The Necessity of Affections:
Shakespeare and the Politics of the Passions

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Abstract

This dissertation—"The Necessity of Affections: Shakespeare and the Politics of the Passions"—is a contribution to an important and interesting aspect of early modern thought. It examines the role of the passions or emotions in Shakespearean tragedy and in early modern politics. Shakespeare can be seen to share a perspective on tragedy and political thought with a number of other writers, some of whom were his contemporaries, and some of whom—like Thucydides and Tacitus—were classical writers. What these figures, here called 'politic historians,' have in common is an interest in using the passions as an explanatory category to reveal the states of mind of tyrants, princes and also other agents, including manipulative Machiavellians. Shakespeare's use of this politics of the passions is shown to be more acute and insightful than the rival treatments given by Stoicism, Hobbes and Machiavelli, in terms of explaining motives, agency and action. It is also argued that an understanding of the passions tells us something about tragedy, necessity and chance: namely, the need for realism about the dangers posed by those who seek to fashion or shape our minds. However, this dissertation proposes that this political realism does not go so far as to become the cynicism of *realpolitik*. A discussion of a number of important passages and themes in the tragedies—in particular, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*—shows how the notion of a rich and vividly articulated self plays a significant role in Shakespearean tragedy.

Cette dissertation—"La Nécessité des Affections: Shakespeare et la Politique des Passions"—est une contribution à un aspect aussi important qu'intéressant dans la pensée du début de l'époque moderne. Elle examine le rôle de passions et émotions dans la tragédie Shakespearienne et aussi dans l'histoire politique du début de l'époque moderne. On peut voir Shakespeare partager un point de vue sur la tragédie et la pensée politique avec d'autres écrivains, quelques uns étant de ses contemporains, et d'autres, comme Thucydide et Tacite, étant des auteurs classiques. Un point commun entre ces écrivains appelés 'historiens politiques' est leur intérêt à se servir de la passion comme émotion pour catégoriquement dévoiler l'état d'esprit des tyrants, princes et autres émissaires, incluant les personnes machiavéliques manipulateurs. L'utilisation du protocole de passions par Shakespeare est demontrée comme plus aigüe et persepicasse comparée aux traitements opposés de Stoicisme, Hobbes et Machiavel, en terme d'explication des intentions, instruments et actions. Il est aussi contasté que la compréhension de passions nous renseigne à propos de la tragédie, nécessité et chance; c'est-à-dire l'envie du réalisme sur les risques posés par ceux qui cherchent à former ou modeler nos idées. Cette dissertation propose que ce réalisme politique n'aille pas aussi loin à être le cynique de la *realpolitik*. Une discussion d'un nombre de passages importants et de thèmes aux tragédies—plus en particulier *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* et *Coriolanus*—nous établis sur la notion qu'une personne (le moi) d'une abondante et vivide articulation joue un rôle notable dans la tragédie Shakespearienne.

Candidates have the option of including, as part of the thesis, the text of one or more papers submitted or to be submitted for publication, or the clearly duplicated text of one or more published papers. These texts must be bound as an integral part of the thesis.

If this option is chosen, **connecting texts that provide logical bridges between the different papers are mandatory**. The thesis must be written in such a way that it is more than a mere collection of manuscripts; in other words, results of a series of papers must be integrated.

The thesis must still conform to all other requirements of the "Guidelines for Thesis Preparation". **The thesis must include**: A Table of Contents, an abstract in English and French, an introduction which clearly states the rationale and objectives of study, a review of the literature, a final conclusion and summary, and a thorough bibliography or reference list.

Additional material must be provided where appropriate (e.g. in appendices) and in sufficient detail to allow a clear and precise judgement to be made of the importance and originality of the research reported in the thesis.

In the case of manuscripts co-authored by the candidate and others, **the candidate is required to make an explicit statement in the thesis as to who contributed to such work and to what extent**. Supervisors must attest to the accuracy of such statements at the doctoral oral defense. Since the task of the examiners is made more difficult in these cases, it is in the candidate's interest to make perfectly clear the responsibilities of all the authors of the co-authored papers.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank McGill's Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for giving me an extra year in which to complete this thesis. This extra year benefited me intellectually, and I hope I have conveyed a sense of the excitement that gripped me in the research and writing of the thesis.

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Introduction

> Shakespeare displays the dance of human passions, one might say.
> —Wittgenstein[1]

> I would not open windows into men's souls.
> —Queen Elizabeth[2]

This dissertation[3] deals with politics, power, and rhetoric in Shakespearean drama, principally the tragedies *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, and *Hamlet*, but also *Othello*, and the near-tragic 'problem play' *Troilus and Cressida*. Above all, however, this dissertation deals with the role the passions play in tragedy and political thought. I argue that there is a rich tradition—which Shakespeare is heir to—starting with the classical Greeks and running through early modern moral psychology, politics and natural philosophy, of thinking about agency and human agents' capabilities in such a way that looks past the infamous opposition of reason and passions. In this tradition, passions figure centrally in the examination and explanation of action and motives: for the early modern 'style' of inquiry known as 'politic history,' the passions open windows into the soul, to use Elizabeth's phrase.

