

Richard HILLMAN, « Speaking of Miracles: Seeing, Believing—and Hearing »,
« Theta VIII, Théâtre Tudor », 2009, pp. 125-142
mis en ligne en juillet 2009, <<http://www.cesr.univ-tours.fr/Publications/Theta8>>.

Theta VIII

est publié par le Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance,
dirigé par Philippe VENDRIX,
Université François-Rabelais de Tours, CNRS/UMR 6576

Responsables scientifiques

André LASCOMBES & Richard HILLMAN

Mentions légales

Copyright © 2009 – CESR. Tous droits réservés.
Les utilisateurs peuvent télécharger et imprimer,
pour un usage strictement privé, cette unité documentaire.
Reproduction soumise à autorisation.

Date de création

Juillet 2009

Speaking of Miracles: Seeing, Believing—and Hearing

Richard Hillman

Université François-Rabelais de Tours, CNRS—CESR

When the rug is pulled out from under by asking, “or is it?”, someone of perverse mind might be switched onto a different track and wonder to what extent believing may instead be a matter of hearing. But the question is less frivolous than fraught, extending all the way from the early modern penchant for “hearing” rather than “seeing” a play to Puritan iconoclasm and anti-theatricality, complex questions, however old hat (as in *Hat, The Anti-Christ’s Lewd* [Lake and Questier]). They intersect with the broad Reformation principle that, in proportion as God visibly withdraws from the public sector, on stage and off, his Word is privatised. Also lurking is the monstrous question of outward signs in relation to inward essence. When Ben Jonson agreed with the ancient rhetoricians (and a current proverb)—“Language most shows a man: speak, that I may see thee” (Jonson, ed. Donaldson, l. 2049 [p. 574])¹—he did more than assimilate the visual to the verbal. He also by-passed his own profession, the role-playing and double-talking that he practised on the stage (and no doubt elsewhere²), habitually “suit[ing] the

1 The famous remark is embedded within a discussion of rhetoric and sandwiched between citations of Quintilian and Cicero; its proverbial character is noted by Donaldson, ed., n. to l. 2049 (p. 752), citing Tilley, S735. See also Herford and Simpson, eds., vol. II, nn. to ll. 2031–89 (p. 270) and 2031 (p. 271).

2 See, for instance, the anecdote recorded by Drummond (13.254–58 [p. 601]) regarding Jonson’s impersonation of an astrologer; see, for that matter, the *Conversations* with Drummond generally.

action to the word” (Shakespeare, *Ham.*, III.ii.17) precisely so as to conceal or to conjure—or both—“that within which passes show” (I.ii.85). As the case of Hamlet illustrates to perfection (if that is the word), such juggling with essential impressions often plays off, as I have proposed elsewhere (Hillman, esp. pp. 1-34), self-*speaking* means against a self-*effacing* end, the latter lending itself to an eminently optical metaphor: “aphanisis” (fading).

Incidentally, it may serve as a cautionary lesson that Jonson, to whom it is fashionable to impute a Catholic-tinged taste for the miraculous, proclaims the contingency of seeing upon hearing. At the same time, one finds the Puritan-leaning George Whetstone, in *A mirour for magistrates of cyties*, invoking at once theatrical and classical authority for what he calls the “sound Reason of Plautus: ‘Of more validitie, is the sight of one eye, than the attention of ten eares: for, in that a man seeth, is Assurance, and in that he heareth, may be Error’” (sig. Aiii).³ In fact, Whetstone takes his quotation contrary to context in the finest undergraduate style: Plautus’ line is a joke at the speaker’s expense involving multiple deceiving appearances, the key one here recalling the lying-in gambit of Mak’s wife. No less than Jonson, however, Whetstone had popular wisdom on his side: obviously related to our own keynote proverb is another more fully documented for the period, which actually adapts Plautus in a closer translation: “One eyewitness is better than ten earwitnesses” (Tilley, E274). Taken together, the declarations of Jonson and Whetstone, along with their echoes, both more and less erudite, would seem to diminish the ideological charge.

Thus encouraged, I hope that in such a brief paper I can side-step major spectator sporting events and settle for local glimpses of the games being played here and there. Such glimpses suggest to me that, in broad contrast with the synthesizing impulse of medieval theatre, the Tudor one habitually takes seeing and hearing apart precisely along the axis of believing. Sometimes, too, it puts them together again, and the results can resemble those of someone who tries to fix his own (non-digital) watch, unsure of what all the pieces are for and left with no hope of making the thing tick. (But then the English theatre is notoriously indifferent to the unity of time.)

