience, too.¹²⁴ Jaques's " . . . sapient and ironic wit affords a welcome divertisement from the love-making in the forest."¹²⁵ The audience is reminded sharply that it is witnessing a pastoral romance because of Jaques's presence. His

. . . mockery makes explicit the partiality, the displacement of normal emphasis, which is implicit in the witty advocacy of it
[mock pastoral content]¹²⁶

¹²²Tolman, op. cit., p. 70.

¹²³Gardner, op. cit., p. 65.

¹²⁴Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 228; and Barber, "The Use of Comedy in 'As You Like It,'" PQ, XXI (October, 1942), 357.

¹²⁵Ashley H. Thorndike, English Comedy, pp. 113-114.

¹²⁶Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 70.

In other words, the audience will not take the pastoral seriously while Jaques is present to comment.¹²⁷ When he expresses his contemplative mockery,¹²⁸ he serves as a foil or contrast for the rest of the play.¹²⁹ Jaques is able to act in this manner because of the detachment he achieves in the cynical mockery that he displays throughout the play. As the melancholic, he fulfills this specific role of objective commentator.

In addition, however, the melancholic shows further signs of objective commentary in his lack of pure emotion and in his honesty. In shunning intercourse with the pastoral elements in the play, Jaques shuns love, too.¹³⁰ Incapable of affection or jealousy,¹³¹ he is one of the few who are not paired off in the romances in the forest. Part

¹²⁷ Parrott, op. cit., p. 168; and Mark Van Doren, Shakespeare, p. 132.

¹²⁸ Barber, "The Use of Comedy in 'As You Like It,'" p. 357.

¹²⁹ Harris, op. cit., p. 442.

¹³⁰ Major, op. cit., p. 30; Dora V. Smith, "Plagiarism in As You Like It," English Journal, IX (November, 1920), 506.

¹³¹ Clark, op. cit., p. 58.

of this isolation is due, of course, to his extreme melancholy and lack of interest in anything that might connote happiness in a worldly way. Moreover, his disillusioned, blunt honesty,¹³² so at odds with the feelings of the rest of the characters, discourages the advances of other characters. Unhappily, his wit is not fully appreciated by his fellowmen, mainly because many of his sarcastic wittisms are aimed at love. For instance, he exploits Touchstone and Audrey for the sake of the Duke Senior¹³³ and speaks of them as they join the others who are about to be married:

Jag. There is, sure, another flood toward, and these couples are coming to the ark. Here comes a pair of very strange beasts, which in all tongues are called fools.

(V. iv. 35-38)

"Shimmering with hues of wit and fantasy,"¹³⁴ he is always

¹³²Edwin A. Hunter, "Shakespeare's Mouthpieces: Manner of Speech as a Mark of Personality in a Few Shakespeare Characters," Sewanee Review, XLVII (July, 1939), 409.

¹³³Wilcox, op. cit., p. 392.

¹³⁴George Brandes, William Shakespeare: A Critical Study, I, 260.

ready for a better joke.¹³⁵ For example, in coming upon some huntsmen who have killed a deer, Jaques thinks it a great joke to

. . . present him to the Duke, like a Roman conqueror; and it would do well to set the deer's horns upon his head, for a branch of victory.

(IV. ii. 3-5)

In doing so, instead of honoring the deer killer, he mocks him by crowning him with the marks of cuckoldry. It is his sly wit, such as is revealed in this trick, that adds to his position as the melancholic. Even in this small way, Jaques is always mocking the pastoral contentment in the play.

Thus, Jaques is Shakespeare's objective commentator known as the melancholic. Perhaps Craig best sums up Jaques as an objective commentator:

Jaques, according to current fashion a malcontent, has nothing to do in the comedy and yet is dramatically important. His importance arises from the fact that he is an impartial commentator, hardly as the dramatist's voice, but the first of a series of chorus-like characters of growing

¹³⁵Peter J. Seng, "The Forresters' Song in 'As You Like It,'" SQ, X (Spring, 1959), 248.

effectiveness in Shakespeare's plays and in those of other dramatists. His words cut across the play with a differing point of view, usually with the thought of the seven ages of man.¹³⁶

His very personality, so melancholy and satiric, tends toward isolation and detachment. His detachment, of course, lends objectivity to his words, manifest in his truth and wit. Acting as both a foil and mediator between the actor and the audience, Jaques supplies the touch needed to tone down this pastoral romance.

¹³⁶Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, pp. 123-124.

CHAPTER III

THE SCOFFER AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR:

MERCUTIO IN ROMEO AND JULIET

Like the melancholic in many ways, the scoffer accentuates the exuberance of youth in a manner in which the melancholic cannot.¹³⁷ The scoffer, in other words, is satirical and cynical, but he has undergone adventures that have not soured him on the world. He is, instead, still trying to uncover the follies of his immediate world.

"Mercutio is a satiric commentator full of bold gaiety, a fellow of infinite zest, whose vitality contributes lavishly to the life of the play."¹³⁸ Mercutio, rowdy and spectacular in character,¹³⁹ is the power-bearer within the dramatic

¹³⁷ Ernest Williams Talbert, Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare's Early Plays: An Essay in Historical Criticism, p. 290.

¹³⁸ Campbell, op. cit., p. 16.

¹³⁹ Herbert McArthur, "Romeo's Loquacious Friend," SQ, X (Winter, 1959), 33.

context of the play.¹⁴⁰ His quick, mercurial actions emphasize the mood of the play.¹⁴¹ As the scoffer, he functions in a variety of ways in the play because of his sparkling personality.

Mercutio's most prominent characteristic is, of course, his conscious wit.¹⁴² He resembles Jaques, although his wit is not that of the melancholic. He keeps up a constant witty banter until the very moment of his death, when he bids farewell with a pun on grave. Mercutio's fantastic wit is evident almost as soon as he is introduced to the audience. For example, on the way to the Capulet party, he tries to persuade Romeo to assume a better mood, because the latter is pining away with love for Rosalind, a girl who has sworn to live a chaste life. Mercutio, at first, scoffs at Cupid, love's messenger, when Romeo says:

¹⁴⁰ George Wilson Knight, The Golden Labyrinth: A Study of British Drama, p. 74.

¹⁴¹ Draper, Stratford to Dogberry, p. 92; and Brents Stirling, Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy: The Interplay of Theme and Character, p. 12.

¹⁴² Brandes, op. cit., p. 89; Chapman, op. cit., p. 24; and Parrott, op. cit., p. 202.

Rom. Not I, believe me: you have dancing shoes
With nimble soles: I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.

Mer. You are a lover; borrow Cupid's wings,
And soar with them above a common bound.

(I. iv. 13-17)

It is apparent that Mercutio is being sarcastic in order to shake Romeo out of his mood. Romeo, revelling in his conventional sadness, merely speaks in the expected language of love. Impatient, Mercutio becomes exasperated with his friend, using the stronger language of the obscene pun:

If love be rough with you, be rough with love;
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.
Give me a case to put my visage in:
A visor for a visor!

(I. iv. 27-30)

Mercutio's cheerful obscenities lighten Romeo's gloom, although he refuses to admit it.¹⁴³ It is Mercutio's appropriate bawdy that supports the whole dramatic structure of the play.¹⁴⁴ For instance, when Mercutio and Benvolio are searching for Romeo after the Capulets' party, Mercutio, not realizing that Romeo has actually fallen in love,

¹⁴³Norman N. Holland, "Mercutio, My Own Son the Dentist," in Essays on Shakespeare, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴J. I. M. Stewart, Character and Motive in Shakespeare: Some Recent Appraisals Examined, pp. 18-19.

" . . . charges the air with bawdy suggestions"¹⁴⁵ as they search for the hidden lover:

This cannot anger him: 'twould anger him
To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle
Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
Till she had laid it and conjured it down;
That were some spite: my invocation
Is fair and honest, and in his mistress' name
I conjure only but to raise up him.
(II. i. 23-29)

Mercutio, however, does not use his wit merely for the satisfaction of his scorn against Romeo's pretended love. He exchanges bawdy puns with the Nurse in a later scene:¹⁴⁶

Nurse. My fan, Peter.

Mer. Good Peter, to hide her face; for her fan's the fairer face.

Nurse. God ye good morrow, gentlemen.

Mer. God ye good den, fair gentlewoman.

Nurse. Is it good den?

Mer. 'Tis no less, I tell you, for the bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noon.

(II. iv. 112-119)

Mercutio's restless wit is never stilled until death.¹⁴⁷

It is this man, the most sportive of wits, whose wit

¹⁴⁵ Harry Levin, "Form and Formality in Romeo and Juliet," SQ, XI (Winter, 1960), 8.

¹⁴⁶ G. Thomas Tanselle, "Time in Romeo and Juliet," SQ, XV (Autumn, 1964), 353.

¹⁴⁷ Alwin Thaler, "Mercutio and Spenser's Phantastes," PQ, XVI (October, 1937), 406.

is a reflection of some of the other facets of his mercurial personality.¹⁴⁸ He is, above all things, a realist, scorning every sort of affectation and sham.¹⁴⁹ He attacks every affectation and sham with both satire and cynicism; hence, whatever he attacks, he attacks with wit. Because he is so witty, one may maintain that the scoffer is continually attacking institutions that he feels are insincere. As a consequence, this bawdy satirist¹⁵⁰ is actually a reformer. As an objective commentator, the scoffer attacks, above all else, the institution of conventional love. One notes that from his first appearance in the play, Mercutio makes fun of Romeo's "dotage."¹⁵¹ His mocking bawdiness is, in part, a reaction to Romeo's

¹⁴⁸Leslie Hotson, "In Defense of Mercutio," Spectator, CLXXIX (August 8, 1947), 168.

¹⁴⁹Campbell, op. cit., p. 15; John A. Hart, "Romeo and Juliet," in Lovers Meeting: Discussions of Five Plays of Shakespeare, p. 21; and Parrott, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁵⁰Campbell, op. cit., p. 14; David Laird, "The Generation of Style in Romeo and Juliet," JEGP, LXIII (April, 1964), 205; and Neal J. Osborn, "Kenneth Burke's Desdemona: A Courtship of Clio?" Hudson Review, XIX (Summer, 1966), 271.

¹⁵¹Franklin M. Dickey, Not Wisely But Too Well, p. 82.

oversentimentalized love for Rosalind, because until he meets Juliet, Romeo utters few phrases that do not deal, in some aspect, with his romantic concept of the chaste Rosalind. Mercutio's function as scoffer, at this point, is to direct the audience's attention and amusement toward Romeo's oft-aided sighs for this "fair lady love."¹⁵² To be certain that his audience recognizes Romeo's first love as artificial, Shakespeare causes Mercutio to become impatient with Romeo's idealization of love with his patterned articulation:¹⁵³

Mer. Nay, I'll conjure too.
 Romeo! humours! madman! passion! lover!
 Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh:
 Speak but one rhyme, and I am satisfied;
 Cry but 'Ay me!' pronounce but 'love' and 'dove';
 Speak to my gossip Venus one fair word,
 One nick-name for her purblind son and heir,
 Young Adam Cupid, he that shot so trim,
 When King Copheua loved the beggar-maid!
 He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not;
 The ape is dead, and I must conjure him.
 I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
 By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
 By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh
 And the demesnes that there adjacent lie,
 That in thy likeness thou appear to us!
(II. i. 6-21)

¹⁵² Talbert, op. cit., p. 287.

¹⁵³ Laird, op. cit., p. 204.

It is at once clear that Mercutio mocks conventionalized love in more than one way in this speech. Recognizing that conventionalized love demands that the lover be a changed person, Mercutio calls Romeo "humors! madman! passion! lover!" Each word is a noun, thus personifying Romeo in each of these terms. Moreover, Mercutio points out that this type of lover must follow certain procedures, as Romeo has been doing. For example, he points out that the conventional lover must sigh, speak in rhyme, and call upon the goddess of love, Venus, and her son, Cupid. Mercutio, then, attempts to arouse Romeo by presenting a parody of the conventional lover's description of the loved one who is perfect in every detail. This method of anatomizing, so popular in the seventeenth century, is the basis for Mercutio's conjuring by Rosalind's body. Thus,

. . . when Mercutio particularizes the characteristics of the conventional lover, he mocks the disguises of love, the feigned passions and the twisted syntax of patterned artifice.¹⁵⁴

By mocking the rhetoric of love,¹⁵⁵ he satirizes romantic

¹⁵⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵⁵Dickey, op. cit., p. 84.

love.¹⁵⁶ Obviously, he is a perceptive young man who sees through Romeo's mutterings. His perceptivity, in conjunction with his wit, helps make him an ideal example of the objective commentator known as the scoffer.

His perceptivity does not cease with a mere identification of Romeo's conventional love; rather, he comments objectively upon life in much the same vein as Jaques, the melancholic. In essence, Mercutio reduces all convention to absurdity.¹⁵⁷ Under the humor of Mercutio's first words, the reader catches the first hint of his mocking spirit:

Give me a case to put my visage in:
 A visor for a visor! what care I
 What curious eye doth quote deformities?
 Here are the beetle brows shall blush for me.
 (I. iv. 29-32)

In calling for his party mask, Mercutio makes a slurring remark about a "curious eye," and, at this point in the play, one accords it no deeper significance. However, as Mercutio's full satiric purpose unfolds, one realizes that in addition to the scornful remarks about love which lead

¹⁵⁶Hart, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 21; and Talbert, op. cit., p. 289.