Shakespeare's plays are about vividly depicted, emotion-inspiring agents that—foreign though they are in terms of history, social status, power and ontology—exercise a fascination over us precisely because they grapple with

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[1] This is somewhat more optimistic than Nietzsche who says somewhere that 'Shakespeare is enamoured of the passions and their death-welcoming moods.'

[2] It is considered probable that this quotation stems from a draft of a letter to Francis Bacon. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. It is also mentioned by the historian P. Lake, in Lake "Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England" 64.

[3] The expression "the necessity of affections," used in the title of this dissertation, is one I borrow from Sextus Empiricus. Sextus Empiricus, quoted in Irwin *Classical Philosophy* 110. I should mention too that I have left the rather large topic of the place of the passions in Shakespeare's comedies for another time. And my decision not to include a discussion of *King Lear* stems from the depth and complexity of the play, which is such that I could not—I felt—treat it adequately here. I have found a confirmation of my intuitions about the 'separateness' of *King Lear* in an essay by G. Steiner. Steiner observes that *Lear* belongs to a small, select collection of utterly bleak, searingly desolate 'pure' tragedies that deserve to be discussed on their own. On the topic of pessimistic tragedies, see Steiner "Tragedy, Pure and Simple" and Williams "Stark Fictions." I do however discuss one aspect of *Lear* in the Conclusion.

'capacities they are not always in control of.' As one contemporary political theorist writes in the context of explaining an aspect of early modern thought, underlying "individual actions are a wide range of motives and dispositions, including, of course, urges that stem from capacities we do not under many circumstances feel in full control of."[4] Sometimes we have to ponder the causes that lie behind and prompt the action we see Shakespeare's characters perform. At other times we grasp with an uncanny immediacy their reasons and motives for acting. Or so we often feel *qua* audience members or readers. Above all, we *do* evaluate the decision-making and the decisions taken by the likes of Cleopatra, Coriolanus, and Cordelia. What accounts for this empathic reconstruction of motives, this narrowing of the cognitive distance between stage and seat, or page and mind? One answer would focus on the history of drama, and on the historical and temporal origin of *mimesis*. Another answer, the one offered here, takes a slightly different tack, focusing on the passions and emotions[5] that drive characters to act in the ways that they do, and on how agents 'work' on themselves and each other, through the passions. As a contemporary critic puts it, a "Shakespearean character can be seen as a gathering of motives, feelings and thought which by their dual origin constitute a meeting ground where individual personality conjoins with political formation."[6]

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[4] Mehta *The Anxiety of Freedom* 4. Mehta's paragraph continues: "The elaboration of such a claim may have its fullest expression in the psychological tradition, but the basic insight that informs it is, as Freud himself emphasized, as ancient as 'the poets' and a familiar feature of ordinary experience."

[5] Passion, affection and emotion are notoriously difficult to define. Aristotle's definition in his *Rhetoric* is justly famous: "The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements." *The 'Art' of Rhetoric* 173. A. Johns' attempt—"the passions were the emotional, physiological, and moral responses of the human body to its surroundings" (Johns *The Nature of the Book* 386)—is despite its merits too focused on the 'bodily' at the expense of 'mind.' The best explanation is provided by P. Fisher in a discussion of wonder: "wonder is like the other central passions—anger, fear, and grief—in that it involves a discovery about the limits of the will within experience, a location where we can no longer identify ourselves completely with our powers of choice, action, self-direction, and yet these territories of experience outside the will are intimately ourselves, uniquely determined, personal." See Fisher *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* 40. For a lengthier discussion of the relationship between emotion and passion, and affection, and why I treat these as cognates, see Chapter one, section I.

[6] Alvis "Introductory: Shakespearean Poetry and Politics" 4.

One finds in Shakespearean tragic drama—influenced *and* paralleled[7] by writers of antiquity (Thucydides, Sophocles, Aristotle, Seneca, Tacitus, Plutarch), and early modernity, (Machiavelli, Lipsius) and some of his contemporaries (the poets and playwrights George Chapman, John Webster, Samuel Daniel, Ben Jonson and John Marston, and the historians John Hayward and Henry Savile, as well as Francis Bacon)—a myriad of complex treatments of the interlocking questions of passion, motive, action and motivation. I hold that between the Platonic and especially Stoic distrust of the passions, and the Humean elevation of passions to the role of playing master to reason's slave, there is a fertile middle ground that acknowledges the importance of feeling, passion and emotion, even as it insists that we should be on guard against being overwhelmed by the more powerful passions. Given that we are susceptible to suggestion, and to rhetoric 'working' on our passions, we need to add the passions to our list of things that need to be 'demystified.'[8] With respect to confronting powerful passions, in which there was a strong early modern interest, it is worth considering the likes of Coriolanus, Othello, Leontes, Iago, Hamlet and Macbeth.