3 The provenance of the citation is *Truculentus* II.vi.8-9: “pluris est oculatus testis unus quam auriti decem; / qui audiunt audita dicunt, qui uident plane sciunt”. The speaker is Stratophanes, himself a boastful soldier who is in the process of being tricked by a courtisan into believing that she has had a child by him.

It seems reasonable to presume that miracles, in the drama that serves their cause, should be guaranteed by sight. I take as corroboration the apparent sensitivity on the point shown by the slaying of Abel according to the *Mistère du Viel Testament*. The episode is pertinent because the Bible has Abel's blood crying to the Lord for vengeance, whereupon God addresses himself to Cain. In the English cycles, the crying of the blood seems to attract no special treatment: with the exception of the Wakefield version, to which I will return in a moment, it is simply reported—by God himself in Chester and N. Towne, in York by an interpolated Angel (again, I will come back to this). But the *Mistère* presents a conflicted case. Here the voice is heard, according to a stage direction that actually records the anomaly of having nothing to see: “La Voix du Sang qui crie a Dieu, et ne la voit on point” (Mistère l. 2751SD [vol. 1, pageant 5: “De la mort d’Abel et de la malediction Cayn”). Immediately, however, sound is processed into sight. The voice appeals to “Justice divine”—“Venez le sang juste venger, / Que voyez ainsi ledanger [*sic*]!” (ll. 2753-54)—and Justice *can* see because she can be seen, since this daughter of God is personified, as throughout the *Mistère* (usually in tandem with Mercy). Justice, in turn, immediately attaches the disembodied voice to a virtual body—“Il est force que je m’encline / A escouter ce messenger” (ll. 2756-57). Justice catches God’s ear and directs his eye: “Ce sang la n’est point mensonger, / Tu en vois manifeste signe” (ll. 2762-63). Hearing has become seeing in order to warrant believing, all in ten lines or so—lines which also delineate a pivotal role for messengers.

Angels, of course, are messengers by etymological quintessence, and what they say is guaranteed by what they are seen to be. Still, reliability is also broadly built into the theatrical function. Human messengers are no angels, yet their credibility is generally taken for granted from the classical drama on—hence the frequent play between belief and disbelief on the part of those receiving the message. It is standard procedure in neo-Senecan tragedy to have the mere aspect of the messenger communicate his (usually bad) news before he speaks, so that hearing and seeing remain seamlessly joined. In the medieval theatre, angels often, but by no means always, intervene to manifest the divine speech of the Bible: this is the case, for instance, when the command to sacrifice Isaac is passed to Abraham in the *Mistère*, as in the N. Towne, York, and Brome versions, though not in Chester or Towneley.

In any case, taking the divinity at his word is what puts humanity to the test, as spectators were probably reminded, in the absence of an angel, by seeing the

speaker on high. The dramatic irony of the medieval drama thus plays out, fittingly, on a cosmic scale, with public and god-head virtually toasting each other (“Here’s looking at you . . .”). Such testing is highlighted for Towneley’s Abraham when visual confirmation momentarily surfaces as an issue: “Who is that? war! let me se! / I herd oone neven my name” (*Abraham*, ll. 58-59). Yet voice apparently suffices; God need only identify himself and add, “take tent to me” (l. 60), for Abraham to declare obedience, if hardly to banish all human misgivings.

To return to Cain and Abel, normally the voice alone seems to pronounce the concluding curse, although a stage direction in certain Chester manuscripts—“God comminge sayth (minstrelles playe)” (*The Tanners Playe* [play 1], l. 616 SD)—suggests that more objective correlatives were there deployed, and not just for the audience, since Cain seems to recognize God at once. The York cycle is unique in having an angel transmit the curse; indeed, there the interpolation opens a space for comic business (a rarity, since angels are not known for slapstick). As is typical when the English raise Cain, this one exudes the whiff of comic brimstone across a violence at once verbal and physical; here, that violence literally brackets the biblical text—and extends to the angel:

Angelus. God hais sent the his curse downe,
 Fro hevyn to hell, *maldictio dei*.
Cayme. Take that thy self, evyn on thy crowne,
Quia non sum custos fratris mei,
 To tyne.
Angelus. God hais sent the his malyson,
 And inwardly I geve the myne. (*Sacrificium Cayme and Abell* [pageant 7], ll. 86-91)

That last line, I take it, is delivered as an aside, with the angel rubbing a bruised head; the stage-business privileges physicality over theology, seeing over believing, to reinscribe the Cain-Abel-God interaction under the sign of the Three Stooges. At any rate, with the ironic unbelief common in the devil’s unwitting henchmen, Cain goes on to bluster back the curse on its unseen originator and to show that what the first murderer believes in is shooting, not only the messenger, but eye-witnesses at large:

The same curse light on thy crowne,
 And right so myght it worth and be,
 For he that sent that gretynge downe
 The devyll myght speyd both hym & the.