¹⁵⁷Levin, op. cit., p. 3.

up to this remark, Mercutio is already commenting about society in general. Thus, when he asks for a "visor to cover a visor," the first visor is, of course, the party mask, but the second is the mask of his own face. Some scholars have interpreted this remark to mean that Mercutio is ugly. On the contrary, his piercing remark is made in regard to the mask one assumes for society's benefit to prevent anyone's recognizing the pretensions of every social action.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, Mercutio is perceptive enough to realize that he himself adopts these masks. He does not cease his attack upon society with this one general remark, but makes jokes about family honor and the prevailing code of civility, thus lampooning the fine manners of fashionable young men.¹⁵⁹ When Benvolio and the scoffer continue to converse about Romeo, Benvolio discusses a letter sent by Tybalt to Romeo, the result of the party-crashing of the night before:¹⁶⁰

Ben. Tybalt, the kinsman of old Capulet,
Hath sent a letter to his father's house.

¹⁵⁸Hart, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 21.

¹⁵⁹Laird, op. cit., p. 205.

¹⁶⁰Hart, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 21.

Mer. A challenge, on my life.

Ben. Romeo will answer it.

Mer. Any man that can write may answer a letter.

(II. iv. 6-10)

Mercutio's reaction to Benvolio's fear that Romeo will answer Tybalt's challenge is his caustic reply, "Any man . . . may answer a letter." Thus, he dismisses the subject of family honor. However, Benvolio presses the issue, asserting that Romeo will fight. Mercutio, with disdain, answers with the following description of Tybalt, the duelist who "fights by the book" and who is

More than prince of cats, I can tell you. O, he is the courageous captain of complements. He fights as you sing prick-song, keeps time, distance, and proportion; rests me his minim rest, one, two, and the third in your bosom: the very butcher of a silk button, a duellist, a duellist; a gentleman of the very first house, of the first and second cause: ah, the immortal passado! the punto reverso! the hai!

(II. iv. 19-26)

Mercutio usurps the form and language of "honorable" dueling and exploits them for the ridiculous conventions they are. Then, at a word from Benvolio, Mercutio condemns all fashionable young men in the person of Tybalt:

The pox of such antic, lisping, affecting, fantasticoes; these new tuners of accents! 'By Jesu, a very good blade! a very tall man! a very good whore!' Why, is not this a lamentable

thing, grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashion-mongers, these perdonami's, who stand so much on the new form, that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench? O, their bones, their bones!

(II. iv. 28-37)

In attacking the idolatries of the fashionable young man, he even imitates some of their catch-words.¹⁶¹ His very sense of disgust rings throughout this speech, and, as it does, it reminds the audience once again that this blunt character is honestly revealing what he sees.¹⁶² He, the scoffer, is commenting objectively on the decay of a society that allows two honorable families to carry on a feud for a false "honor's" sake. In other words, Mercutio continually reminds the audience that he is pricking the conventions by which men endeavor to escape the burden of perception about the falseness of society and its forms.¹⁶³

What Mercutio has to say is crystalized in the famous Queen Mab speech, wherein the scoffer becomes a mirror

¹⁶¹Holland, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁶²Stockton Axson, "Shakespeare: Thinker, Showman, and Artist," Rice Institute Pamphlet, XVII (January, 1930); and Schücking, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁶³Laird, op. cit., p. 205.

commentator, as well. The mirror scene, one recalls, has little to do with the plot nor adds to the elements of excitement stimulated by the plot.¹⁶⁴ Several critics have argued that this speech actually has no place in the play, that it is, indeed, a "delightful gallop of fancy,"¹⁶⁵ or an inserted episode with no bearing on the play.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, some assert that it is a part of the play, if only as an expression of the ebullition of youth,¹⁶⁷ or as an example of the breakdown of Romeo's "artificial demeanor."¹⁶⁸ However, if one looks at it in terms of Price's description of mirror scenes, one discovers that it reflects an important aspect of the drama, one of the functions of a mirror scene.¹⁶⁹ The Mab speech helps the audience grasp the fatal dualism of fantasy and reality in

¹⁶⁴Price, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁶⁵Stewart, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁶⁶Schücking, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁶⁷Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 44.

¹⁶⁸McArthur, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁶⁹Price, op. cit., p. 102.

the plight of Romeo and Juliet.¹⁷⁰ While they are together, the world is a happy one not threatened by the feud to mar their happiness. The moment they are separated, however, the realities of the city of Verona close in upon them. For example, both Mercutio and Tybalt die within an hour after Romeo and Juliet are married.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, in the Mab speech, Mercutio comments upon the masks and distortions of society, the folly about which he speaks so often in Romeo and Juliet. In this one speech, as he mocks dreams,¹⁷² he becomes a mirror commentator expressing the conflict between the realities and unrealities of his society. Adopting a symbolic form of expression in the Mab speech, he once again pulls down the imposing forms around him,¹⁷³ this time exposing the dream as a prophecy of things to come, as Romeo maintains. Romeo finally says that Mercutio "talk'st of nothing," and Mercutio agrees that dreams are nothing. Despite his remark, Romeo does not understand the lesson

¹⁷⁰McArthur, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁷¹Laird, op. cit., p. 205.

¹⁷²Hart, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 21.

¹⁷³Holland, op. cit., p. 10.

that Mercutio offers as mirror commentator.

Like Jaques, Mercutio has one other characteristic attitude of the objective commentator. His bawdry, like that of Jaques's, helps keep him outside the realms of love.¹⁷⁴ He has seen how love has affected Romeo, causing him to become melancholy and noncommunicative. In fact, he compares Romeo's condition when he is in "love" with Rosalind to a living death, because his jesting friend of old lives no longer:

Alas, poor Romeo! he is already dead; stabbed
with a white wench's black eye; shot through the ear
with a love-song; the very pin of his heart cleft
with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft: and is he a
man to encounter Tybalt?

(II. iv. 13-17)

In other words, he finds the tyranny of sex to be ridiculous.¹⁷⁵ This mockery of love serves a dual purpose in the plan. The scoffer can, and does, easily remind the audience of the realities of the flesh.¹⁷⁶ Virtually everything Mercutio says about Romeo's love for Rosalind has definite overtones

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 12; and Talbert, op. cit., p. 290.

¹⁷⁵Dickey, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁷⁶Bonnard, op. cit., p. 322.

of copulation. He does everything in his power to tempt Romeo to search in other places for his satisfaction. It is for this purpose that both Mercutio and Benvolio lure Romeo to the Capulets' party, where Romeo, unknown to Mercutio, finally takes his friend's advice and actually forgets Rosalind in the presence of his new love, Juliet. When Romeo and Mercutio next meet, Romeo shows definite signs of returning to his old self, as a result of the true love he has found with Juliet.¹⁷⁷ Mercutio is overjoyed as Romeo is once again fit company for " . . . the society of young men who really know the world:"¹⁷⁸

Why, is not this better now than groaning for love?
 now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo;
 now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by
 nature: for this drivelling love is like a great
 natural, that runs lolling up and down to hide his
 bauble in a hole.

(II. iv. 92-97)

Consequently, Mercutio's non-involvement with love, like Jaques's, qualifies him in another way to be an objective commentator.

¹⁷⁷

Robert E. Fitch, "No Greater Crack?" SQ, XIX (Winter, 1968), 9.

¹⁷⁸

Van Doren, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

Mercutio performs one final act as the scoffer when he challenges Tybalt to the duel that leads ultimately to the death of both men. In a very necessary way, his death serves as a catalyst for the tragedy in the rest of the play. At the time of Mercutio's death, he and Benvolio speak of the possibility of a fight with the Capulets. In his usual witty way, Mercutio accuses Benvolio of being hot-headed and of looking for a fight. In turn, Benvolio accuses him of the same attitude, as the Capulets enter the scene. Speaking to Tybalt, Mercutio manages to create an even greater tension:

Tyb. You shall find me apt enough to that, sir,
an you will give me occasion.

Mer. Could you not take some occasion without
giving?

Tyb. Mercutio, thou consort'st with Romeo,--

Mer. Consort! what, dost thou make us minstrels?
and thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing
but discords: here's my fiddlestick; here's that
shall make you dance. 'Zounds, consort!

(III. i. 44-52)

Even at this ill-fated moment, Mercutio sees fit to mock "the fashionable young man," taking mock-offense (even as Tybalt would take real offense) at the slightest fault in word choice. Mercutio maintains his mocking attitude even after Romeo enters the scene. However, his mockery turns

to anger when Romeo refuses to fight. Not understanding the full implications of the situation,¹⁷⁹ Mercutio leaps to defend his friend's honor, ironically dishonoring him:¹⁸⁰

Mer. O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!
Alla stoccata carries it away.

Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

Tyb. What wouldst thou have with me?

Mer. Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives; that I mean to make bold withal, and, as you shall use me hereafter, dry-beat the rest of the eight. Will you pluck your sword out of his pilcher by the ears? make haste, lest mine be about your ears ere it be out.

(III. i. 75-85)

As Romeo attempts to halt the fight, Tybalt gives Mercutio a wound

. . . not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve: ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world.

(III. i. 99-102)

Even as he dies, Mercutio's wit lingers, as he curses the "new form," which he has mocked, and, by which, ironically,

¹⁷⁹Bertrand Evans, "The Brevity of Friar Lawrence," PMLA, LXV (September, 1950), 855. Mercutio does not know, nor does he ever find out, that Romeo and Juliet are married.

¹⁸⁰Lawrence Edward Bowling, "The Thematic Framework of Romeo and Juliet," PMLA, LXIV (March, 1949), 217.

he dies:¹⁸¹

'Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to
scratch a man to death! a braggart, a rogue,
a villain, that fights by the book of arithmetic!
(III. i. 103-105)

Even in death, Mercutio serves as a commentator, because it is his death which touches off the series of tragedies that can end only in the ultimate destruction of Romeo and Juliet.¹⁸² As a catalyst, then, the scoffer performs his last act.

As scoffer, Mercutio functions in this play in several ways. Not only does his harsh wit serve as a foil for the more romantic Romeo,¹⁸³ it also helps to emphasize the follies of youth and society.¹⁸⁴ His comic contrast with the melancholy Romeo is necessary to show the audience that it must not take Romeo too seriously at first.¹⁸⁵ And, as

¹⁸¹Levin, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁸²Bonnard, op. cit., p. 323; Crane, op. cit., p. 140; McArthur, op. cit., p. 44; and Parrott, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁸³Crane, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁸⁴Dickey, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 82.

scoffer, Mercutio serves as the link between the matter of the play and Romeo's previous history.¹⁸⁶ As scoffer, he clearly signifies the importance of the objective commentator in Romeo and Juliet.

¹⁸⁶Crane, op. cit., p. 140.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROTECTOR AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR:

ENOBARBUS IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

The character designated as a protector has some surface similarities to the melancholic and the scoffer, as well as to all characters that function as objective commentators, but, on the whole, his presence is more important to the play than either of these other two major commentators. Clear of judgment, he is respected for his honesty and good character. A friend of the major male figure in the play, he is in a position to comment in the manner of a chorus upon the actions and personality of the leading figure. Menenius Agrippa of Coriolanus, as suggested earlier, is a commentator of this type. In addition, the gruff blunt soldier,¹⁸⁷ Domitius Enobarbus of Antony and Cleopatra, is clearly the objective commentator known as the protector. Antony's staunchest

¹⁸⁷ Brandes, op. cit., p. 148.

supporter,¹⁸⁸ he is, nonetheless, a critical commentator, fully cognizant of the actions and passions in motion around him in the Egyptian world where he is at ease, but not subdued.¹⁸⁹

Enobarbus is primarily noted for his choric functions in the play. For example, it is he who tells the audience what has previously occurred and why.¹⁹⁰ When seeking to discover whether or not the Roman gossip about Antony and Cleopatra is true, Mecaenas and Agrippa ask Enobarbus, who, in his replies, sounds like truth itself because of his insight, sympathy, humor, and intimate place in the action.¹⁹¹ By means of the conversation that occurs between these three, Shakespeare reveals part of the story of the lavish activities in Egypt to his audience as it "eavesdrops,"

¹⁸⁸Sylvan Barnet, "Recognition and Reversal in 'Antony and Cleopatra,'" SO, VIII (Summer, 1957), 334.

¹⁸⁹Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama, p. 103; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 393.

¹⁹⁰Dean B. Lyman, "Janus in Alexandria: A Discussion of Antony and Cleopatra," Sewanee Review, XLVIII (January, 1940), 97.

¹⁹¹Wilson, op. cit., p. 393.

and uses Enobarbus to compress incidents that are far apart in time and space:¹⁹²

Agr. Good Enobarbus!

Mec. We have cause to be glad that matters are so well digested. You stayed well by 't in Egypt.

Eno. Ay, sir; we did sleep day out of countenance, and made the night light with drinking.

Mec. Eight wild-boars roasted whole at a breakfast, and but twelve persons there; is this true?

Eno. This was but as a fly by an eagle: we had much more monstrous matter of feast, which worthily deserved noting.

(II. ii. 178-188)

Because he acts as a chorus, the other characters and Shakespeare's audience know that Enobarbus is not exaggerating; indeed, Enobarbus is the only sure source of truth. Furthermore, his mere presence throughout the play reminds one of Antony's former greatness. For a soldier to remain as loyal as Enobarbus does to Antony suggests a greatness on the part of Antony that is revealed in actions in only a few places in the play. Ironically enough, the greatest testimony to Antony's fame comes after Enobarbus has deserted--although he does, in fact, remain loyal to his friend:

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 406.

movement of the play."¹⁹⁴ For instance, as Antony's army fights at sea despite Enobarbus' whole-hearted persuasion to the contrary, and is defeated, Enobarbus enters the stage with the news of the action for the audience. With a note of desperation in his voice, Enobarbus exclaims:

Naught, naught, all naught! I can behold
no longer:
The Antoniad, the Egyptian admiral,
With all their sixty, fly and turn the rudder:
To see 't mine eyes are blasted.