Tragedy is a form of ethical and political investigation and arguably instruction,[9] which deals with extreme and remarkable cases. It is in these cases or instances—violence within a culture, revenge in a family, conflict within a polity, the clash of competing principles, and the like; indeed the whole panoply of tragic themes—that *logos* is challenged, and that the mind has to confront its limits and contours. Hence it is no surprise that passions, motives and motivations have always been central to tragedy. The passions can be used to diagnose the motives that prompt behavior, so they contribute to the demystification of 'tragic' agents but princes and rulers, too. Of course tragedy—or more exactly its contexts—has changed over the centuries. Are not the things that were paramount in the *polis* irrelevant to sixteenth and

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[7] I am attempting to finesse the issue somewhat by being evasive about where the 'influence' stops and where the 'parallels' begin, since i) I have a considerable interest in finding exciting parallels and ii) a lesser interest in tracing direct influences.

[8] M. Heinemann discusses, and practices, demystification lucidly but sets up a flawed dichotomy between power and government, and 'merely' "private relationships and passions." Heinemann "'Demystifying the Mystery of State'" 75. As I will show, passions need to be demystified too.

[9] See in particular the discussion of tragedy as instruction in Chapter one.

seventeenth-century London or to us today? Surely not entirely irrelevant. If they were, the study of history would be a strangely futile enterprise. Given that the study of history still matters, perhaps some things have not changed all that drastically. In the West today, people reside mostly in modern (and postmodern) cities in nation-states, and our schemes and practices of 'civility' and 'technologies of the self'[10] are ostensibly numerous, with vast differences in behaviour apparent for all to see. But we can still ask if there are not deep, subterranean continuities and 'family resemblances,' in Wittgenstein's phrase. We do not need to share Machiavelli's conviction that 'human nature is everywhere the same' to say, and see, that cities and nations are still composed of human agents. As Thucydides says, "the city *is* its men."[11] ('Polis is eyes'—that is, 'I's'—says the poet Charles Olson.) Against those who would have us see the human agent or subject as constituted in its entirety by its embeddedness in social practices, we can turn to the perennial theme of the confrontation of *logos*[12] with deep, sometimes dark, motivations like fear and hatred and anger, and ask about the constitution—and motivation—of both citizens and rulers.[13] I look, therefore, at how the passions play a vital role in the process by which tragedy represents

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[10] I allude here to the works of N. Elias and M. Foucault, two important thinkers who have treated this subject (but who diverge in their estimation of the value of the changes, over the many centuries, in the ways people moderate their affects—Elias finding some benefits to the 'civilizing process' and Foucault bleakly finding, on the whole, only new modes of repression that at best allow us to experiment with new—but ultimately more or less futile—modes of resistance).

[11] Thucydides, quoted in Van Creveld *The Rise and Decline of the State* 57. Van Creveld adds: "In any kind of regime the people who comprise the decision-making body are made of flesh and blood. Nothing would be more preposterous than to think that, just because some people wield power, they act like calculating machines that are unswayed by passions." Van Creveld *The Transformation of War* 157.

[12] If one is uncomfortable by the notion of *logos* (or mind) one can substitute—as Halliwell sometimes does—the notion of "embodied psyche," Halliwell "Tragedy, reason and pity" 86.

[13] Interestingly, both Shakespeare's and Thucydides' works are described as permanent and perennial. About Shakespeare, Jonson said "He was not of an age, but for all time," and Thucydides says of his own history that it is written, "Not as an essay which is to win applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time" (1.22.4). (The learned Jonson might have known Thucydides' comment, and may have echoed it deliberately.) The parallel between Shakespeare and Thucydides is neither optimistic nor naïve. Both thinkers—and Shakespeare is nothing if not a thinker—are political, combine topicality with long-term validity, and emphasize pity and compassion without lapsing into sentimentality. About Thucydides, one scholar says: "Thukydides schreibt als Politiker für die politischen Menschen," Regenbogen, quoted in Orwin *The Humanity of Thucydides* 4. The same can be said about Shakespeare.

attacks on the bonds—often, emotional bonds—that hold a society, family, or polity together, however loosely.

In finding in tragedy a blend of philosophy and art, I follow Plato. For whatever his hostility to tragedy, he acknowledges its power, and arguably tries to match or outdo it in his own 'dramatic' philosophy, particularly when he re-imagines the death of his protagonist Socrates. I also follow Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Elizabethans in attaching a remarkable depth and power to tragic drama. I do not wish to beg the question of the power of tragic drama to interest and excite; however this is not the place to specify the exact psychological and philosophical reasons for this interest.[14] Aristotle, though not discussed in detail figures prominently. The Peripatetic philosopher leads the way because he emphasized the *logos*[15] of the *pathē*—in other words, Aristotle emphasizes the reasonableness of the irrational, and the meaningfulness of the unreasonable. By this I mean that Aristotle counters Plato's banishing of tragedy from the *polis* by arguing that it is reasonable to accept representations of attacks on human bonds (social, familial, etc.) because these attacks test the limits of practical wisdom and practical reason; these attacks test the "adequacy of reason to explain human nature."[16] As J. Lear puts it, "The point of tragedy, for Aristotle, is to reveal logos manifest even in attacks upon logos, and thus to establish the adequacy of logos to account for even the most destructive aspects of human nature."[17] Lear continues, adding that