Fowll myght thowe fall!
Here is a cankerd company,
Therefore goddes curse light on you all. (ll. 92-98)

Set against such procedures, the Cain of Wakefield emerges as especially interesting. Here alone the character explicitly capitalizes on the absence of seeing to parade, at first, disbelief despite better knowledge; God's first warning falls on ears that are not deaf but defiant:

Whi, who is that hob ouer the wall?
We! who was that that piped so small?
Come go we hens, for parels all;
God is out of hys wit! (*Mactatio Abel*, ll. 297-300)

The subsequent interventions are also by voice alone, to judge from the first exchange:⁴

Deus. Caym, Caym!
Caym. Who is that that callis me?
I am yonder, may thou not se? (ll. 342-43)

The malediction itself, when it comes, provokes the same bluster as in York—"Yei, dele aboute the, for I will none, / Or take it the when I am gone" (*Mactatio Abel*, ll. 356-57)—but there is more room to bluster in, because neither God nor angel appears to Cain. This effect seems linked to his self-projection into despair:

Syn I haue done so mekill syn
That I may not thi mercy wyn,
And thou thus dos me from thi grace,
I shall hyde me fro thi face. (ll. 358-61)

Theologically, Cain's reading appears sound and standard, to judge by other versions—including the absence of *Miséricorde* to balance Justice in the *Mistère's* corresponding moment. Yet the impulse to hide from the divine "face" is one thing in the Bible ("a facie tua abscondar" [Gen. 4:14]), another in the theatre, when that face is the more all-seeing because unseen. Insofar as this absent-presence precipitates Cain's present-absence, the staging points to an early effect of

4 So editors agree, to judge from their stage directions.

aphanisis and the curse becomes that of subjectivity (roughly equivalent anyway in my books).

It is tempting to correlate this negotiation of the self in the unseen face of the Word with the theatrical precocity of the Wakefield Master, who in other respects, too, makes belief a function less of manifestation than of grace-driven hermeneutics: one thinks of the shepherds' discovery, thanks to their charity, of Mak's slice off the old leg of mutton, their spontaneous aspiration to angel-song. The self-condemnation of Cain is no less a conversion—"thou thus dos me from thi grace"—one in which hearing without seeing becomes a positive spur to believing.

It is arguably as much because of as despite the early modern English theatre's reticence about the religious—a reticence eventually enshrined (so to speak) as a legal formality—that the triangular relation among seeing, hearing and believing tends to acquire theatrical self-consciousness. Certainly, in that indispensable point of reference which it is tempting to retitile "A Midsummer's *Mise-en-Abyme*", we are cued to laugh at Bottom's synesthetic grasping at belief as it fades—"The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen . . ." (Shakespeare, *MND*, V.i.211-12)—a point soon recycled by Pyramus looking in the wall's hole for revelation: "I see a voice! Now will I to the chink, / To spy and I can hear my Thisby's face" (V.i.192-93). But this seeing through a glass not just darkly, but dimly in every *sense*, remains resonantly Pauline, and the joke on Hermia was not so funny when Lysander's voice appeared to light her way in the dark:

Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense. (III.ii.177-80)

The discrepancy between hearing and seeing points her towards disillusion, drawn out when, despite what she sees, she can hardly believe her ears: "You speak not as you think. It cannot be" (191). The cumulative effect of such confusions is to put the joke on us when Puck's invitation precisely not to trust in our sight any more than the lovers could—"Think you have but slumb' red here / While these visions did appear"—is made contingent on his highly suspect word: "Else the Puck a liar call" (V.i.425-26, 434).

If comic containment and meta-theatrical commentary serve as points for taking the pulse of cultural anxiety, there is in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a nearly abstract distillation of this issue, as of others more notoriously fraught (notably patriarchal power). The case provides a window, most immediately, on the inevitability of the question throughout the comic canon. It virtually defines comedy in the period that characters dupe, and are duped by, deceptive appearances, but the attention paid to verbal instability in these processes, hence the installation of a triangular dynamic, should not be (as it were) overlooked. Metadramatic highlighting can help. Jonson's *Epicoene* pivots on the point. *Troilus and Cressida* invites especially close inspection of it: the fusion of what he hears and sees in the Greek camp during the play-within-the-play engineered by Ulysses results for Troilus in an unshakable faith in Cressida's infidelity—the familiar Shakespearean paradox with regard to jealousy. Yet the pageant works, also paradoxically, because it plays into its stage-spectator's hands and confers metatheatrical power on him. When Pandar urges Troilus to listen to what “yond poor girl” says in her letter—“Do you hear, my lord? Do you hear?” (Shakespeare, *Tro.*, V.iii.97, 99)—he conspicuously fails to shake the self-cast lover's hold on a Truth forged from hearing and seeing. The contents remain within Troilus' power to withhold even from the audience: he at once severs “matter from the heart” and witnessed “deeds” from these “Words, words, mere words” (108–12) and consigns her language, as a metonym for Cressida herself, to the changeable wind. The script thus superimposed is obviously a tragic one for all concerned; we read it by the light of the flames of Troy.