(III. x. 1-4)

Reporting this off-stage action further suggests his qualifications as a chorus.¹⁹⁵ His function in this way, then, is a device that is vital to the structure of the play, since he supports the bulk of the plot.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, he early establishes himself in the role of the chorus as he comments upon the character of his beloved Antony.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴Wilson, op. cit., p. 397.

¹⁹⁵Elizabeth Story Donno, "Cleopatra Again," SQ, VII (September, 1956), 228; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 398.

¹⁹⁶Arnold Stein, "The Image of Antony: The Lyric and Tragic Imagination," Kenyon Review, XX (Fall, 1959), 592; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 392.

¹⁹⁷Stirling, Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy: The Interplay of Theme and Character, p. 161.

Perhaps, Stroup summarizes best the relationship between Antony and Enobarbus, when he says that "Enobarbus knew the man better than the man knew himself."¹⁹⁸ In other words, through Enobarbus' eyes, the audience observes the many sides of Antony,¹⁹⁹ the Roman general, who has made his will the lord of his reason, thus causing the chaos that results in death for Enobarbus, Cleopatra, and himself.²⁰⁰

At the beginning of the play, Enobarbus obviously looks upon the love affair of Antony and Cleopatra with amusement. It is he who perceives the humor of the situation in their love, realizing Cleopatra's magnetism for Antony.²⁰¹ He mocks them, for instance, because of the "oneness" that lovers pledge to one another as he says, "Hush, here comes Antony," (I. ii. 82) when, in actuality, it is Cleopatra who enters the scene. At this point, Cleopatra is upset

¹⁹⁸ Thomas B. Stroup, "The Structure of Antony and Cleopatra," SQ, XV (Spring, 1964), 295.

¹⁹⁹ Stein, op. cit., p.595.

²⁰⁰ Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 279.

²⁰¹ Wilson, op. cit., pp. 392-393.

Because a "Roman thought" has taken possession of Antony, and she sends Enobarbus after him. As Antony and Enobarbus meet, they speak of Antony's proposed departure from the Egyptian pleasures of which he has been partaking. "In the dialogue that follows, Enobarbus plays the part of a humorous and mocking chorus."²⁰² In a jovial mood, Enobarbus remarks:

Eno. What's your pleasure, sir?

Ant. I must with haste from hence.

Eno. Why, then, we kill all our women: we see how mortal an unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure, death's the word.

(I. ii. 135-139)

Enobarbus obviously recognizes, with no little wit, that Antony is too far enmeshed in affairs in Egypt to be concerned with affairs in Rome. When Antony curses Cleopatra, Enobarbus insinuates the same wry humor into his answer:²⁰³

Ant. Would I had never seen her!

Eno. O, sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work; which not to have been blest withal would have discredited your travel.

(I. ii. 158-161)

²⁰²Parrott, op. cit., p. 320.

²⁰³Sheila M. Smith, "This Great Solemnity: A Study of the Presentation of Death in Antony and Cleopatra," English Studies, XLV (April, 1964), 165.

In this utterance, Enobarbus refuses to take seriously Antony's laconic statement about Cleopatra.²⁰⁴ Antony's attitude, however, rebuffs Enobarbus' sarcasm as much as his curt, "No more light answers." (I. ii. 183) Antony's attitude, in addition to his concrete plans for returning to Rome, delights Enobarbus, perhaps because he sees the return of the greatness which Antony has shown before the corrupting influence of Egypt. Demetrius expresses the hope of all Romans concerned when he says, after witnessing Antony's degrading actions in the first Act, " . . . but I will hope / Of better deeds tomorrow." (I. i. 61-62)

Enobarbus, of course, accompanies Antony to Rome and is a part of the conference there. When Lepidus attempts to have Enobarbus influence Antony to be meek, Enobarbus make a definite statement about the character of Antony:

I shall entreat him
To answer like himself: if Caesar move him,
Let Antony look over Caesar's head
And speak as loud as Mars.

(II. ii. 4-7)

Later, as he learns of the proposed marriage of Antony to Octavia, he shows once again how perceptive he is about

²⁰⁴Crane, op. cit., p. 178.

Antony's character. After a description of Cleopatra by Enobarbus, Mecaenas comments that Antony will have to forego the pleasures of Cleopatra after his marriage to Caesar's sister. But Enobarbus knows that Antony will never abandon his "Egyptian dish:"

Mec. Now Antony must leave her utterly.

Eno. Never; he will not:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale

Her infinite variety: other women cloy

The appetites they feed; but she makes hungry

Where most she satisfies; for vilest things

Become themselves in her; that the holy priests

Bless her when she is riggish.

(II. ii. 238-245)

This pronouncement, later proved to be true, merely shows how well Enobarbus knows Antony.²⁰⁵ With the help of Enobarbus' comments about Cleopatra making up a detailed and convincing analysis of the attributes of the Queen of the Nile, the audience realizes why Antony must return to his mistress.²⁰⁶ Thus, it is from Enobarbus, the accurate and reasonable commentator whose words are to be taken seriously, that the audience measures the full extent of

²⁰⁵Charney, "Shakespeare's Style in Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra," p. 364.

²⁰⁶Rosen, op. cit., p. 129.

Antony's passion for Cleopatra.²⁰⁷

As Antony returns to Cleopatra and becomes even more entangled with his mistress, Enobarbus becomes Antony's reason and judgment.²⁰⁸ In this position, Enobarbus is even more able to comment on Antony's actions. For example, after Octavia has returned to her brother and Antony and Caesar declare war upon one another, Enobarbus, as second-in-command, is a necessary member in planning the attack. He is definitely against the sea-fight, which Cleopatra and Antony are enthusiastically advocating. As usual, he gives Antony excellent reasons for wishing to fight by land:

Your ships are not well mann'd;
Your mariners are muleters, reapers, people
Ingross'd by swift impress; in Caesar's fleet
Are those that often have 'gainst Pompey fought:
Their ships are yare; yours, heavy: no disgrace
Shall fall you for refusing him at sea,
Being prepared for land.

(III. vii. 35-41)

When Antony refuses to listen to Enobarbus, and mutters impatiently, "By sea, by sea," (III. vii. 42), Enobarbus

²⁰⁷Dolora G. Cunningham, "Characterization of Shakespeare's Cleopatra," SQ, VI (Winter, 1955), 10-11.

²⁰⁸Stroup, op. cit., p. 296.

finds the situation sufficiently important to reiterate his warning to his leader:

Most worthy sir, you therein throw away
The absolute soldiership you have by land;
Distract your army, when doth most consist
Of war-mark'd footmen; leave unexecuted
Your own renowned knowledge; quite forego
The way which promises assurance; and
Give up yourself merely to chance and hazard,
From firm security.

(III. vii. 43-49)

Careful and reasonable, as always, he lists his objections to the proposed plan.²⁰⁹ Antony, ruled once again by Cleopatra, refuses Enobarbus' common-sense advice with a firm reply, "I'll fight at sea." (III. vii. 49). And, as always, disaster occurs when Antony refuses to follow reason, the Roman way, and chooses the course of romance, the Egyptian way.²¹⁰

Enobarbus witnesses the first defeat of the now seemingly ignoble Antony with the words: "Mine eyes did sicken at the sight, and could not / Endure a further view." (III. x. 15-17) Noting Antony's loss of quality,²¹¹

²⁰⁹Barnet, op. cit., p. 334.

²¹⁰Stroup, op. cit., p. 296.

²¹¹J. Leeds Barroll, "Antony and Pleasure," JEGP, LVII (October, 1958), 717.

Enobarbus starts to think of deserting Antony, still retaining, however, his lifelong admiration of the general. In other words, " . . . the amused irony of Enobarbus' early comments on his master's infatuation has turned to cynical rejection."²¹² As another battle is formulated by Antony, Enobarbus shows his perception once again when he fails to be deceived by Antony's boastful, hopeless

²¹³
courage:

Yes, like enough, high-battled Caesar will
Unstate his happiness, and be staged to the show,
Against a sworder! I see men's judgements are
A parcel of their fortunes; and things outward
Do draw the inward quality after them,
To suffer all alike. That he should dream,
Knowing all measures, the full Caesar will
Answer his emptiness! Caesar, thou hast subdued
His judgement too.

(III. xiii. 29-37)

Enobarbus realizes, unhappily, that Antony is not obeying his reason. Nor, similarly, is he impressed by Antony's elaborate sentimentality in the farewell scene to his faithful servants, when he makes them cry:²¹⁴

²¹²Daniel Stempel, "The Transmigration of the Crocodile," SQ, VII (Winter, 1956), 66.

²¹³Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 279.

²¹⁴Loc. cit.

Ant. Well, my good fellows, wait on me to-night:
 Scant not my cups; and make as much of me
 As when mine empire was your fellow too,
 And suffer'd my command.

Cleo. What does he mean?

Eno. To make his followers weep.

(IV. ii. 20-24)

This comment, of course, is made after Enobarbus decides to desert, an act of intelligent self-preservation.²¹⁵ Thus, even after formulating a decision of this magnitude, he is no less the objective commentator. Shakespeare's portrait of Antony is incomplete without Enobarbus, who, in his ultimate gesture of death, reminds the audience of how great Antony is.²¹⁶ This last action, showing that Enobarbus is fully cognizant of Antony's generosity and love,²¹⁷ calls attention to Antony's greatness, restoring him when he does not seem to be quite a tragic figure.²¹⁸

²¹⁵Barnet, op. cit., p. 334.

²¹⁶Gordon W. Couchman, "Antony and Cleopatra and the Subjective Convention," PMLA, LXXVI (September, 1961), 423.

²¹⁷Joseph Allen Bryant, Jr., Hippolyta's View: Some Christian Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays, p. 190.

²¹⁸Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama, p. 89; and Brents Stirling, Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy: The Interplay of Theme and Character, p. 161.

There is even an element of superiority in his ironic attitude toward Cleopatra.²²⁴ When Antony announces his decision to leave, Enobarbus comments:

Under a compelling occasion, let women die:
it were pity to cast them away for nothing;
though, between them and a great cause,
they should be esteemed nothing. Cleopatra,
catching but the least noise of this, dies
instantly; I have seen her die twenty
times upon far poorer moment: I do think
there is mettle in death, which commits
some loving act upon her, she hath such
a celerity in dying.

(I. ii. 141-149)

Thus, the soldier in Enobarbus, as it should have done in Antony, makes him separate pleasure from duty.²²⁵ Although he dislikes her, he can speak honestly but sarcastically of her. When, for instance, Antony and he are speaking of departing for Rome, Enobarbus reveals his feelings for Cleopatra:

Ant. She is cunning past man's thought.

Eno. Alack, sir, no; her passions are made
of nothing but the finest part of pure
love: we cannot call her winds and
waters sighs and tears; they are greater
storms and tempests than almanacs

²²⁴Farnham, op. cit., p. 182.

²²⁵Barnet, op. cit., p. 333.

can report: this cannot be cunning in
her; if it be, she makes a shower of
rain as well as Jove.

(I. ii. 150-157)

Enobarbus' sense of irony leads him to denounce by means of
praise in this passage.²²⁶ In his usual cynical manner,
he comments further upon Antony and Cleopatra's relationship:

And the business you have broached
here cannot be without you;
especially that of Cleopatra's, which
wholly depends on your abode.

(I. ii. 180-182)

Despite the cynical overtone in his words, however,
Enobarbus shows that he understands the depth of Cleopatra's
affections for Antony.²²⁷

Later, in discussing Cleopatra's physical charms in her
first meeting with her conqueror, Enobarbus presents a
full and poetic description of the temptress who has ensnared
Antony's heart:

²²⁶Paul A. Jorgensen, "Antony and the Protesting
Soldiers: A Renaissance Tradition for the Structure of
Antony and Cleopatra," p. 169; and Terence Hawkes, "View
Number One on Antony and Cleopatra," Anglo-Welsh Review,
XIII (Winter, 1963), 11.

²²⁷Michael Lloyd, "The Roman Tongue," SO, X (Fall, 1959),
462.

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne
Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were
silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description: she did lie
In her pavilion--cloth-of-gold of tissue--
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

(II. ii. 196-209)

Enobarbus, then, describes the maids attending Cleopatra and the first meeting of the two lovers with the same level of language. Although some have claimed that this particular speech is not in keeping with his character, fascinated by the magnificence of what he has witnessed, he can do nothing but put it before the audience in such hauntingly beautiful poetry.²²⁸ In addition, Shakespeare assigned this speech

He is the proper character to remind the audience of the absent Cleopatra, and that he speaks here for the first time in verse enhances the fascination

²²⁸Wilson, op. cit., p. 394.

of her magic.²²⁹

Enobarbus is not satisfied merely to describe Cleopatra in a setting of her own design, but, rather, describes her at a time when a woman should not look beautiful:

I saw her once
Hop forty paces through the public street;
And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
That she did make defect perfection,
And, breathless, power breathe forth.

(II. ii. 234-238)

This description, obviously, shows that Enobarbus is fully aware of the "infinite variety" of Cleopatra.²³⁰ Continuing to describe Cleopatra, Enobarbus finally explains " . . . that holy priests / Bless her when she is riggish," (II. ii. 244-245) another of his somewhat questionable compliments. Obviously, however, the magic of Cleopatra's charms is to be found in the contradictions of her personality.²³¹ Thus, Enobarbus' shrewd judgment of Cleopatra's attraction to Antony shows once again what a perceptive

²²⁹Parrott, op. cit., pp. 321-322.