> for Aristotle, tragedy achieves its catharsis by offering a logos for the terrible events (the objective *pathē*) which provoke the tragic emotions (the subjective *pathemata*). There is relief and reassurance in the thought that the portrayed destruction does not, in the end, represent a surd attack upon logos, but an attack that can be understood within the domain of logos.[18]

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[14] See Halliwell *Aristotle's Poetics*.
[15] I follow a certain convention in translating the ancient Greek word *logos* as "account," as in the phrase: 'provide an account of x.' See Sherman "*Hamartia*" 187. This goes some distance towards nullifying the imprecise and rather overused charge of 'logocentrism,' sometimes directed at the regular translation of *logos*: 'reasoned speech.' Who, after all, can be against providing an *account* of something? Moreover, those who deny that we can give explanatory accounts of things or events seem to commit a 'performative contradiction.'
[16] Heinaman *Aristotle and Moral Realism* 6.
[17] Lear "The Place of Tragedy in Aristotle's Ethics" 76.
[18] Lear "The Place of Tragedy in Aristotle's Ethics" 77.

This distinction between passions as 'objective *pathē*'— J. Lear's 'terrible events'—and the passions as they are lived or felt is an important distinction. Halliwell draws this distinction along similar lines: "*pathos* [...] is simultaneously the objective cause and the subjective experience of 'suffering.'"[19] The Aristotelian attempt to provide an account of terrible events is in large measure an attempt to show, *pace* Plato, that the emotions are important, and to show how they *can* be understood in such a way that 'terrible events' can (sometimes) be avoided. Of course what is most interesting about disasters, tragedies and terrible calamitous events is the air of ineluctability that they have about them. Confronting the terrible events such as those depicted in Greek and Shakespearean tragedy, it seems that one can only rue—as Hamlet does—the 'cursed spite' that compels one to face these events, when 'time is out of joint.'[20]

But in fact it is only a harsh determinism that would insist that 'terrible events' are necessarily inevitable. As M. Nussbaum says,

> what looks like grim necessity is often just greed, laziness, and lack of imagination. [...] The sufferings depicted in *The Trojan Women* are not, any of them, the result of necessity, or inherent in the nature of human value. They stem from folly and greed; even the gods are implicated by their willingness to allow such things to go forward.[21]

Of course one can curse the world and wish that one had never been born—a standard ancient Greek curse, and one that Hamlet repeats[22]—and still decide that action must be taken, perhaps to attempt to counter the ineluctability just mentioned. As Hamlet says—and shows—we must inquire, ask, and seek to

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[19] Halliwell "Plato's Repudiation of the Tragic" 342.

[20] *Hamlet* 1.5.196, editor's footnote. Interestingly, the editor of the Arden edition of *Hamlet* links the idiomatic expression 'time is out of joint' to an interesting parallel usage by Horsey: "This turbulent time...all out of joint, not likely to be reduced a long time to any good form of peaceable government," an expression which evokes Thucydidean *stasis* (strife, discord, civil war or faction).

[21] Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness* xxxi-ii. Nussbaum, incidentally, uses the notion of 'necessity' differently than I do; I mean 'felt or lived' necessity *qua* compulsion—the kind of necessity to *act* that fear, folly or greed can inspire—and not 'logical necessity' or the necessity pertaining to physical laws. See my discussion in the first section of Chapter nine.

[22] "I could accuse me of such things that it were/ better my mother had not borne me," *Hamlet* 3.1.123-24.

understand. This is what Hamlet attempts to do when confronting the very emblem of calamity, the Ghost. Upon seeing the Ghost for the first time, Hamlet asks: "Say why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?"[23] Later Hamlet distinguishes between those that are adept at 'acting' (in both senses of the word) and those that are swept along by the capricious to-and-fro of contingency, wishing of course that he be included among the former, and hoping, if he is wavering on the edge, that he can embolden himself to emulate those possessing both 'blood and judgement':

> blest are those/ Whose blood and judgment are so well commenddled/ That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger/ To sound what stop she please. Give me that man/ That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him/ In my heart's core [...].[24]

Hamlet wants to spur himself on to action but he has already taken the first crucial steps by exercising his practical wisdom in inquiring into causes, actions and events, in this case finding 'confirmation'—such as it is—in the Ghost's utterances for his own earlier, inchoate suspicion of Claudius. Here Hamlet illustrates something that is common to his creator, Shakespeare, and among others, Machiavelli and Thucydides: "His aim is to *make sense* of social events, and that involves relating them intelligibly to human motivations, and to the ways in which situations appear to agents."[25]

I have on occasion mentioned both Machiavelli and Thucydides in the same breath; however, these two prototypical 'realist' thinkers ought not to be equated. Thucydides is often taken for a hardhearted realist along Machiavellian lines—indeed a forerunner of Machiavelli—who has no place or time for naiveté or the 'milk of human kindness.' Machiavelli and Thucydides have often been linked, as realists, and as defenders of an uncompromising *realpolitik.* However, some have complicated this link, convincingly arguing that Thucydides is not a

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[23] *Hamlet* 1.4.57.
[24] *Hamlet* 3.2.68-73.
[25] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 161. Williams is speaking of Thucydides. I hold however that Machiavelli's thought is suspect because of its *realpolitik* cynicism. Also, see footnote 27, below.