To pursue the generic implications, the errors that constitute comedies regularly separate hearing and seeing, while their resolution reunites them in a climactic experience that compels belief. This is to recycle the mediievally miraculous. Versions of “If there be truth in sight, you are . . .” (Shakespeare, *AYI*, V.i.118ff.) regularly deliver the denouement “as you like it”. By contrast, tragedy on the early modern English stage indefinitely defers revelation by interposing interpretation—language itself—between seeing and believing: “Is this the promis'd end? . . . Or image of that horror?” (Shakespeare, *Lr.*, V.iii.265–66). Attempts by the likes of Hieronimo to manufacture revelation, hence to fuse the miraculous and the tragic, may be gauged against this norm. Tragic protagonists on the Elizabethan stage are pervasively defined by their hope of Truth appearing from outside, failing which they slip across language out of their own field of vision: “Here I am Antony / But cannot hold this visible shape” (Shakespeare,

Ant., IV.xiii.13-14). Old Hamlet's ghost appears in "such a questionable shape" (Shakespeare, *Ham.*, I.iv.43) as to set in motion a chain of interrogations purporting to fix the value of "the ghost's word" (III.ii.286); and if the latter is pegged at "a thousand pound" (287) in Hamlet's pre-cooked books by the spectacle of the Mousetrap, the Prince does not trust to the dumb-show any more than most playwrights do: he supplies interpretation to guide his missile, even if some of it haywires the guidance system. The play's clearest point about purgatory, surely, is that the condition is highly contagious.

It is arguably, in fact, the norm for tragic protagonists, the more poignantly because it has become theologically impossible and so cannot be put off to the next world. How better to describe the state of unkinged Richard II, who shattered the mirror because its spectacular presence conflicted with his sense of self-absence, and who falls into a version of religious melancholy? Now that he is physically penned within "ragged prison walls" (Shakespeare, *R2*, V.v.21), the master/waster of time assimilated to a dysfunctional time-piece, his thoughts are set ticking to "set the word itself / Against the word" (V.v.13-14). The failure of seeing-as-believing, whose soundtrack was the self-enchanting conjurations of his own voice, now fragments the "word itself" into "an hundred shivers" (IV.i.289).

Faustus, too, if he were not overqualified for salvation (an audience steeped in the older drama would not miss the ironic force of his title "Doctor"), might have had the wit to answer Mephistophilis, "So, this is purgatory, nor am I out of it". He begins where Richard leaves off, setting biblical verses against each other in the void of non-revelation. The point is hard to miss because the fallout of the Middle Ages, theatrical as well as theological, hangs thick in the air. It is arguably the pinnacle of Marlowe's dramatic excesses in various directions that he provides a master of the revels in the form of the Master of Lies and shows Faustus so tied up in quasi-purgatorial verbal (k)nots that he refuses to believe in hell when he sees it. Some have revelation thrust upon them...

Squeezing the verbal out of the spiritual picture was evidently not a durable option for a Protestant theatre—witness Thomas Heywood's rare recuperation of medieval dramatic spectacle in the national religious cause. Part I of *If you know not me, you know no bodie: or, The troubles of Queene Elizabeth* (probably staged in 1604, published in 1605) is remarkably full of dumb-shows, minimally glossed or not at all, while the English Bible as object acquires a transcendent iconic status. (There is really, after all, no other possible candidate for such a function within Protestant ideology.) Its very presence in Elizabeth's chamber gives her jailor Beningfield

the Romish hebe-jebes (“*Sanctum Maria* pardon this prophanation of my hart” [Heywood, sig. E3^v]) and opens into extraordinary revelation; angels defend the sleeping princess from murderous friars and place the Bible in her hand, opened to a verse calculated to infuse worldly comfort *sola fide*: “*Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, Shall not be confounded*” (sig. E4^r). So far the defeat of superstition by Truth can be conducted emblematically: seeing-as-believing sealed by the Word. But the final emblem of Part I, as Elizabeth makes her triumphant entry into her capital as Queen, marks a counter-current of entry into the symbolic order of language. The Mayor presents her with a purse and a Bible, as if the latter’s magic (“blisse”, in the Queen’s words) will rub off on the former, which she associates with “honor”, and crown with *jouissance* the ultimate Puritan happy marriage between Grace and Cash Abounding. The Queen kisses the Bible and personally manages the final miraculous display:

This booke that hath so long conceald it selfe,
So long shut vp, so long hid, now Lords see,
We here vnclaspe, for euer it is free. (sig. G4^r)

The catch is that this end is a beginning, that it will henceforth be up to each reader of the unclasped bible to work out his salvation with diligence. Richard II and Faustus conspicuously find such “freedom” less than liberating, and it would logically become less so in proportion to one’s belief in something that cannot be seen: one’s own promised end. Elizabeth’s benediction, then, functions unsettlingly like Puck’s epilogue. Of course, it is most unlikely that Heywood thought in these terms, but he may not have known what do for the (literally) proverbial encore. Part II of *If You Know Not Me*, which followed hard upon (just a year later), plunges into its celebration of commerce, Englishness, and, centrally, Elizabeth in a radically different style, down-to-earth chronicle devoid of miracle-play technique: there is not a single dumb-show, no spectacular revelation, and as the sea-fight with the Armada is related by a series of messengers, Elizabeth is as dependent on their human, uncertain, and earnest mediation as is the audience. Heywood’s experiment in epiphany was a one-time wonder.

By contrast with Heywood, it seems clear that Shakespeare, across the genres, deliberately played on the triangular relation among seeing, hearing, and believing. To the cases already cited we may now add, precisely, that of his messengers. Their status as fallen angels, mediating what they have seen by means of fallible human words, is shown up by the need, when events might seem beyond

belief, for visual supplement or special status. The extraordinary blood-shedding of Macbeth requires a “bloody man” (I.ii.1), who “can report, / As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt / The newest state” (1-3), who unites “words” and “wounds”: “So well thy words become thee as thy wounds, / They smack of honor both” (43-44). The heroism of Coriolanus would seem incredible, except as Cominius himself will “report it” (I.ix.2), although even the grudging Citizens will be compelled by the sight of his scars “to put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them” (II.iii.6-7). But the ultimate vehicle of self-conscious mediation must be the hapless messenger of Cleopatra, encouraged by vigorous coaching to slant his eye-witness testimony regarding Octavia (“She creeps”, “her forehead / As low as she would have it” [*Ant.*, III.iii.19, 33-34]) to earn the Queen’s opinion of his “good judgment” (24)—our own, too.

To the extent that one accepts Shakespeare’s responsibility for it, the case of Joan de Pucelle testifies to the issue’s dramatic interest for him from earliest days. The question boils down to the relation of the character’s “voices” to her own words and deeds, given that she presents herself as a messenger of the divine and performs what both sides regard as supernatural feats. That question was precisely the one posed by the historical Jeanne d’Arc from start to finish—and beyond. It was formally considered first at Poitiers, then at her trial under watchful English eyes, and latterly at the deliberations, at which she was not in a position to testify, that produced her rehabilitation. The Shakespearean treatment stands out against the background less of the recognized sources than of the first tragedy on the subject, *L’histoire tragique de la Pucelle de Dom-rémy*, composed in 1580 by the Jesuit Fronton Du Duc in Lorraine. This, too, is a possible source, as I have proposed elsewhere (Fronton Du Duc, ed. Hillman, l. 529, n. 68), but for present purposes the point can rest strictly comparative.

The interest is simply that the French playwright, himself poised between a miracle play tradition and Humanist aspirations, pursued the triangular dynamic throughout so as to weld seeing, hearing, and believing for the audience and thus establish Jeanne’s truth as a touchstone for good and evil characters. Naturally, the choric voice of the Prologue invests her divine mission with authority from the start, but the serious business of conflating seeing with hearing begins with the appearance of Saint Michel, the more pointedly because distinctive features call attention to each component. This is no gently persuasive angel but a stern and commanding one, with what she will later call a “threatening voice” (l. 288).