²³⁰Charney, "Shakespeare's Style in Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra," p. 364.

²³¹Spencer, op. cit., p. 374.

commentator he is.

It is the cynical Enobarbus, then, who provides the most eloquent comments about Cleopatra, thoroughly describing her personality.²³² Any idealization of Cleopatra that may occur is not in his character but, rather, has the function, as in Antony's case, of substituting external observations for inner conflict.²³³ Enobarbus, as the protector, is the one who must present these observations, because he is the spokesman of an enlightened common sense, both appreciative and critical.²³⁴ His concern for Cleopatra is, of course, with her effect upon his master,²³⁵ and, in this way, also, may one expect a clear judgment from a man in the commentator's position.

Not only does he comment upon the actions and characters of Antony and Cleopatra, but he is also

²³²Donno, op. cit., p. 228.

²³³Rosen, op. cit., p. 130.

²³⁴George Wilson Knight, The Imperial Theme: Further Interpretation of Shakespeare's Tragedies Including the Roman Plays, p. 270.

²³⁵Ralph Behrens, "Cleopatra Exonerated," Shakespeare Newsletter, IX (November, 1959), 37.

astonishingly clear-sighted about his own feelings. The personification of irony,²³⁶ he laughs at himself as he laughs at others of whom he takes notice. He recognizes his own foibles and deals with them in a perceptive manner, always following the dictates of his common sense. For instance, in one scene, he speaks with Menas, Pompey's friend, after a treaty has been discussed by Pompey, Caesar, Antony, and Lepidus. Although Menas and he are actually enemies because of their masters, the delightful conversation that ensues between them reveals no animosity. In discussing the battles in which they have participated, they praise one another:

Eno. You have done well by water.

Men. And you by land.

Eno. I will praise any man that will praise me; though it cannot be denied what I have done by land.

(II. vi. 89-92)

The mood, obviously, is a jovial one, and although Enobarbus is jesting, he praises both Menas and himself. He has taken stock of himself and realizes that he is a good soldier, further evidence that he is realistic. Moreover,

²³⁶ Marion Bodwell Smith, Dualities in Shakespeare, p. 206.

since the other characters comment upon his courage in battle, there is a tendency on the part of the audience to consider Enobarbus' utterances not as boasts, but as accurate statements of fact, despite the inherent jesting that is evident.

Perhaps, the greatest evidence of Enobarbus' perceptivity (and, at the same time, the least evidence of it) occurs in his decision to desert Antony. This cynical and realistic soldier witnesses the slow demise of his beloved Antony's reason and ability and contemplates the advisability of deserting the general. Although it appears to be the mark of infidelity for Enobarbus to desert, one must remember that Enobarbus, above all, is a realist and, because of his very nature, must seriously consider this step.²³⁷ The audience watches Enobarbus' tragic struggle with his decision to leave Antony. In each of the three segments wherein he discusses this decision, he shows that he is passing a hard-headed, shrewd judgment carefully

²³⁷ Henry David Gray, "Antony's Amazing 'I Will to Egypt,'" MP, XV (May, 1917), 49.

thought out.²³⁸ The first sign of actual unrest occurs after the Antoniad flees the fight at sea with Caesar:

I'll yet follow
The wounded chance of Antony, though my reason
Sits in the wind against me.

(III. x. 36-38)

True to his nature, Enobarbus reveals to the audience this first hint that he is no longer viewing the situation of Antony and Cleopatra with his former amusement, and that he is, indeed, showing definite signs of being averse to it. Enobarbus, however, continues to follow the Roman general despite his slowly ebbing confidence in him:

Mine honesty and I begin to square.
The loyalty well held to fools does make
Our faith mere folly: yet he that can endure
To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord
Does conquer him that did his master conquer,
And earns a place i' the story.

(III. xiii. 41-46)

Despite Enobarbus' obviously wavering confidence, he determines to remain with Antony, because this position earns him honor, even in defeat. His continued alliance with Antony is clearly a logical process,²³⁹ reasoned out by this

²³⁸ Stein, op. cit., p. 592.

²³⁹ Wilson, op. cit., p. 401.

rational man.²⁴⁰ He understands himself well enough to recognize the battle under which he is going between the honor of staying with a doomed man and the dishonor of leaving that same man in order to stay alive. Enobarbus, then, witnesses the scene between Cleopatra and Thyreus when they discuss the possibility of an alliance of some sort between Cleopatra and Caesar. Eager for his general to retain what remnants of honor he has left, Enobarbus brings Antony to witness the scene, too. But when Antony orders Thyreus flogged and vows to fight Caesar once more, Enobarbus sadly realizes that Antony can sink no lower. Unable to remain when his reason tells him to go, Enobarbus clearly states his determination to leave:²⁴¹

Now he'll outstare the lightning. To be furious,
Is to be frightened out of fear; and in that mood
The dove will peck the estridge; and I see still,
A diminution in our captain's brain
Restores his heart: when valour preys on reason,
It eats the sword it fights with. I will seek
Some way to leave him.

(III. xiii. 195-201)

²⁴⁰Matthew N. Proser, The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies, p. 199.

²⁴¹Wilson, op. cit., p. 402.

He determines that he cannot remain in Antony's camp and still retain his own identity. In recognition of what he is, then, Enobarbus deserts before the start of the next battle. His desertion, of course, convinces the audience that Antony must fail.²⁴²

It is after his desertion, however, that Enobarbus discovers that his estimation of himself is not completely valid. Witnessing Caesar's plans to take Antony alive, he realizes " . . . that rational justification for desertion is not enough."²⁴³ Speaking of those others who have also deserted in relation to himself, Enobarbus comments:

Alexas did revolt; and went to Jewry on
Affairs of Antony; there did persuade
Great Herod to incline himself to Caesar,
And leave his master Antony: for this pains
Caesar hath hang'd him. Canidius and the rest
That fell away have entertainment, but
No honorable trust. I have done ill;
Of which I do accuse myself so sorely,
That I will joy no more.

(IV. vi. 12-19)

Enobarbus reaches his conclusion through the same logical

²⁴²Stephen A. Shapiro, "The Varying Shore of the World: Ambivalence in Antony and Cleopatra," MLQ, XXVII (March, 1966), 26.

²⁴³Wilson, op. cit., p. 404.

process that he used in deciding to desert; however, on this occasion, the ironic soldier admits that he harbors a feeling heart.²⁴⁴ As he finishes this speech, he receives news that Antony has sent all of Enobarbus' treasure after him. This gesture, ironically, confirms for him the greatness of his former benefactor, the quality that he has been describing in Antony throughout the play. Thus, he comes to recognize fully Antony's greatness after forfeiting his chance to share in it:²⁴⁵

I am alone the villain of the earth,
And feel I am so most. O Antony,
Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
My better service, when my turpitude
Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart:
If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
Shall outstrike thought: but thought will do 't,
I feel.

I fight against thee! No: I will go seek
Some ditch wherein to die; the foul'st best fits
My latter part of life.

(IV. vi. 30-39)

He becomes his own judge, the most severe one he faces.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴Barnet, op. cit., p. 333.

²⁴⁵Bryant, op. cit., p. 174.

²⁴⁶Lyman, op. cit., p. 97; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 404.

He informs the audience, too, of his decision to die. When Antony acts, then, Enobarbus recognizes his own true self and reacts in a way unanticipated by Antony.²⁴⁷ "The clear-sighted commentator on the tragedy around him is caught in the coils of it through an error in his judgment of himself."²⁴⁸ As he discovers his error, he dies:²⁴⁹

O sovereign mistress of true melancholy,
 The poisonous damp of night disponge upon me,
 That life, a very rebel to my will,
 May hang no longer on me: throw my heart
 Against the flint and hardness of my fault;
 Which, being dried with grief, will break to powder,
 And finish all foul thoughts. O Antony,
 Nobler than my revolt is infamous,
 Forgive me in thine own particular;
 But let the world rank me in register
 A master-leaver and a fugitive:
 A Antony! O Antony!

(IV. ix. 12-23)

Tragic irony, thus, " . . . enmeshes the master ironist who has seen everything clearly except his own nature in mortal crisis."²⁵⁰ His end demonstrates that man cannot live by

²⁴⁷Barnet, op. cit., p. 334.

²⁴⁸Wilson, op. cit., p. 404.

²⁴⁹Barnet, op. cit., p. 334.

²⁵⁰Wilson, op. cit., p. 404.

reason alone.²⁵¹ Consequently, "Enobarbus has throughout been a common-sense commentary on the action: this is the actions' commentary on common sense."²⁵² Until he dies, then, he functions as a satiric commentator, presenting clearly and wittily his observations upon the various characters and their actions.²⁵³ As a detached and honest realist, he comments freely upon Antony and Cleopatra's actions, making scathing judgments of their folly.²⁵⁴ He is able to do so as protector, because he is uninhibited in the presence of his superiors and because he has a reputation for "plainness."²⁵⁵ Remaining superior to the follies of Antony and Cleopatra because of his detachment from love, he is able to maintain a choric function throughout the

²⁵¹ Marion Bodwell Smith, op. cit., p. 206.

²⁵² George Wilson Knight, The Imperial Theme: Further Interpretation of Shakespeare's Tragedies Including the Roman Plays, p. 273.

²⁵³ Donno, op. cit., p. 228; and Parrott, op. cit., p. 320.

²⁵⁴ Couchman, op. cit., p. 423; Hunter, op. cit., p. 409; Stemple, op. cit., p. 65; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 392.

²⁵⁵ Donno, op. cit., p. 228.

play. In addition, because of his perceptivity and his honesty, the audience may rely upon him to establish the necessary response to characters and matters in the play;²⁵⁶ in other words, he performs the choric function of telling the audience what to think.²⁵⁷ He also tightens the dramatic line of the narrative as he interprets and anticipates the action in the role of an objective commentator.²⁵⁸ Like Mercutio, he also intensifies the realistic and cynical aspects of the play, functioning as an objective commentator.²⁵⁹ Perceptive, honest, and objective, Enobarbus does, indeed, fulfill the role of Shakespeare's objective commentator called the protector.

²⁵⁶Farnham, op. cit., p. 192; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 406.

²⁵⁷Coghill, Shakespeare's Professional Skills, pp. 138-139.

²⁵⁸Barroll, op. cit., p. 716; Henry David Gray, op. cit., p. 49; Rosen, op. cit., p. 134; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 406.

²⁵⁹W. B. C. Watkins, Shakespeare and Spencer, p. 97; and W. B. C. Watkins, "The Two Techniques in King Lear," RES, XVIII (January, 1942), 22.

CHAPTER V

THE FOOL AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR:

THE FOOL IN KING LEAR

The objective commentator known as the Fool is probably the most easily identifiable of all such commentators, because all fools have the historical license to be satiric commentators.²⁶⁰ Traditionally, the fool always tells the truth, making his comments by indirection if possible.²⁶¹ He remains detached from the action, maintaining this attitude with sympathy, pity, and irony.²⁶² Made to suffer,²⁶³ nonetheless, he retains a close relationship with his master.²⁶⁴ As commentator, he is the " . . . licensed

²⁶⁰Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 19.

²⁶¹Ibid., p. 78.

²⁶²Ibid., p. 104.

²⁶³Russell A. Fraser, Shakespeare's Poetics in Relation to King Lear, p. 125.

²⁶⁴Busby, op. cit., p. 48.

critic of his master and his fellows"²⁶⁵ and may obliquely satirize the society in which he lives.²⁶⁶ He characteristically entertains his master and ministers to his master's sense of self-importance.²⁶⁷ Moreover, he may serve several functions in the play of which he is a part. For example, he may act as the link between the main plot and the subplot,²⁶⁸ at the same time acting as a moderating influence upon the excesses of other characters in the play.²⁶⁹ He can keep the audience informed of the progress of events²⁷⁰ while revealing the folly of wise men.²⁷¹ He always functions as a chorus, thus giving him the added power

²⁶⁵Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 7.

²⁶⁶F. W. Cook, "The Wise Fool," Twentieth Century, CLXVIII (September, 1960), 221.

²⁶⁷Goldsmith, "Touchstone: Critic in Motley," p. 885; and Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 48.

²⁶⁸Busby, op. cit., p. 40.

²⁶⁹Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 104.

²⁷⁰Busby, op. cit., p. 40.

²⁷¹Barber, "Use of Comedy in As You Like It," p. 354; Rea, "Jaques in Praise of Folly," p. 465; and Paul A. Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery, p. 113.

of practical commentary in that respect.²⁷² Moreover, he can forestall adversity,²⁷³ and, at the same time, provide comic relief.²⁷⁴ Welsford reveals the dramatic power of the Fool, stating that " . . . the Fool by his mere presence dissolves events, evades issues, and throws doubt on the finality of the fact."²⁷⁵ Obviously, he possesses characteristics that show him to be a powerful objective commentator. Lear's Fool, the best drawn of all of Shakespeare's fools, shows these qualities of an objective commentator, while retaining his absolute and convincing humanity.

Like Enobarbus, the protector, Lear's Fool is primarily noted for his choric functions.²⁷⁶ Above all, he continually

²⁷²Busby, op. cit., p. 38.

²⁷³Wyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare, p. 130.

²⁷⁴Busby, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁷⁵Enid Welsford, as quoted by Geoffrey Bush in Shakespeare and the Natural Condition, p. 100.