Machiavellian.[26] As I will attempt to show, Shakespearean tragedy moves toward something akin to Thucydidean tragic realism[27] as a *middle ground* between Machiavellian cynicism about the gentler, social passions (especially pity) on the one hand, and a recuperative pre-Tacitean providentialism (which is part of what J. Dollimore calls 'humanism'[28]) on the other hand. Another pole to be briefly considered is pessimism. Pessimism comes in several incarnations. Pessimism can be assimilated to Machiavellian cynicism—as a form of acute cynicism about the value and efficacy of any moral motives whatsoever—*and* pessimism can be assimilated to humanism/providentialism in the sense that 'radicalized' Shakespeareans have understood these—as an ideology of quietism that pessimistically assumes that political action against tyrants, against proto-absolutist rulers, is futile. Providentialism and humanism also to some extent share a theological commitment. To reiterate: I wish to provide a Shakespeare who does not abandon such notions as reason, self, and some ethical motives; in short, again, I urge a tragic realist Shakespeare against, especially, the pessimistic cynicism of Machiavelli. That said, one has to study Machiavelli to know what Machiavellians are capable of...and how to counter them. As Bacon says, one

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[26] See Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik," and Palmer "Machiavellian *virtù* and Thucydidean *aretē*."

[27] In contrast to conventional treatments of realism within political science and international relations theory, I consider realism not so much a theory as an attitude or intimation that stresses the following: agents' flawed, passional, and sometimes irrational natures; the inescapability of (some) threat or risk; the need for security and the need for a pinch of suspicion, though not enough to induce a Machiavellian skepticism about ethics and ethical behaviour, or about moral choice. A conventional account of realism would stress the following: "the anarchic nature" of relations between states and between agents, "the domination of the weak by the strong," and the "primacy of interest" over emotion. See Crane *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity* 4. In harder-edged versions of realism, politics is seen as the "struggle for power and survival rather than the quest for harmony and justice," in Kaufman "E. H. Carr, Winston Churchill, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Us: The Case for Principled, Prudential, Democratic Realism" 315. I deliberately keep my definition of realism broad, since I intend it to cover work by a disparate group, all of whom, however, have been classed as realists: Thucydides, various Sophists, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. (Of course this is not to say that all of these figures hold the same views.) I also distinguish between hardcore realism, and my own very moderate realism; and I sometimes use the term *realpolitik* to refer to a harder-edged, cynical form of realism, such as Machiavelli's. J. Dollimore too mentions *realpolitik* and realism but says too little about either, in Dollimore *Radical Tragedy* 5; 208. A recent work on the English History plays—Spiekerman *Shakespeare's Political Realism*—approaches Shakespeare's realism from a different perspective; but I share with Spiekerman the idea that Shakespeare can teach us something about politics and about the political. Spiekerman's study is marred, however, by a baffling failure to define and discuss key terms, especially 'realism.'

[28] Dollimore *Radical Tragedy*.

must sometimes pit passions against each other; and as A. Hirschman holds, we must sometimes pit interest and self-interest against the passions. But neither course removes the need to understand the passions, and the need to understand *by*, *through* and *with* the passions.[29]

The Resources of the Self

Shakespeare too, on the account offered here, grapples with these issues surrounding the nature of terrible sufferings, and the dark motives just mentioned at the end of the previous section: how to react to them, and how to make sense of them? How are the passions to be understood? Are terrible events surd, or absurd? Can we legitimately, theoretically, provide an 'account' (a logic of events), which might be helpful in preventing at least *some* such terrible events? Are the passions a subject about which there can be a teaching, a discourse of 'prevention' so to speak, or are the passions best understood along Machiavellian lines as part of the inevitable ebb and flow of Fortune, about which we can do almost nothing, except perhaps to take advantage of contingency and lawlessness to seize power? Can there be a nosology or pathology of the *pathē*? If such a nosology is provided, it will not emphasize passivity but rather the 'purposiveness' of the passions in compelling action: as S. Halliwell says about Aristotle, "Aristotle's view of tragedy is focussed not on the actuality of suffering, but on the lines of causation within the sphere of human agency which lead towards it."[30]

At any rate, these questions, particularly the last question, are central to this thesis. Arguably Shakespearean tragedy is best understood as confronting such concerns. I then turn to the interlocking questions of the politics of tragedy, autonomy and vulnerability—vulnerability to rhetoric, persuasion and suasion of

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[29] Hirschman *The Passions and the Interests*.
[30] Halliwell *Aristotle's Poetics* 146.