Yet that voice infuses her own with joyous confidence after his departure—a point picked up by the Doctor of Theology to prove divine origin. Her language up to the moment of her capture, when her human faltering requires, and receives, another vision, sustains this infusion of energy through a style at once jaunty and exalted, not least when she vocalizes the Dauphin’s secret prayer about his legitimacy, as imparted by the angel, to prove her own. And she poses the challenge of belief in terms, first, of hearing: “don’t judge me by my person, small and slight, / But by what I say, in what manner and whose right / I present myself to you” (ll. 422-24). Jeanne’s early convert, Jean de Valois, duc d’Alençon (the same historical personage dismissed as “that notorious Machevile” [*1H6*, V.4.74] by Shakespeare’s Duke of York—it takes one to know one), notably aligns himself with Ben Jonson and the rhetoricians (“Language most shows a man: speak, that I may see thee”):

... when I heard
 Her declarations from her own mouth, fluent word
 By word, in terms so naïve, with a look modest
 And firm, a spirit reflective and self-possessed,
 She seemed to me celestial. ...

... How could any fault be found
 At all with those pronouncements of hers, wise and sound?
 Utterance is the true messenger of the soul;
 It is the one true brush that paints our portraits whole.
 For as metals are tested by making them ring,
 Whatever flaw may lie within a human being
 Declares itself through speech; and the stream makes us
 know
 Unfailingly the source from which it takes its flow.
 (ll. 614-27)

Notably, but not surprisingly: Fronton Du Duc was a professor of rhetoric. As for distinctive seeing, the angel’s appearance would doubtless have carried authority from the mystery tradition, and it would be interesting to know what overlap pre-

existed with the visual details derived from Jeanne's trial testimony. In any case, Fronton Du Duc once again blends seeing with hearing: "I recognize the voice, the hair, the radiance . . ." (l. 1666).⁵ But another effect stands out: there is some room for ambiguity, but it is highly likely that in the initial vision, uniquely, the boy-actor playing Jeanne wears female clothing. This amounts to a visual refutation of one of the debunking rumours about Jeanne, namely, that she was a male imposter—a rumour the English themselves needed to debunk in order to paint her as a witch (hence the apparently historical detail, not taken up by the play, that the executioner displayed her naked corpse to the crowd before it was consumed by the fire).⁶ The play's visual refutation gains impact from the fact that such cross-dressing was far from normal or innocuous in the Jesuit theatre (McCabe, pp. 178-97). (Indeed, the practice would shortly be forbidden.)

It is, of course, Jeanne's martyrdom that confirms her sanctity for Fronton Du Duc (even if formal sainthood would have to wait until the twentieth century), and that experience again unites the visual and the verbal. Jeanne is effectively silenced in court by resolute unbelievers, when her eloquent defence falls on deaf ears ("no defences / Whatever does she adduce" [ll. 2056-57]); she is physically silenced on the scaffold to prevent persuasion ("the hangman, brutal, / Bridled all her mouth with a bit of twisted metal" [ll. 2313-14]). But as she is carted off to execution she makes the onlookers into hearers, moving them to tears with consolations and a request for their prayers: "So many then the words to which her soul gave motion, / That I might sooner number the waves of the ocean" (ll. 1456-57). This is a vulnerably human Messenger speaking, potentially the weakest link in the signifying chain, as is signalled by the momentary failure of language equal to what he has seen: "my voice, all trembling, / Will hardly come; I'm too shaken, words are no good . . ." (ll. 2262-63). The greater the impact, then, when his voice rebounds as the vehicle of the non-verbally miraculous: the heart unburnt, the dove soaring from the pyre to the heavenly vault. Those miracles are standard, by the way, not only in sympathetic accounts of Jeanne, but in the discourse of contemporary Catholic martyrdom, *mutatis mutilationibus*. They resemble, for instance, those attached to executed priests and recusants

5 On the account of the hair and the radiance as derived from the judicial records, see Soons, pp. 115-16.

6 This rumour makes best sense of the reaction of Burgundy in *1H6* when he first hears about the "maid": "Pray God she prove not masculine ere long / If underneath the standard of the French / She carry armor as she hath begun" (II.i.22-24).

in England, where hearts played a special role, being generally cut out of the more-or-less living body and cast into the fire.⁷