²⁷⁶Charlton, op. cit., p. 225; John W. Draper, "The Occasion of King Lear," SP, XXXIV (April, 1937), 180; George Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy with Three New Essays, p. 163; Rosen, op. cit., p. 13; and William Ferguson Tamblyn, "Tragedy in King Lear," Sewanee Review, XXX (January, 1922), 69.

choruses upon Lear's folly, involving his relinquishing the kingdom to his daughters before his death and the results upon his relationships with those around him.²⁷⁷ Lear's foolhardy act, the apex of common sense to himself, occurs long before the Fool enters the play. The banishments of Cordelia and Kent, therefore, also occur before the Fool makes his first entrance. This long delay, however, merely amplifies his supreme importance to Lear later on in the play. The elaborate preparation for his first appearance²⁷⁸ confirms the Fool's relationship with the banished Cordelia. When Lear asks for his Fool, a knight comments upon the Fool's remorse since the departure of Cordelia:

Knight. Since my young lady's going into France,
sir, the fool hath much pined away.

Lear. No more of that; I have noted it
well. Go you, and tell my daughter I would
speak with her. Go you, call hither my fool.
(I. iv. 70-83)

²⁷⁷Josephine Waters Bennett, "The Storm Within: The Madness of Lear," SO, XIII (Spring, 1962), 145; John W. Draper, "The Old Age of King Lear," JEGP, XXXIX (October, 1940), 537; Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery, p. 111; John C. McCloskey, "The Emotive Use of Animal Imagery in King Lear," SO, XIII (Summer, 1962), 322; Schoff, op. cit., p. 162; and W. B. C. Watkins, "The Two Techniques in King Lear," p. 21.

²⁷⁸Stroup, op. cit., p. 128.

The reader immediately connects the Fool and Cordelia with the Knight's understated, yet poignant, comment about the unhappiness of the Fool.²⁷⁹ This feeling, established early in the play, is reiterated whenever the Fool taunts Lear with the latter's folly, because the absence of Cordelia until the end of the play merely capitalizes upon the isolation of Lear and the Fool. The continued appearance and importance of the Fool (eventually, the Fool becomes the symbol to Lear of his identity²⁸⁰) emphasizes the absence of Cordelia, one of the symbols of real love that Lear impetuously thrusts aside. In addition, early in the play the Fool augments Cordelia's frankness.²⁸¹ As Cordelia truthfully claims to love Lear, "according to her bond," (I. i. 95) so the Fool truthfully comments upon the actions of Lear.

The theme of folly is continually reemphasized by the

²⁷⁹Bennett, op. cit., p. 145; William R. Elton, King Lear and the Gods, p. 324; Dean Frye, "The Context of Lear's Unbuttoning," ELH, XXXII (March, 1965), 31; Terence Hawkes, Shakespeare and the Reason, p. 168; and Stroup, op. cit., p. 130.

²⁸⁰Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery, p. 11.

²⁸¹Stirling, Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy: The Interplay of Theme and Character, p. 166.

bitter Fool,²⁸² whose only real fear, like that of his predecessors, is the fear of the whip.²⁸³ His very position demands that he comment truthfully upon his master's overwhelming folly, although he realizes that it would make life easier for him if only he could tell a lie: "Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie." (I. iv. 195-196) The Fool continually keeps Lear's folly not only in plain view of the King himself, but also before the audience, thus determining how the audience should react. One must remember that Lear's act of distributing his property before the correct time (i. e., at the time of his death) is an unnatural act, leading inevitably to chaos. The Fool is also cognizant of this fact and must, as objective commentator, remark upon it. The Fool's first comment concerning folly is not openly directed to Lear. Instead, at his first entrance, the Fool ignores Lear and addresses himself to Kent, commenting upon the folly of retaining one's loyalty to Lear:²⁸⁴

²⁸²Stroup, op. cit., p. 129.

²⁸³Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 6.

²⁸⁴Northrop Frye, Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearian Tragedy, p. 105.

Fool. Let me hire him too: here's my coxcomb.

Lear. How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?

Fool. Sirrah, you were best to take my coxcomb.

Kent. Why, fool?

Fool. Why, for taking one's part that 's out of favour: nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou 'lt catch cold shortly: there, take my coxcomb: why, this fellow has banished two on 's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will; if thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb.

(I. iv. 111-116)

Even at this point, the Fool is casting oblique barbs at the master to whom, ironically, he is unswervingly devoted.²⁸⁵

Finally "recognizing" Lear's presence, he turns to him with a direct comment upon his folly:

Fool. How now,
nuncle! Would I had two coxcombs
and two daughters!

Lear. Why, my boy?

Fool. If I gave them all my living,
I 'ld keep my coxcombs myself.

There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

Lear. Take heed, sirrah; the whip.

(I. iv. 117-123)

The definite advantage of making a fool the objective commentator in a play begins to show up even at this early point.

²⁸⁵ Huntington Brown, "Lear's Fool: A Boy, Not a Man," Essays in Criticism, XIII (1963), 168; Eleanor P. Hammond, "Lear and his Daughters," Poet Lore, XXIV (March, 1913), 110; and Schoff, op. cit., p. 160.

Had any other person uttered these same thoughts to him, Lear would have ordered death, or, at the very least, banishment, as he did for Cordelia and Kent as a result of their utterances of truth. The great liberties that he is able to take with his master merely emphasize the advisability of the Fool as objective commentator.²⁸⁶ Moreover, Lear is also aware that the Fool always tells the truth.²⁸⁷ The half-hearted threats that he makes to the Fool about using the whip merely show that he recognizes at least a kernel of truth in the Fool's utterances. Nor does Lear's threat of the whip prevent the Fool from enlarging upon the follies of the King.²⁸⁸ Not content to speak of Lear's folly merely as the occasion presents itself, he emphasizes its importance by inventing topics that will give him an opportunity to

²⁸⁶A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth, p. 261.

²⁸⁷Carolyn S. French, "Shakespeare's Folly: King Lear," SQ, X (Fall, 1959), 527; Julian Markels, "Shakespeare's Confluence of Tragedy and Comedy: Twelfth Night and King Lear," SQ, XV (Spring, 1964), 76; J. M. Nosworthy, "King Lear--The Moral Aspect," English Studies, XXI (1939), 266; and Weisinger, op. cit., p. 305.

²⁸⁸Lily Bess Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion, p. 191.

express his views, again:

Fool. Dost thou know the difference, my boy,
between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?

Lear. No, lad; teach me.

Fool. That lord that counsell'd thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me,
Do thou for him stand:
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.

Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away;
that thou wast born with.

(I. 151-164)

He points out that Lear's actions are those of a fool.²⁸⁹

It is this idea that adds support to the Fool's very conscious
announcement of Lear's folly repeated throughout the play.

Again, he invents a topic for Lear's display of folly as
he makes up a riddle, one of his favorite devices:²⁹⁰

Fool. Give me an egg,
nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.

Lear. What two crowns shall they be?

²⁸⁹ Bennett, op. cit., p. 145; Brandes, op. cit., p. 137; and William Empson, "The Fool in Lear," Sewanee Review, LVII (April, 1949), 190.

²⁹⁰ Jonas A. Barish and Marshall Waingrow, "The Service in King Lear," SQ, IX (Summer, 1958), 351; and Northrup Frye, Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearian Tragedy, p. 10.

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

(I. iv. 170-180)

He ends with a snatch of song after this sharp criticism, a practice which he continues throughout the duration of his part in the play. His object in doing so, of course, is partly comic relief²⁹¹ and partly an attempt to avoid the threat of the whip.²⁹² Always, he returns to his original theme of folly when given an opportunity.

The Fool's next comment upon Lear's folly broadens as he points out the unnaturalness of Lear's act in giving a daughter the kingdom while he still retains his vigor:

Lear. When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?

Fool. I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mother: for when thou gavest them the rod, and put 'st down thine own breeches,

Then they for sudden joy did weep,

²⁹¹ Crane, op. cit., p. 164.

²⁹² Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 62.

And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among.

(I. iv. 187-194)

Relentlessly, the Fool comments upon Lear, the "fool," and kingly folly. Later, in the same scene, he almost prophetically widens the scope of his comments about Lear when he suggests death in one of his rhymes:

For, you know, nuncle,
The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by it young.
So, out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

(I. iv. 234-237)

The Fool foreshadows Lear's death, indirectly instigated by Goneril and Regan, in this little quip uttered early in the play.²⁹³ Of course, he has been observing the actions of Goneril and foresees misfortune for Lear if the latter insists upon following his present course of action. He further reiterates this warning to the foolish Lear, pointing out that Goneril and Regan are much alike:

Fool. Shalt see thy other daughter will
use thee kindly; for though she's as like
this as a crab's like to an apple, yet
I can tell what I can tell.

Lear. Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

²⁹³ Robert K. Presson, "Boethius, King Lear, and Maystresse Philosophie," JEGP, LXIV (July, 1965), 412.

Fool. She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab.

(I. v. 12-19)

Lear, however, refuses to take to heart his Fool's warning and plunges recklessly into his ultimate destruction.

Lear leaves the inhospitable Goneril and goes to Regan's home, where he thinks he is certain to be welcomed with loving arms. Even after noting Lear's disillusionment with Goneril, the Fool cannot resist reminding Lear of this folly:

Fathers that wear rags
Do make their children blind;
But fathers that bear bags
Shall see their children kind.
Fortune, that arrant whore,
Ne'er turns the key to the poor.
But, for all this, thou shalt have as many
dolours for thy daughters as thou canst
tell in a year.

(II. iv. 48-55)

Once again, he points out the folly of giving one's fortunes to one's children.²⁹⁴ Lear begins to show visible signs of being disturbed, but manages to conquer the hysterica passio and sets off for Regan's home in good spirits. The Fool's one last jibe at Lear before the final confrontation with the

²⁹⁴Hardin Craig, "The Ethics of King Lear," PQ, IV (April, 1925), 102.

"loving" daughters shows the unkindness of a kindness whose consequences are not completely anticipated:

Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to
the eels when she put 'em i' the paste
alive; she knapped 'em o' the coxcombs
with a stick, and cried, 'Down, wantons,
down!' 'Twas her brother that, in
pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay.

(II. iv. 123-127)

As always, the Fool tirelessly comments upon the folly of mankind in general, and of Lear in particular. As Lear runs out to the heath with his faithful Fool at his heels, the Fool once again acts as an objective commentator speaking of their being houseless because of Lear's folly: "He that has a house to put 's head in has a good head-piece."

(III. ii. 25-26) At this point, he observes that one with sense would not be without a house. Lear's hysterica passio, which previously he has been able to choke down, begins to arise anew as he contemplates the latest indignity perpetrated upon him. When the storm continues, the Fool's comments turn to a different topic as he recognizes that Lear's mind is changing.

In addition to his endless commentary upon the foolish Lear, the Fool also acts as a vehicle of truth in King Lear,

exhibiting another characteristic of the chorus, and, hence, of the objective commentator. He recognizes that he is responsible for telling the truth, and reminds the members of the audience of this fact in order to convince them that they may estimate or interpret the actions of the play by means of his words. After Lear first threatens to whip him, the Fool observes that "Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out, when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink." (I. iv. 124-126) Thus, he early notes that the truth is hard to discern, because it is often hidden behind a mask. He praises himself, however, as the carrier of this weighty matter, because he is under compulsion to tell the truth, thus investing whatever he says with a professional reliability:²⁹⁵ "Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie." (I. iv. 195-196) He also quickly points out the paradox in truth, suggesting its universal quality:

²⁹⁵John F. Danby, "The Fool and Handy-Dandy," in Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism, p. 378; Elton, op. cit., p. 324; Heilman, This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear, p. 108; and Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery, p. 111.

I marvel what kin thou and thy
daughters are: they'll have me whipped for
speaking true, thou 'lt have me
whipped for lying; and sometimes I am
whipped for holding my peace.

(I. iv. 199-202)

The truth that the Fool speaks is revealed throughout the entire play as this minor tragic figure blindly follows the great tragic figure of the mad Lear on the heath.²⁹⁶ In virtually every one of his speeches, particularly in the early ones, he expounds truthfully upon Lear's situation. In fact, as Lear first stumbles, then totters, and finally crashes into madness, the Fool is almost a personification of truth, a torment rather than a comfort.²⁹⁷ However, he can do nothing, if not utter the truth.

He also serves as an objective commentator in the many other functions that he performs as Lear's personal fool. The wisdom so characteristic of the commentator is often presented by the Fool in his numerous proverbs, riddles, maxims, fables, and ballads.²⁹⁸ Because of his necessity

²⁹⁶Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 30.

²⁹⁷Watkins, "The Two Techniques in King Lear," p. 21.

²⁹⁸Maynard Mack, King Lear in Our Time, p. 99.

for speaking the truth, he often formulates the tenets of worldly wisdom with a clarity that worldly people often prefer to blur.²⁹⁹ Moreover, his wisdom transcends that of his fellows in his very actions that consistently express the Christian virtue of patience, humility, and love.³⁰⁰ As this sometimes cowardly Fool follows Lear into the storm and onto the heath, he puts into action the love that Regan and Goneril claimed to have for their father at the beginning of the play. His unhesitant following of Lear because of his devotion for his master parallels the later actions of Cordelia when she follows her father into prison because of her love for him. The Fool is obviously afraid of the heath in the storm, and advises Lear to act in a manner denoting common sense:

O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is
better than this rain-water out o' door. Good
nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters' blessing:
here's a night pities neither wise man nor
fool.

(III. ii. 10-13)

Lear ignores his advice, as he has ignored all of the Fool's

²⁹⁹Knights, op. cit., p. 109.