others. I argue that in the 'contributions'[31] made by Shakespeare to the raging early modern debates about the role, place and scope of the passions in the good life and in the life of the 'good'—that is, in ethics—we can find a host of important explorations of ethical and political issues. The tragedies are dramas of, and sites of, the conflict of values, and the conflict of agents; as such they are dramas of "failed community."[32] Many political issues are raised and treated in Shakespeare's tragedies, but it is arguably not emphasized enough how closely Shakespeare aligns his political tragedy to ethics, or ethical inquiry. I wish to raise concerns like these, and to highlight the intertwining of politics and ethics in Shakespearean tragedy. I must add a caveat, though, and inform the reader that I will not be providing readings of Shakespeare's tragedies, if by 'readings' one means following the development of the plot or story from the beginning to the end of the play. Rather, I treat the following interrelated themes—agency, self-managing, necessity-as-compulsion, realism vs. cynicism, interiority, partiality, affective bonds, 'politic history'—in passages from the tragedies that I deem relevant to my discussion of the role of the passions vis-à-vis these themes.[33]

Seneca might seem to be well suited to playing a role here, in an account focusing on the 'passional' aspects of political drama. As a dramatist[34] Seneca showed the utter bizarreness and the alien nature of human passion and motivation; as a philosopher he advocated that we emulate the Stoic sage, who was Herculean in his capacity to resist any and all emotional perturbances, and to attain *apatheia*. But as I show, especially in Chapter four, the Stoics' account of the passions is deeply problematic. A better account can be found in Aristotle, who challenges both Plato and the Stoics. Aristotle challenges Plato's antipathy towards drama as corrupting and Aristotle would also have found ridiculously one-sided the Stoic stigmatizing of the emotions as irrational, tyrannical,

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[31] I put this in scare-quotes because Shakespeare's 'contribution' is not conventional—it occurs, as it were, 'between the lines' (as read, and as delivered on stage)—in the sense of political treatises and the like.
[32] Goldhill "Political Themes" 72.
[33] In particular, I treat *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus* and *Hamlet*.
[34] See Miola *Classical Tragedy*. Seneca—the philosopher and the dramatist—is not unimportant but will not figure centrally in this thesis.

incapable of teaching us anything, and as irredeemable in the sense of contributing to the life of the ethical agent.

Shakespeare certainly did not have answers to questions such as these, at least not in the formal sense—his philosophy is implied; or better still is 'applied' philosophy. But his tragedies are inflected by a preoccupation with these, and related matters, to a greater extent than we tend to acknowledge. First, he may have had more access to circulating manuscripts of ancient plays than we have hitherto suspected.[35] And secondly, he was an avid reader of Montaigne, Plutarch, and Seneca.[36] These three are precisely the writers, along with Pascal, La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère—and of course Shakespeare—that the contemporary social theorist Elster mentions as having much to teach us because of "their extreme psychological acuity and powers of formulation."[37] In all probability we must add Tacitus to this list of figures read by Shakespeare, and possibly Thucydides too.[38]

Knowledge of the politics of the passions became for a number of early modern thinkers and playwrights, especially Shakespeare, emerged as a kind of prophylactic of power, a defence against power wielded by others, and as a kind of supplement to careful scrutiny of motives. As Levy says, both quoting and explaining Francis Bacon,

> the most important thing to learn was "the coherence of causes and effects, counsels and successes, and the proportion and likeness between nature and nature, force and force, action and action, state and state, time past and time present." That knowledge enabled one to make true use of books and men, not for ostentation or amusement, but for political judgement.[39]

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[35] See the important article on this topic by Schleiner "Latinized Greek Drama in Shakespeare's Writing of *Hamlet*."

[36] Not just these three classical writers, of course. It is possible that Shakespeare read other classical writers too, perhaps even Thucydides—see Palfrey *Late Shakespeare* 50-4.

[37] Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 51.

[38] I discuss Tacitus briefly in a number of places in this thesis, especially in Chapters seven and eight; the case for linking Shakespeare and Thucydides is made in Palfrey *Late Shakespeare*. Machiavelli is not mentioned here, but it is now believed that Shakespeare was—as Palfrey says—"influenced" by him. See Palfrey *Late Shakespeare* 50-2. (See also Raab *The English Face of Machiavelli*.)

[39] Levy "Hayward, Daniel, and the Beginnings of Politic History in England" 15.