The language of sainthood, as applied by the French, of sorcery and witchcraft by the English, maintains the same epistemological framework in *1 Henry VI*. Fronton Du Duc's insistent fusing of seeing, hearing, and believing through their constant interplay throws into relief Shakespeare's deconstructive procedures, but also their curious self-limitation. It would doubtless have been assumed here that the English view is the right one, but the conjuring scene (V.iii), which shows the unequivocal "Fiends", is extraordinarily belated. Moreover, it functions by splitting off Joan's own voice from her "voices", for the fiends frustrate her most fundamentally—indeed, cast adrift her continuing eloquence, which runs right through to her final curse—by refusing to speak: "O, hold me not with silence over-long!" (13). And until that point, what we see and hear of Joan is sufficiently shifting and ambiguous to keep us off-balance. There is plenty of sexual innuendo from all quarters, but the potentially damning sight of her and Charles fleeing Orléans like "loving turtle-doves" (II.ii.30) comes filtered by the blurred night-vision of biased Burgundy: "as far as I could well discern / For smoke and dusky vapors of the night . . ." (26-27). Meanwhile, her voice has the capacity to "astonish" with "high terms" (I.ii.93)—and not just the Dolphin, who in this resembles (and possibly echoes) his precursor in Fronton Du Duc ("la sagesse . . . dont tu nous étonnois" [l. 527]).⁸ Her verbal enchantment of Burgundy himself casts such a spell that we may share his doubt—"Either she hath bewitch'd me with her words, / Or nature makes me suddenly relent" (III. iii.58-59)—and it is not necessarily dispelled by her bathetic gloss: "Done like a Frenchman—turn and turn again" (85). Indeed, from the English point of view, Joan actually acquires touchstone status here at Burgundy's ironic expense. For when Bedford accused Charles of consorting with "witches and the help of hell" (V.i.18), the most notorious shape-changer of all was quick to chime in: "Traitors have never other company" (19). Again, it takes one to know one. My immediate point, though, is that the points of the triangle—seeing, hearing, and believing—are taken apart, each turned and turned again before our puzzled ("Pucelle or puzzel" [I.iv.107]) eyes and ears. Fronton Du Duc's whole world of

7 "Regularly, martyrdom accounts state that the hearts of the executed martyrs leaped out of the fire into which they were thrown" (Marotti, p. 87). On the discourse of martyrdom surrounding English Catholics more generally, see Marotti, pp. 66-94, esp. 85-89 ("Signs and Wonders"); Marotti (p. 78) stresses the specifically Catholic preoccupation with miracles and relics at executions.

8 On the linguistic overlap at this point, see my translation of Fronton Du Duc, p. 173, n. 68.

wonder is fragmented, dispersed—and therefore, paradoxically, allowed to survive subversively against all odds.

Of course, I speak of “wonder” advisedly. After twenty years or so of playing various tricks with the triangular balance (or imbalance) of forces across the genres, Shakespeare’s evocations of the miraculous in the last plays recuperate a venerable theatrical formula in a self-conscious way, teasing the belief of on- and off-stage spectators by insinuating discrepancy between seeing and hearing, then uniting the two. *The Winter’s Tale* provides the outstanding instance, and not just within the stage-managed scene of Paulina, where music accompanies spectacle but speech sets the seal on it (“If she pertain to life, let her speak too” [Shakespeare, *WT*, V.iii.113]). For the audience has been prepared for that spectacular revelation by the withholding of spectacle: the preceding narrated account—in prose, moreover—of the reunion of father and daughter.

The same double perspective conditions the running competition between the choric Gower and the climactic revelations of *Pericles*. Gower himself not only teases with his own approaching redundancy as a speaker (“More a little, and then dumb” [Shakespeare, *Per.*, V.ii.2]) but, inverting the choric procedures of *Henry V* (and in this way as in others throwing down the gauntlet to Jonson), he presents the spectacular as transcendent: “But tidings to the contrary / Are brought your eyes; what need speak I?” (II.Cho.14-15). Marina, for her part, supplies the first reunion with a musical prelude to the music of the spheres. The second insistently merges seeing and hearing as the basis for belief: “Voice and favour! / You are, you are—O royal Pericles!” (V.iii.13-14); “Are you not Pericles? Like him you spake, / Like him you are” (32-33); “The voice of dead Thaisa!” (34).

Cymbeline, *The Tempest*, and indeed *Henry VIII* provide what might be termed mannerist versions of such a convergence—collocation remade dislocation. The silly glosses of *Cymbeline*’s Soothsayer—a highly qualified professional in the believing department—stumble after the Word divinely deposited on Posthumus’ breast. This amounts to a reprise of Heywood’s fusion of angel and book, but it scoffs at fallen exegesis. This is perhaps possible because the ultimate revelation is waiting in the historical wings. In *The Tempest* the management of visual and verbal techniques to induce belief is effected by a meta-theatrical magician, not always smoothly, and there is no more effective index of the artifices we and others are asked to believe—the shipwreck, for starters—than the synthetic seal of approval applied by gullible Gonzalo: “set it down / With gold on lasting pillars . . .” (Shakespeare, *Tmp.*, V.i.208)—words made visible, but only in his imagination.