³⁰⁰Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 67.

previous advice. The Fool repeatedly counsels prudent, self-interested service to both Lear and Kent but ignores his own advice because of his loyalty.³⁰¹ In other words, he still sees the situation in an objective manner, yet refuses to act in accordance with what he knows would be best for himself. Unlike Enobarbus, he realizes, before it is too late, that he must remain with his master in order to retain what small happiness he can, and, thus, " . . . the innocent Fool remains faithful to his master, seeing beyond the old man's folly and unhesitantly suffering with him."³⁰²

Lear's Fool also intensifies the pathos and humanizes the tragedy for Shakespeare's audience.³⁰³ His bitter jests, proceeding from love and loyalty, merely strengthen the pathos.³⁰⁴ He is not fully aware of how deeply his bitter jests affect Lear. His very presence, loved though he is, reminds Lear of his own foolishness early in the play. Often,

³⁰¹Barish, op. cit., p. 351.

³⁰²Stroup, op. cit., p. 131.

³⁰³Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 104; and Albert H. Tolman, Falstaff and Other Shakespearian Topics, p. 91.

³⁰⁴French, op. cit., p. 527.

when the Fool is attempting to relieve the King with a joke, Lear's answers show that he is only half-listening. From the first rejection by Goneril, the King immediately begins to contemplate the ingratitude of his daughters and the ill fortune that placed him in his predicament. In trying to console Lear, then, the Fool reminds him of the very things that give him pain.³⁰⁵ Thus, Shakespeare develops a curious blend of the comic and the tragic, and " . . . the Fool intensifies the pathos by relieving it."³⁰⁶ Recognizing that Lear's situation holds comic elements,³⁰⁷ the Fool often tries " . . . to outjest / His heart-struck injuries." (III. i. 17-18) The very essence of comic irony exists in the reversal of roles in which the apparently wise man changes places with the Fool.³⁰⁸ This action is precisely what

³⁰⁵Draper, Stratford to Dogberry: Studies in Shakespeare's Earlier Plays, p. 46; and S. Musgrove, "Nomancature of King Lear," RES, VII (July, 1956), 297.

³⁰⁶D. Nichol Smith, as quoted by Goldsmith in Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 98.

³⁰⁷Knight, The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy with Three New Essays, p. 163.

³⁰⁸Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 17.

happens to Lear and his Fool, but the overwhelming tragedy of Lear's madness and its consequences obliterate the underlying comic sense. Nonetheless, it is this combination of the comic and the tragic that qualifies the Fool as Shakespeare's ideal objective commentator.

The Fool's last assigned words occur after Lear has stumbled onto the truth that he discovers in his madness. The Fool, apparently dazed by all that he and Lear have been through, makes one last attempt to arouse the King with a riddle. Obviously, Lear is not paying any attention to him, but he valiantly continues in his efforts to jest for the King:

Fool. Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?

Lear. A king, a king!

Fool. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

(III. iv. 10-15)

No responsive laugh comes from Lear; instead, he mumbles, "To have a thousand with red burning spits / Come hissing in upon 'em--." (III. vi. 16-17) His mind, obviously, is upon Goneril and Regan and not upon the poor joke that the Fool has rendered. Rebuffed, the Fool says little more

before his last line in the play. Despite this bitter jesting, cynical advice, and loving presence, Lear cannot maintain his sanity, although he does gain a prudential wisdom from the Fool's taunts.³⁰⁹ Only after realizing, in one blinding moment of brilliant sanity, the real nature of humanity can Lear apply the knowledge that his tutor, the Fool, has been trying to teach him. In the midst of this action, the Fool remains slightly bewildered and unable to comment. It is shortly after this point that he retires forever with one last feeble witticism: "And I'll go to bed at noon." (III. vi. 92)

Detached from the action by virtue of this traditional role on the stage,³¹⁰ the Fool may comment upon Lear's actions and upon those of the other characters in the play. His pointed moralizing emphasizes the role that he retains as an objective commentator,³¹¹ as do his prophetic

³⁰⁹Barish, op. cit., p. 351; Fraser, op. cit., p. 127; and Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery, p. 112.

³¹⁰Bush, op. cit., p. 100; Sears Jayne, "Charity in King Lear," SQ, XV (Spring, 1964), 285; and Crane, op. cit., p. 163.

³¹¹John Jay Chapman, op. cit., p. 62; Robert F. Fleissner, "The Nothing Element in King Lear," SQ, XIII (Winter, 1962), 69; and Rosen, op. cit., p. 38.

utterances.³¹² As he helps Lear to understand that which confronts the king,³¹³ the Fool provides a measure of much needed comic relief for the audience.³¹⁴ He serves as a commentator for Lear until Lear can see for himself, even though the king's "sight" unhappily occurs after he has renounced the unrealities of his kingly world and has retired to the realities of a mad world. Offering him love and insight to keep him sane,³¹⁵ the Fool has failed at his task, but this failure is neutralized by the heroic effort that he has put forth. Loyal unto his last words, the Fool is, indeed, wholly suitable as an objective commentator.

³¹²Charlton, op. cit., p. 225; and Empson, op. cit., p. 191.

³¹³Jayne, op. cit., p. 287.

³¹⁴Winifred M. T. Nowottny, "Some Aspects of the Style of King Lear," Shakespeare Studies, XIII (1960), 53.

³¹⁵Francis Fergusson, Shakespeare's Tragedies of Monarchy, p. 269.

CHAPTER VI

THE INFORMER AS OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR:

IAGO OF OTHELLO

Although the objective commentators discussed in the previous chapters were men with basically good intentions, the objective commentator need not be characterized by this quality. Indeed, the commentator called the informer is an ambitious man with intentions of doing ultimate evil. Seizing upon every opportunity that presents itself and even creating opportunities if none exist, he manipulates the other characters in the play and the action. Disregarding those to whom he should be close, he risks all to satisfy his overwhelming ambition. He takes care in disguising his vaulting ambitions by pretending to be a close friend of those whom he wishes to victimize. He always plays a dangerous game and exults in its danger, as he shows his superiority to those around him, actually overcoming, for a time, great natural disadvantage before he plunges into his ultimate destruction. These informers are some of

Shakespeare's greatest villains, including Richard III and Edmund. Perhaps, one of his greatest creations is also an informer: the diabolical Iago of Othello.³¹⁶

Iago functions as a chorus in much the same manner as Shakespeare's objective commentators.³¹⁷ For instance, he and Roderigo function as clownish commentators in the opening action of the play as they discuss the events that have taken place before the opening action of the play. Their topics are vital to the structure of the play, because the actions which Iago persuades Roderigo and himself to follow are the very bases of the plot. Initially, Iago exposes the reason for his consuming hatred of Othello:

Three great ones of the city,
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
Off-capp'd to him: and, by the faith of man,
I know my price, I am worth no worse a place:
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
Evades them, with a bombast circumstance
Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war;
And, in conclusion,

³¹⁶ William Shakespeare, Othello. In The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, editor. Pp. 947-979. All future references to this work will be from this edition.

³¹⁷ Leo Kirschbaum "Modern Othello," ELH, XI (December, 1944), 293.

Nonsuits my mediators; for, 'Certes,' says he,
'I have already chose my officer.'

(I. i. 8-17)

His hatred for Othello is evident, as is his contempt for
Cassio, whom he naturally envies:³¹⁸

Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,
A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife;
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theoric,
Wherein the toged consuls can propose
As masterly as he: mere prattle, without practice,
Is all his soldiership.

(I. i. 19-27)

He also claims that Cassio's promotion is unfair, noting
that " . . . preferment goes by letter and affection, /
And not by old gradation" (I. i. 36-37) Moreover,
he explicitly tells the audience that he himself is an
opportunist:³¹⁹

³¹⁸John W. Draper, "Captain General Othello," Anglica,
LV (April, 1931), 307.

³¹⁹Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 197;
Barbara Heliodora C. de Mendonca, "'Othello:' A Tragedy
Built on a Comic Structure," Shakespeare Survey, XXI (1968),
32; John W. Draper, "Honest Iago," PMLA, XLVI (1931), 726;
V. Walpole, "'And Cassio High in Oath,'" MLR, XL (January,
1945), 47; and Virgil Keeble Whitaker, The Mirror up to
Nature: The Technique of Shakespeare's Tragedies, p. 248.

I follow him to serve my turn upon him:
 We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
 Cannot be truly follow'd.

(I. i. 42-44)

This trait is, of course, directly related to his overwhelming belief in reason, and, hence, in self. He comprehends the world as "self-serving" and "self-seeking"³²⁰ and takes advantage of every opportunity as it presents itself.³²¹ He views existence as a relentless struggle for life,³²² and although he depends upon chance to a great extent for the success of his scheme,³²³ he views his world with a soldier's cunning.³²⁴ In addition, while functioning as a

³²⁰ Ann L. Hayes, "Othello," in Lovers Meeting: Discussion of Five Plays of Shakespeare, p. 55.

³²¹ Brandes, op. cit., p. 109; James H. E. Brock, Iago and Some Shakespearean Villains, p. 6; Robert B. Heilman, Magic in the Web: Action and Language in Othello, p. 44; and Marvin Rosenberg, "In Defense of Iago," SQ, VI (Spring, 1955), 151.

³²² Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 197.

³²³ J. P. Sullivan, "The Machiavel and the Moor," Essays in Criticism, X (1960), 233.

³²⁴ Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 196. According to Craig, Iago's background is almost perfect for him to be a successful opportunist. He has, for instance, a soldier's discipline, evolved from reason without emotion. He also has a soldier's cunning for obtaining the best for himself and in manipulating superior officers.

The informer takes advantage of the soliloquy³²⁶ (as do other objective commentators) in order to inform the audience of the true nature of the other characters in the play³²⁷ and to reveal facets of his own nature. He comments

³²⁶Brandes, op. cit., p. 110; Coghill, Shakespeare's Professional Skills, p. 146; Allan Gilbert, The Principles and Practice of Criticism: Hamlet, The Merry Wives, Othello, p. 38; Leah Scragg, "Iago--Vice or Devil?" Shakespeare Survey, XXI (1968), p. 55; Daniel Seltzer, "Elizabethan Acting in Othello," SQ, X (Spring, 1959), 205-206; and Sullivan, op. cit., p. 233. Many critics have made much of what they claim is Iago's "motiveless malignancy," a much over-used phrase to describe this villain. The argument, in brief, is that the motives that Iago utters in his soliloquies are mentioned once or twice and quickly forgotten as he perpetrates evil to satisfy some unknown recess of his mind. Because his motives are not reiterated continually throughout the play, these critics feel that as comments they are not valid. However, these critics are ignoring the value of the soliloquy, which, conventionally, is a vehicle for the utterance of truth. If they accept the soliloquy as a truthful device in other plays, they must, in order to be consistent, accept it as a truthful device in Othello. Since, moreover, in his soliloquies, Iago, more than any other Shakespearean character, is more effectively played if he addresses himself directly to the audience, one thinks that Iago would be particularly anxious to present the truth to those whom he has really taken into his confidence.

³²⁷Harry T. Baker, "Fair Cassio," PQ, VI (January, 1927), 89; and Charles Norton Coe, Demi-Devils: The Character of Shakespeare's Villains, p. 35. Both of these authors expound upon the inconsistencies of Iago's remarks, particularly in conjunction with Cassio. Any discrepancies, however, that may occur in Iago's comments about Cassio or any other character when one investigates the type of speech in which

in particular upon Cassio, Roderigo, Desdemona, and Othello, inadvertantly reflecting his own opinion of himself in each of these utterances.

As an opportunistic manipulator,³²⁸ he exploits Cassio's character for his own benefit and, at the same time, exposes his own personality. As he contemplates the means for attaining to revenge, he discusses Cassio, the personal man, not the professional soldier. According to him, "Cassio's a proper man," (I. iii. 398) but one who " . . . hath a person and a smooth dispose / To be suspected, framed to make women false." (I. iii. 404-405) Cassio, obviously, is a physically handsome man. As an opportunist, Iago has previously noted Cassio's attraction to women and now makes it a basis of a part of his plan for the destruction of Othello.³²⁹ Cassio is a thorough gallant, who takes note of all the ladies, including Iago's wife, Emilia. The

Iago utters the description. Any description uttered in a soliloquy or an aside is true. Otherwise, the comments that he makes are usually meant to disguise his ultimate purposes.

³²⁸ George Winchester Stone, "Garrick and Othello," PQ, XLV (January, 1966), 305.

³²⁹ Alfred Kelcy, "Notes on Othello," PQ, XII (October, 1933), 362.

affection of the gesture with which he welcomes her could, indeed, lead Iago to think that Cassio "had done [Iago's] office" with her. Cassio says:

Welcome, mistress:

Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
That I extend my manners; 'tis my breeding
That gives me this bold show of courtesy. [Kissing her]
(II. i. 97-100)

This gesture alone characterizes Cassio, as it infuriates Iago, who admits that this behavior is typical, but decides that he can use it for his own ends, particularly when he watches the behavior of Cassio and Desdemona as affectionate friends:

He takes her by the palm: ay, well
said, whisper: with as little a web as this will
I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon
her, do; I will gyve thee in thine own courtship.
You say true; 'tis so, indeed: if such tricks as
these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had
been better you had not kissed your three fingers
so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the
sir in. Very good; well kissed! an excellent
courtesy! 'tis so, indeed. Yet again your fingers
to your lips? would they were clyster-pipes for
your sake!

(II. i. 167-179)

Obviously, the pleasure with which women accept Cassio's courtesies are yet another indication of his character.

Iago also notes Cassio's relationship with Bianca:

A housewife that by selling her desires
 Buys herself bread and clothes: it is a creature
 That dotes on Cassio; as 'tis the strumpet's plague
 To beguile many and be beguiled by one:
 He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain
 From the excess of laughter.