A further quotation—this one from Sir Henry Wotton—supports the notion that 'politic history' is a beachhead into the mysteries of state and rule: "In reading of history…a politique should find the characters of personages and apply them to some of the Court he lives in, which will likewise confirm his memory and give scope and matter for conjecture and invention."[40] Lastly, there is Bacon's discussion of the matter, which foregrounds the contributions of the poets to the understanding of passion and action:

> touching some of the affections […] the poets and writers of histories are the best doctors of this knowledge; where we may find painted forth with great life, how affections are kindled and incited; and how pacified and refrained; and how again contained from act and further degree; how they disclose themselves; how they work.[41]

Tragic grandeur, 'great life,' and dramatic tragic expression can serve—as Salkever says—to educate the *dēmos*[42] and help us ponder the qualities that make good and bad, ethical and unethical citizens, as well as the dangers posed by other agents, including princes. One thing is clear: namely, the description we must give of agents must be as 'thick' a description as possible, which is arguably Bacon's point. A 'thin' description will simply abstract from the actual motives that people have. It is a mark of the genre of tragedy to focus on the 'fragility of goodness' and to question the capacity of *logos* to adequately confront rhetoric and passions. While this focus can seem suffused with pessimism, it is better regarded as a realistic acknowledgement of the vulnerability of the self—not to mention the 'passional' robustness or 'thickness' of the self—and as a guarded spur to understanding, and thus as a tool-kit for political analysis. To adapt a related discussion by Halliwell, which we can use as a coda to the discussion of the vicissitudes of the passions in tragedy, and the dangers they can sometimes pose, we should look "within the experience of tragedy […] for serious adjustments in understanding the intricate criss-crossings

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[40] Wotton, quoted in Levy "Hayward, Daniel, and the Beginnings of Politic History in England" 1. Wotton was the English ambassador to Venice. He would have needed all the skill he could muster in terms of 'conjecture and invention.'
[41] Bacon *Of the Advancement of Learning* 164.
[42] The 'people' as distinct from the elite.

of agency and contingency, knowledge and ignorance, deliberation and misfortune, external goods and virtue."[43]

[43] Halliwell "Tragedy, Reason and Pity" 95.

Chapter one:
Shakespeare and the Explanations of Tragedy

> [I]f we are to understand [...] tragedy even from a historical perspective, we have to understand it as tragedy. The tragedy is not just a document that happens to be a drama, or a drama that happens to be in a conventional form styled tragic: to understand it in its historical situation involves grasping, among other things, its tragic effect.
>
> —Williams[1]

> War is a 'violent teacher.'
>
> —Thucydides[2]

Tragedy, Thucydides and political wisdom

The desire to account for a variety of human behaviour—irrational, unreasonable and reasonable—by appealing to emotion or the passions[3] is as old a desire as can be found in Western tragic literature. Indeed at the very beginning of the Western tradition stands the tragic wrath of Achilles: "Rage:/ Sing, Goddess, Achilles' rage, / Black and murderous, that cost the Greeks/ Incalculable pain...."[4] It is not just epic literature that makes use of the notion that the passions can be used to explain behaviour and to account—at least in part—for action. Early historians, philosophers and above all dramatists also analyze human action in terms of cognitive antecedents such as passions, and in terms of passion's consequences for cognition.[5] To adapt an insight of Arnaldo Momigliano's, at times "passions can reach the point at which individuals are no longer able to answer for their actions. All the historian [or dramatist] can do [...]

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[1] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 15. Williams is speaking about Greek tragedy but I do not believe that what he says holds for *just* Greek tragedy, and not Renaissance tragedy as well.
[2] Macleod *Collected Essays* 124. This is Macleod's translation of Thucydides' famous phrase.
[3] Passion and emotion are regarded by many as cognates, and I use them as such in this dissertation. See my discussion below (this Chapter section).
[4] Homer, *Iliad* 1.1-4. In Chapman, the epic poem begins: "Achilles' banefull wrath resound, O Goddesse, that imposd/ Infinite sorrowes on the Greekes" Chapman *The Iliad* 1.1-2, but the first word of Western literature is *mēnis*, rage or wrath.
[5] See Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 55.

is to define the mechanism of their passions—which Thucydides does."[6] When Dante somewhere says that Achilles 'at last has been brought to fight by love', he is of course stating the obvious, but it nonetheless brings out the sense in which there is sometimes nothing as apt and illuminating as explaining the provenance of one emotion by citing another, prior one. Love *is* one of the key factors in the interplay of motives investigated, as it were, by Homer. As with Shakespeare's tragedies, and arguably Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the themes of the *Iliad* include tragedy,[7] loss and war, but ambition, fear, anger and the 'folly' (*atē*) of the passions are the mechanisms that make these themes plausible.[8]

From Achilles' description of rage as a 'mist' that usurps good judgement and Helen's anger at Aphrodite for clouding her mind with love and lust for Paris,[9] through Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Medea* with their remarkable, self-shattering actions—which are not so much blind as 'lucidly' in the service of passion—and Seneca and his violently anguished characters, to Shakespeare's tragedies and their careful probing of agents' and tyrants' motives, the passions have been linked—as they will be linked here—to political and practical (ethical) wisdom.[10] Of course for Homer and Aeschylus, it often seems that it is the gods, and not the passions, which bring about cognitive states and thus the actions that follow from these states. But it is not simply that the gods cause actions directly: as B. Williams says, "a god gives an agent a reason for action he did not have before."[11] And the same is true of the passions: they do not always cause

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[6] Momigliano *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* 41.

[7] Like Plato, for whom Homer was the fount of tragedy—"the original teacher and guide of all these fine tragedians" *Republic* 595c—I read Homer's *Iliad* as tragic through and through. See Redfield *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* and Macleod's introduction, "The Iliad as a Tragic Poem", to his edition of the *Iliad Book XXIV*.