As for *Henry VIII*, there is a conspicuous failure to harness what we hear and what we see at successive moments of tragic downfall—of Buckingham, of Wolsey, prolix in praise of their King—and throughout the latter’s dealings with Katherine and Anne. These discrepancies are set off against Katherine’s vision of blessed spirits, which compels belief along both axes. By the time the audience arrives, by this tortuous route, at the purported climax, with Cranmer’s conjuring prophecy, it is well prepared to recognize deficiency in what is actually seen. “Thou speakest wonders”, announces Henry (Shakespeare [and Fletcher], *H8*, V.iv.55), in the style of Fronton Du Duc’s Citizen: “You recount me things that are truly marvellous” (Fronton Du Duc, l. 2361). But the latter “things” flow from others seen, heard, and believed, the supernatural naturalized. Cranmer is a messenger from places swarming with controversy, political and religious. His baptismal prophecy risks drowning with court holy water “This royal infant . . . in her cradle” (Shakespeare [and Fletcher], *H8*, V.iv.17-18)—*nobody* made visible, neither Mak’s parodic Easter dinner nor any Elizabeth we know. Protesting so much will not convince that *All Is True*, if the dumb-show is out of synch. We are being asked to swallow—sight unseen, *sola fide*—a virtual wafer-cake resistant to trans- or any other substantiation. Across our theatrical memories, now, the rug is being pulled out from under (“When You See Me, You Know Me”—or do you?) and we risk having equivocation thrust upon us: “If you know not me, you know nobody”. For as another Touchstone observes in a somewhat different context, wittily if unwittingly infusing the “If”’s to come (“If there be truth in sight . . .”) with a Machiavellian trace, “Your If is the only peacemaker; much virtue [*virtù*?] in If” (Shakespeare, *AYL*, V.iv.103-4).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Abraham. *The Towneley Plays*. Ed. George England and Alfred W. Pollard. Early English Text Society, Extra Series No. 71. 1897; rpt. Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint Co., 1973.
- Biblia Sacra juxta Vulgatam Clementinam*. Electronic edition by Michael Tweedale. London, 2005. Last access 27 November 2007: <http://vulsearch.sourceforge.net/html/>
- DRUMMOND, William. *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*. Ben Jonson. Ed. Ian Donaldson. The Oxford Authors, gen. ed. Frank Kermode. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Pp. 595-611.
- FRONTON DU DUC. *The Tragic History of the Pucelle of Domrémy Otherwise Known as the Maid of Orléans*. Trans. with introd. and notes by Richard Hillman. Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation, 39. Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2005.
- HEYWOOD, Thomas. *If you know not me, you know no bodie: or, The troubles of Queene Elizabeth* [Part I]. London: [Thomas Purfoot] for Nathaniel Butter, 1605.
- JONSON, Ben. *Ben Jonson*. Ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, et al. 11 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52.
- _____. *Timber, or, Discoveries, Made upon men and matter, as they have flowed out of his daily readings, or had their reflux to his peculiar notion of the times*. Ben Jonson. Ed. Ian Donaldson. The Oxford Authors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Pp. 521-94.
- Mactatio Abel. *The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle*. Ed. A. C. Cawley. Old and Middle English Texts, gen. ed. G. L. Brook. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958.
- Le Mistère du viel testament*. Ed. Nathan James Édouard Rothschild and Émile Picot. 6 vols. Société des anciens textes français. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1878-91.
- PLAUTUS, Titus Maccius. *Truculentus. Titi Macci Plauti Comoediae*. Ed. W. M. Lindsay. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Sacrificium Cayme and Abell* [pageant 7]. *York Plays: The Plays Performed by the Crafts or Mysteries of York on the Day of Corpus Christi in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries*. Ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith. 1885; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963.
- SHAKESPEARE, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans, J. J. M. Tobin, et al. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

The Tanners Play. The Chester Mystery Cycle. Ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills. 2 vols. Vol. 1: Text. Supplementary Series, 3. London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1974.

WHETSTONE, George. *A mirour for maagestrates of cyties.* London: Richard Jones, 1584.

Secondary Sources

HILLMAN, Richard. *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama: Subjectivity, Discourse and the Stage.* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1997.

LAKE, Peter, and QUESTIER, Michael. *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists, and Players in Post-Reformation England.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.

MCCABE, William H. *An Introduction to the Jesuit Theater: A Posthumous Work.* Ed. Louis J. Oldani. St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1983.

MAROTTI, Arthur F. *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.

SOONS, Jan Joseph. *Jeanne d'Arc au théâtre. Étude sur la plus ancienne tragédie, suivie d'une liste chronologique des œuvres dramatiques dont Jeanne d'Arc a fourni le sujet en France de 1890 à 1926.* Purmerend: J. Muusses, 1929.

TILLEY, Maurice Palmer. *A Dictionary of The Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Collection of the Proverbs Found in English Literature and the Dictionaries of the Period.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950.