(IV. i. 95-100)

This speech indicates that Iago knows that Cassio is aware that he is attractive to women, and, also, that Cassio cherishes the title of conqueror of women. Women, obviously, are Cassio's weakness. Nonetheless, Iago recognizes Cassio's ultimate virtue as he says, "He hath a daily beauty in his life / That makes me ugly." (IV. iii. 18-20) Through Iago's eyes, then, the audience observes the personal side of Cassio while the professional side of the man is presented through the action in the play.

Iago also comments upon Roderigo, the love-sick admirer of Desdemona and takes a sardonic pleasure in using Roderigo as a tool for revenge,³³⁰ and in delegating disagreeable and dangerous jobs to him, cleverly making it seem that only Roderigo is capable of each mission.³³¹ For instance, it is

³³⁰T. S. Dorsch, "This Poor Trash of Venice," SQ, VI (Summer, 1955), 361.

³³¹Brock, op. cit., p. 7.

Roderigo, supported by Iago in the shadows, who tells Brabantio of the marriage of Desdemona and Othello. Roderigo also leads Brabantio and his followers to Othello's dwelling-place for their revenge. In addition, Roderigo is assigned the job of infuriating Cassio on Othello's wedding night. Moreover, Iago tells Roderigo that he must kill Cassio in order to win Desdemona. Roderigo, ambitious for Desdemona, agrees to do these assignments, but with less and less enthusiasm each time. It is Iago who partially transforms Roderigo from a timid, conventional man into an aggressive one, willing to commit murder to attain an end.³³² In telling the audience about his manipulations of Roderigo, Iago also informs them, quite bluntly, that he himself is a thief,³³³ as he systematically plunders Roderigo throughout the play.³³⁴ After telling Roderigo to convert his lands into money, " . . . put money in thy purse" (I. iii. 346),

³³²W. H. Auden, "The Alienated City: Reflections on 'Othello,'" Encounter, XVII (August, 1961), 6.

³³³Robert B. Heilman, "The Economics of Iago and Others," PMLA, LXVIII (June, 1953), 561.

³³⁴Brock, op. cit., p. 3.

in order that he may purchase Desdemona's love, Iago mocks Roderigo as he informs the audience of his purpose for "aiding" Roderigo in his suit, commenting, at the same time, upon his character:

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
If I would time expend with such a snipe,
But for my sport and profit.

(I. iii. 389-392)

Iago obviously likes money and is not above taking it from such a foolish man as Roderigo. His opinion of Roderigo, quite understandably, is consistent throughout the action of the play, and although he treats him as an intimate friend when they converse, the audience is always aware of Iago's private thoughts. He persuades Roderigo to engage Cassio in a fight, for Iago's own gain, of course. He, then, refers once more to Roderigo as his tool for revenge:

Which thing to do,
If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trash
For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip

(II. i. 311-314)

Iago's opinion of Roderigo, obviously, is not high. Roderigo complains that he received nothing for his efforts except to be " . . . exceedingly well cudgelled" (II. iii. 371-372),

but Iago persuades him to have patience, because his scheme has commenced to work. Satisfied only for the moment, Roderigo soon replies, "I do not find that thou dealest justly with me." (IV. ii. 74) The audience discovers that Iago has supposedly been giving Desdemona jewels from Roderigo in an effort to win the latter's way into Desdemona's bed. Iago, the self-acclaimed thief, persuades Roderigo to perform one last act before giving up his suit for Desdemona. Later, he expresses his contempt for Roderigo as he explains to the audience what has happened to the jewels from the gullible Roderigo:

I have rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense,
 And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio,
 Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
 Every way makes my gain: live Roderigo,
 He calls me to a restitution large
 Of gold and jewels that I bobb'd from him,
 As gifts to Desdemona

(V. i. 11-17)

Like the thief he is, then, Iago wishes to be rid of whom he has robbed. By means of his wily cunning,³³⁵ Iago manages

³³⁵Lily Bess Campbell, op. cit., p. 148; and Albert Frederick Sproule, "A Time Scheme for Othello," SQ, VII (Spring, 1956), 220.

to kill Roderigo before he exposes Iago's hypocrisy.³³⁶

Throughout the play, however, Iago has commented clearly upon Roderigo's stupidity, which is obviously proved by the latter's actions. Not flatteringly, but truly, Iago exposes Roderigo as a dupe, while, at the same time, he exposes more of his own opportunistic character to the audience.

To some extent, Iago also reveals to the audience the character of Desdemona, innocent and pure victim of Iago's plan for revenge on Othello. Despite his wanton remarks like, " . . . she is sport for Jove" (II. iii. 17), Desdemona is recognized by Iago as virtuous in his soliloquies. He comments, for instance, that

. . . 'tis most easy
The inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit: she's framed as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor--were 't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
His soul is so enfetter'd to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function.

(II. iii. 345-354)

³³⁶Elmer Edgar Stoll, "Modesty in the Audience," MLN, LV (December, 1940), 574.

He recognizes Desdemona's good qualities,³³⁷ but is incapable of comprehending her virtue.³³⁸ He sees her power over Othello, but thinks of it, characteristically, as an opportunity for self-satisfaction. Although he perceives Desdemona's characteristics, he is not able to understand her because of his inability to deal with anything on the level of the ideal.³³⁹ Thus, although he can inform the audience of the details of her character, he is not necessarily able to apply these details advantageously. Nonetheless, he functions as an objective commentator in describing Desdemona.

His biggest challenge in the play is to turn Othello against friends and wife. In plotting revenge upon this good man, he exposes some of Othello's vital qualities. In order for his scheme to succeed, he must know the character

³³⁷Carroll Camden, "Iago on Women," JEGP, XLVIII (January, 1949), 70.

³³⁸Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 199.

³³⁹Clarence Valentine Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 117.

of Othello.³⁴⁰ That he does know Othello fairly well is expounded upon, both in soliloquy and in his regular speeches. He tells Roderigo that he and Othello have fought together and mentions his own great courage: " . . . I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof / At Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds / Christian and heathen" (I. i. 28-30) Almost prophetically, he also tells Roderigo that

. . . Moors are changeable in their wills:
 --fill thy purse with money:-- the food that
 to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be
 to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida.
 (I. iii. 51-54)

He recognizes that Othello overvalues him³⁴¹ when he comments, "He holds me well; / The better shall my purpose work on him." (I. iii. 96-97) Furthermore, he comments upon Othello's nature, showing, at the same time, his own nature:

The Moor is of a free and open nature,
 That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
 And will as tenderly be led by the nose
 As asses are.

(I. iii. 405-408)

³⁴⁰Hayes, op. cit., p. 57; John Robert Moore, "Othello, Iago, and Cassio as Soldiers," PQ, XXXI (April, 1952), 194; and Whitaker, op. cit., p. 245.

³⁴¹Kirschbaum, "Modern Othello," p. 289.

In this passage lies the key to the success of Iago's plot. He is able to manipulate Othello only because the latter regards him as honest.³⁴² His supreme success in disguise comes as the result of having all the other characters in the play think him honest.³⁴³ Only the audience, thanks to Iago himself, is completely aware of how ironically the word, "honest," rings in Iago's ears.³⁴⁴ The Moor, more so than anyone else, fails to understand Iago.³⁴⁵ Thus, Othello's own honesty paves the way to his own destruction,³⁴⁶ and it is through Iago that the audience is aware of that

³⁴²Stoll, "Heroes and Villains: Shakespeare, Middleton, Byron, and Dickens," p. 30.

³⁴³Brock, op. cit., p. 4; and August Goll, "Criminal Types in Shakespeare," The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, XXX (May, 1939), 38.

³⁴⁴Julian Willish Abernethy, "Honest Iago," Sewanee Review, XXX (July, 1922), 336; Coe, op. cit., p. 40; Seltzer, op. cit., p. 204; and Spivack, op. cit., p. 52.

³⁴⁵Philip A. Smith, "Othello's Diction," SQ, IX (Summer, 1958), 430.

³⁴⁶Maurianne S. Adams, "Ocular Proof in Othello and its Source," PMLA, LXXIX (June, 1964), 240; and J. K. Walton, "Strength's Abundance: A View of Othello," RES, XI (February, 1960), 11.

complete honesty. Moreover, Iago admits that

The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband.

(II. i. 297-300)

It is this "constant, loving, noble nature" that Iago decides to attack, because, obviously, the Moor's love for Desdemona is his most vulnerable point.³⁴⁷ As he finishes constructing his scheme for revenge, he makes Othello's jealousy an intimate part of his plot.³⁴⁸ He conditions and controls Othello's honesty³⁴⁹ through verbal ambiguity,³⁵⁰ by false interpretation,³⁵¹ and by direct provocation to inquiry.³⁵² Othello's change of mind from complete belief in Desdemona to an uncertain belief in her is carefully observed by

³⁴⁷ Moore, op. cit., p. 193.

³⁴⁸ Abernethy, op. cit., p. 337.

³⁴⁹ Terence Hawkes, "Iago's Use of Reason," SP, LVIII (April, 1961), 165.

³⁵⁰ R. M. Rossetti, "Crux and No Crux," SQ, XIII (Summer, 1962), 301.

³⁵¹ Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 201.

³⁵² Loc. cit.

Iago:

The Moor already changes with my poison:
 Dangerous conceits are, in their natures, poisons,
 Which at first are scarce found to distaste,
 But with a little act upon the blood,
 Burn like the mines of sulfur.

(III. iii. 325-329)

He points out the change in Othello to the audience,
 summarizing the action of the preceding scenes. After
 Othello falls into a trance, Iago mutters:

Work on
 My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught;
 And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,
 All guiltless, meet reproach.

(IV. i. 45-48)

Commenting upon Othello's character, Iago, at the same time,
 furthers the narration of the story, thus serving as an
 objective commentator in more than one way.

Iago, the self-centered informer, also comments upon
 himself for the benefit of the audience. He identifies
 himself, above all, as a villain. ³⁵³ He refers to his
 "double knavery," indicating that he is more than willing

³⁵³ Aerol Arnold, "The Function of Brabantio in Othello,"
SQ, VIII (Winter, 1957), 53; Bradbrook, op. cit., p. 65;
 Kenneth O. Myrick, "The Theme of Damnation in Shakespearean
 Tragedy," SP, XXXVIII (April, 1941), 240; and Elmer Edgar
 Stoll, "Iago Not a 'Malcontent,'" JEGP, LI (April, 1952), 165.

to do what needs to be done in order to get revenge. This attitude, of course, has already been reflected in his actions before the time of this utterance, and he has even gone so far as to describe the philosophy of every Shakespearean villain:³⁵⁴

Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions: but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.

(I. iii. 321-337)

Ironically, in this speech Iago speaks of reason, one of the very necessary characteristics of the objective commentator. As the informer, however, he carries the doctrine of reason to far greater lengths than those exemplified by the very rational protector, who ultimately realizes that reason alone is destructive. In asserting

³⁵⁴ Lily Bess Campbell, op. cit., p. 157.

the superiority of man's will and reason over emotion,³⁵⁵ Iago creates a destructive, rather than a constructive, force.³⁵⁶ The supreme control of his reason over his emotions renders him, of course, passionless.³⁵⁷ It is this very cold, and passionless nature³⁵⁸ that, in part, causes him to remain detached from the play, another requirement of the objective commentator. He is detached because he is involved only superficially with the conventional morality of the others in the play.³⁵⁹ He is an isolated figure,³⁶⁰ and it is this isolation that enables him to comment

³⁵⁵William J. Grace, "The Cosmic Sense in Shakespearean Tragedy," Sewanee Review, L (October, 1942), 435; Thomas Greene, "The Postures of Hamlet," SQ, XI (Summer, 1960), 361; and Rosenberg, op. cit., p. 151.

³⁵⁶Hawkes, "Iago's Use of Reason," p. 165.

³⁵⁷Hallstead, op. cit., p. 111.

³⁵⁸Boyer, op. cit., p. 123; Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 196; Barbara Everett, "Reflections on the Sentimentalist's Othello," Critical Quarterly, III (1961), 131; and Theodore Spencer, "The Isolation of the Shakespearean Hero," Sewanee Review, LII (July, 1944), 323.

³⁵⁹Spivack, op. cit., p. 44.

³⁶⁰Theodore Spenser, op. cit., p. 323; and Walton, op. cit., p. 9.

objectively upon the characters, as well as himself, in the play. In his other outright statement about his villainous actions, he takes a grim, sardonic pleasure in the situation he has just faced:³⁶¹

And what's he then that says I play the villain?
 When this advice is free I give and honest,
 Probal to thinking and indeed the course
 To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
 The inclining Desdemona to subdue
 In any honest suit: she's framed as fruitful
 As the free elements. And then for her
 To win the Moor--were 't to renounce his baptism,
 All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
 His soul is so enfetter'd to her love,
 That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
 Even as her appetite shall play the god
 With his weak function. How am I then a villain
 To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
 Directly to his good?

(II. iii. 342-357)

He is obviously not trying to excuse his evil actions. Instead, he is enjoying himself, and the lusty laughter which is lurking in this passage echoes throughout many of his speeches. Furthermore, by informing the audience of his villainy, he is clearly functioning as an informer.

In another way, Iago also proves his detachment from the action, and, therefore, his qualities as an objective

³⁶¹Abernethy, op. cit., p. 341.

commentator. All of Shakespeare's objective commentators heretofore discussed have had no direct relationship with love; in fact, they have deliberately avoided that emotion thought to usurp one's reason. Iago is no exception; if anything, he is one who sees clearly, though perhaps too cynically, through love's illusions.³⁶² His attitude toward women, one of distrust and suspicion,³⁶³ is clearly indicated in his attitude toward his own wife. His conversations with her consist of little more than, "Go to," hardly an indication of any affection for her. In fact, he accuses her of copulation with both Cassio and Othello. In fact, some of Iago's most cynical wit is shown in his degradation of wives and love.³⁶⁴ Observing the welcome that Cassio extends to Emilia, he comments:

Iago. Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,
You 'ld have enough.

³⁶²Osborn, op. cit., p. 270.

³⁶³Brock, op. cit., p. 6; Boyer, op. cit., p. 123; and Sullivan, op. cit., p. 232.

³⁶⁴Ernest A. Strathman, "The Devil Can Cite Scripture," SQ, XV (Spring, 1964), 18.

Des. Alas, she has no speech.

Iago. In faith, too much;
I find it still, when I have list to sleep:
Marry, before your ladyship, I grant,
She puts her tongue a little in her heart,
And chides with thinking.

Emil. You have little cause to say so.

Iago. Come on, come on; you are pictures out of doors,
Bells in your parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens,
Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
Players in your housewifery, and housewives in your bed.
(II. i. 101-113)

Next, he and Desdemona indulge in a debate wherein he attacks
all women with his satirical remarks:³⁶⁵

Iago. She that was ever fair and never proud,
Had tongue at will and yet was never loud,
Never lack'd gold and yet went never gay,
Fled from her wish and yet said 'Now I may,'
She that being anger'd, her revenge being nigh,
Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly,
She that in wisdom never was so frail
To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail,
She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind,
See suitors following and not look behind,
She was a wight, if ever such wight were,--

Des. To do what?

Iago. To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.
(II. i. 149-161)

Thus, even what could compliment a woman turns to biting
sarcasm when Iago utters it. He repeatedly laughs at the
loves he witnesses, at the same time maintaining his

³⁶⁵Camden, "Iago on Women," p. 57.

his detachment by refusing affinity with anyone.³⁶⁶

Shakespeare further qualifies him as an objective commentator in that he acts as a link for the events that occur in the play. He punctuates the story with explanations of the action, explaining in eight soliloquies the complex details of the plot that he has perpetrated in order to revenge himself upon Othello.³⁶⁷ He is the natural selection for this function, because, at all times during the play, he is the only character aware of all of the action.³⁶⁸ He reveals the motives from which the plan has evolved. Only he and the audience are aware of why he is perpetrating his scheme. That Iago has lost a promotion to Cassio has already been stated, and it is one of the motives that he expresses for his desire to have revenge against Othello. He also offers another reason for this desire:

³⁶⁶Spivack, op. cit., p. 31.

³⁶⁷John Jay Chapman, op. cit., p. 47.

³⁶⁸Hayes, op. cit., p. 56; G. R. Hibbard, "'Othello' and the Pattern of Shakespearian Tragedy," Shakespeare Survey, XXI (1968), p. 42; Heilman, Magic in the Web: Action and Language in Othello, p. 32; and John Shaw, "What is the Matter? in Othello," SQ, XVII (Spring, 1966) 158.

I hate the Moor;
 And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
 He has done my office: I know not if 't be true;
 But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
 Will do as if for surety.

(I. iii. 392-396)

This motive is no little one, because the cuckoldry of
 which he speaks would bring much laughter from society.³⁶⁹

Obviously, he thinks that he is superior to those around
 him whom he refers to as fools;³⁷⁰ an injury from cuckoldry
 would severely detract from that superiority in which he
 revels. This particular motive gnaws at Iago's mind,
 because he repeats it:

. . . But partly led to diet my revenge
 For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
 Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof
 Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards
 (II. i. 303-306)

This motive is also echoed by Emilia. Iago has apparently
 confronted her at some time with an accusation of infidelity,
 which she has angrily denied:

O, fie upon them! Some such squire he was
 That turn'd your wit the seamy side without,
 And made you to suspect me with the Moor.
 (IV. ii. 145-147)

³⁶⁹Draper, "Honest Iago," p. 729.

³⁷⁰A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, p. 186.

In his soliloquies and by the indirect help of Emilia, Iago informs the audience, then, of his motives for his hatred of the Moor. Othello refuses the advancement Iago feels he has deserved, and he also thinks that Othello has cuckolded him--a serious enough motivation to promote a desire for revenge. That Cassio is included in Iago's plan for revenge is natural, since Cassio is the officer whom Othello chose over Iago.³⁷¹ Iago claims that Cassio's promotion is unfair because of the former's superior military knowledge. Moreover, Iago thinks that Cassio, too, has "promoted" himself into Emilia's bed:

. . . I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
 Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb--
 For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too--
 (II. i. 314-316)

This Iago, who loves his superiority more than anything else in the world, also expresses his jealousy, based upon nothing more than the fact that Cassio is a fairer man than he:

. . . if Cassio do remain
 He hath a daily beauty in his life
 That makes me ugly
 (V. i. 18-20)

³⁷¹Draper, "Captain General Othello," p. 307.

Thus, Iago informs the audience of his reasons for hating Cassio. Jealous for the lieutenancy, he is also jealous of the beauty of the man who has received it. He proceeds to explain to the audience, then, his reasons for the scheme that he is to undertake. By commenting upon the reasons behind his plot and by explaining the full consequence of each of his moves, he further qualifies himself as an informer who serves as an objective commentator.

As an objective commentator, he also is a catalyst for the action, a characteristic that he shares with Mercutio. In complete control of the action,³⁷² he completes the vast machinery of his plot and, then, suggests that Othello should be jealous of Cassio. Trusting this man who invariably poses as his friend,³⁷³ Othello falls at once into Iago's trap. Moreover, Iago is the only character who exercises his creative power and initiates any movement in the plot.³⁷⁴ As he commands his medicine to "work on, work on," he is anticipating the end to which Othello's

³⁷²Crane, op. cit., p. 158.

³⁷³Scragg, op. cit., p. 54.

³⁷⁴Abernethy, op. cit., p. 337.

jealousy must bring him.³⁷⁵ He acts as a catalytic agent to bring about the ultimate fall of Desdemona and Othello.³⁷⁶ Because of Iago's comments, the audience clearly perceives what is happening. Hence, the informer acts in the capacity of an objective commentator. Furthermore, this clever, ambitious man who coolly manipulates others for his own ends³⁷⁷ serves as a clown commentator, as the commentator who exposes the characters of the dramatis personae, as a tone-setter, and as a catalyst. Detached from the action, his cynical humor is similar to that of other objective commentators. As an informer, " . . . he is the showman who produces the play and the chorus that interprets it"³⁷⁸ The informer, thus, must be classified as another type of objective commentator.

³⁷⁵Auden, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁷⁶Hallstead, op. cit., p. 117.

³⁷⁷Rosenberg, op. cit., p. 151.

³⁷⁸Spivack, op. cit., p. 31.

CHAPTER VII

THE OBJECTIVE COMMENTATOR

AND HIS IMPORTANCE

At least one, and usually more, objective commentators may be found in a Shakespearean play. The commentator varies, of course, in his importance and function, but he is always present and identifiable. He need not be a character, but when he is, the commentating aspect is usually subordinate to some other aspect of his characterization. Regardless of function or importance in the play, he is that character who comments freely about the circumstances of the action and the characters, including himself. Moreover, he is honest in what he relates to the audience concerning the action and the characters. The more important commentators are characterized by an extensive use of the soliloquy and the dramatic aside, conventional vehicles for the dissemination of absolute truth on the stage. In addition, an objective commentator is witty, either lightly humorous, or darkly sardonic, according to the individual

personality. Moreover, he needs to be witty in order to maintain his detachment from the action, which attitude is necessary for the objectivity of his comment. The objective commentator further retains his objectivity by maintaining his distance from love for women. His objections to love stem from his strong reliance on reason. He always thinks with cold, dispassionate reason. To some extent prophetic, he serves as a chorus, thereby functioning in several capacities in the play.

In some plays, the objective commentator serves to heighten dramatic emotion. For example, the Fool in King Lear manages through his comments consisting of rhymes, riddles, and jokes to remind both Lear and the audience of Lear's folly. In addition, as he follows Lear upon the heath through the storm, Lear's plight is heightened by the mumblings of the Fool. Of course, a character need not be an objective commentator in order to heighten emotion, but the audience, recognizing the commentator, and knowing that he is the embodiment of reason, can appreciate the sacrifices the commentator makes. Enobarbus, the protector, manages to heighten emotion in Antony and Cleopatra, for

instance, after he has followed his reason and deserted Antony. When he calls upon Antony as he dies, the audience cannot help but feel a heightened emotion similar to that which it feels as Antony and Cleopatra both welcome death to be reunited with their lovers. Furthermore, an objective commentator may, ironically, heighten emotion through his reason.

Moreover, the objective commentator may provide comic relief during particularly tense moments of the play. When, for instance, Mercutio prattles his way through Romeo and Juliet, he saves the audience from being weighed down with Romeo's ever-present gloom. Mercutio's constant banter adds a sparkle to the play which comes from the comic relief he so willingly provides. Lear's Fool from King Lear accomplishes virtually the same thing when he jokes as Lear goes mad. The intensity of Lear's madness and the causes are not made less tragic, but, rather, as some relief is thrown into the constant throbbing of tragic happenings, the Fool serves to soften it, and, at the same time, to intensify it. The objective commentator, then, is in a position to provide comic relief, particularly in the tragedies.

In addition, the commentator may serve to bring information to the audience which it could not otherwise know. Although minor figures known as clown commentators usually serve this purpose, the major ones may also assume such a responsibility. At the same time, these commentators set the tone for the play and guide the audience's feelings. For example, Iago, the main commentator in Othello, serves in this capacity as he and Roderigo discuss Othello. Iago begins a statement of motives for the ensuing plot to destroy Desdemona and Othello, and, at the same time, tells a little of the history of Othello. As he reveals his knowledge, despite the fact that the audience almost immediately evolves a dislike for him that continues to mount as the play proceeds, he sets the mood for the play that is heightened as it continues. Enobarbus also functions in this manner as he informs the audience of the kind of a man Antony was in the past. Sardonic, yet fair in his discussion of events, he establishes a mood of awe for the leading characters and registers disgust for the love which takes away their greatness. Ordinarily, of course, the clown commentators, or the prologue sets the scene and establishes

the mood.

All commentators comment freely upon the action and characters in the plays, thus acting in an interpretative manner for the audience. In this way, all commentators are related directly to the Fool, who, according to stage tradition, is allowed to say what he pleases to correct the folly of his master, while, at the same time, satisfying the master's need for self-importance. Jaques, in As You Like It, comments cynically upon the pastoral romance with which he is surrounded. His caustic remarks continually remind the audience that the play is, indeed, merely a flight of fancy. Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra comments freely upon Cleopatra, Antony, and himself, showing not only the virtues of these characters, but also their vices. Given Enobarbus' point of view, the audience is capable of judging the romance for itself. Mercutio takes great pleasure in puncturing the illusions of those around him, and, as he comments upon their foibles and follies, the audience once again realizes the point of view that Shakespeare expects it to take regarding certain matters. Lear's Fool, of course, very pointedly comments upon his

master's folly, and, until he disappears from the play, never does he allow either King Lear or the audience to forget that Lear's tragedy has been caused by Lear himself. Iago also assume a particular importance in this function, because only he is fully capable of showing the audience the intricacies of the plot that leads to an unexpected end. Commentating upon both characters and action, Iago shows the audience what to expect at certain points in the play. The objective commentator, then, may convey information about action and character through a concise statement at various points in the play.

Objective commentators may also be used as connective devices, linking passage of time and action. Enobarbus is particularly outstanding in this function, because he is selected to tell the audience about off-stage action. In doing so, he performs a summarizing action that saves much time. Also, when some important event occurs, Enobarbus usually shows the audience how the event relates to the overall structure of the play. Enobarbus is present during most important scenes and serves as a link in that capacity, too. Mercutio, the scoffer, also acts as a link in Romeo

and Juliet as he tells the audience the difference in behavior of Romeo before and after the latter meets Juliet. Moreover, it is usually Mercutio who tells the audience how much time has elapsed since he last saw Romeo, thus enabling the audience to see how fast the affairs of Romeo and Juliet occur. The very presence of this mercury-like character speeds up time and adds to the overall impression that Shakespeare wishes to create. The objective commentator thus functions as a connective link in some plays.

Finally, the objective commentator may serve as a catalyst for important action in the play. Enobarbus' desertion, for instance, does not really signify that Antony's end occurs because of that action, but it does signify that Antony's end is inevitable. Without Mercutio, Tybalt's death in Romeo and Juliet would never have occurred. If Tybalt had not died, Romeo would not have been banished and the play could have ended as a happy romance. Instead, thanks to Mercutio and his untimely death, the story of Romeo and Juliet becomes a tragedy. Iago is nothing if he is not a catalyst. He is the innovator and director of the action which occurs in Othello. Without this

opportunist and his manipulations, the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona would not be possible. The commentator, then, may serve as an integral part of the action in the play.

The significance of the objective commentator lies mainly in the fact that he is a device to aid the audience in understanding exactly what Shakespeare means. Without the objective commentator as a guide, the audience must attempt to interpret for itself the full scope of the meaning of a play. In Shakespeare's plays, however, the audience is always supplied with a character who supplies it with this interpretation. The objective commentator retains contact with the play's reality at all times. Serving as a guide for the audience's emotions and reaction to the play he is necessary to the understanding of the play. Moreover, when he is removed, either by death or by some other means, the action declines. Thus, the objective commentator, whether he be melancholic, scoffer, protector, Fool, or informer, is Shakespeare's answer to the inclusion of the chorus in Elizabethan drama.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁹Wilson, op. cit., p. 407.

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