[8] *Atē* is variously translated as: folly, blindness, ruin, calamity, and 'acts that cause remorse.' For a sense of the semantic complexity here, see the discussion in Neuberg "*Atê* Reconsidered." Shakespeare uses the word three times, perhaps most notably in *King John* 2.1.63.

[9] Not all translators use 'mist.' In Fagles it is translated as 'blinding smoke'; Lombardo has 'smoke' too. (See *Iliad* 18.120-131. For Helen and Aphrodite see 3.456-470.) What matters, however, is that rage and other passions are seen as disrupting not just the ideal or perfect functioning of reason, but practical reasoning as well.

[10] In Aristotle as elsewhere, political thought and ethics and practical wisdom are conflated, since politics *is* the ethics of the civil polity, and vice versa.

[11] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 135.

behaviour in an unmediated or direct way. If they did, they would probably be a good deal less complicated. Rather, the passions generate both behaviour *and* other mental states, states—such as interest—which themselves in turn generate behaviour.[12] Of course the complex relationship between reason, passion and interest, and the actions caused by the interplay of these factors, is extremely vexed. A hint of the complications and nested hierarchies at work is given in one of Bruyère's insightful sayings: "Nothing is easier for passion than to overcome reason; its greatest triumph is to conquer interest."[13] In spite of this complexity, a major advance in the understanding of action and agency is obtained when the passions are factored into accounts of action; that is, when some of the causal effects of the passions on human thought, interest and action are taken into account.[14]

It is worth pausing to explain why I have been using the words emotion and passion—and to a lesser extent, the older expression favoured by the early moderns, *affection*[15]—synonymously.[16] This may seem surprising, for today we tend to associate passions with outbursts of sentiment, and with conviction or commitment.[17] And we tend to associate 'affection' with fondness, and 'affect' with pretension. We have a passion for our hobbies (for example, for stamp collecting, gardening, hiking or what have you). Though there is an overlap, we tend to reserve the term emotion for the strong feelings that move, stir or even overwhelm us. Emotions are also regarded as possessing a distinct qualitative 'feel' (or as philosophers put it, qualia). However, passion and emotion—and affection as it was used in the early modern period—are intimately related, with

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[12] See Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 137.
[13] Quoted in Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 79.
[14] This sentence owes much to Elster's discussion of the "*causal effects of emotions on human life.*" Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 76, emphasis in original.
[15] From the medieval period onwards, affection meant any mental state, but also any imprint on the mind (in the sense of the mind being acted on); part of this latter sense is carried over to the current meaning of the word 'affectation.'
[16] The classicist and philosopher G. Striker also insists on using passions and emotions, as she puts it, "interchangeably." See Striker "Emotions in Context" 299.
[17] J. Bate cites the OED and makes the point that this 'outburst' sense of the word passion—which we today associate with emotion—was available to the English early moderns. Bate says that 'passion' as 'outburst of feeling' was a new meaning, emerging around 1580 to 1590. See Bate *Titus Andronicus* 201. Even so, the word then did not generally carry the sense of feeling, sentiment and spontaneity that it carries today in post-Romanticism English.

both (or all) possessing similar "characteristic action tendencies."[18] The etymology of emotion is 'motion,' and that of 'motion' is to move and to 'stir' (be stirred). Both passion and emotion are closely related to the Greek *pathos*. Most importantly, both passions and emotions 'move' or impel us. In its older sense, as the way the term was used from antiquity to the eighteenth-century, passion denoted "not only the stormy or fit-like, but all the passive (same Latin root *passio*: 'to suffer') mental processes taking place in the human mind, that is to say, that which it 'suffers' or undergoes ('the horses'), as opposed to that which it does when it tried to assert itself and exercise free choice ('the rider')."[19] In some respects, a language like German is clearer on this complicated topic. In German—and there are nearly identical expressions in the Nordic languages—the word for passion or emotion is 'gemütsbewegung' which literally means 'psyche-movement' or 'mind-motion.' Incidentally this is very close to the definition of passion that Diogenes Laertius ascribes to the Stoics: a passion is a 'movement of the soul.' At any rate, etymology and translation will not always help; sometimes one must simply show what one means.

The Instruction of Tragedy…

> In the tragic perspective, acting, being an agent, has a double character. On the one side, it consists in taking council with oneself, weighing the for and against and doing the best one can to foresee the order of means and ends. On the other hand, it is to make a bet on the unknown and the incomprehensible and to take a risk on a terrain that remains impenetrable to you.[20]

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[18] Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 246. Meaning: they move us in similar and regular ways.

[19] da Fonseca *Beliefs in Action* 91-92. (See also Nussbaum *Fragility of Goodness*.) da Fonseca is here alluding to Plato's famous image, in the *Phaedrus*, of reason—associated in Plato with the 'truest' aspect of the self—as a charioteer, with a 'good' (spirited) horse and a 'bad' (appetitive) horse pulling the chariot. This provocative image has been indelibly linked to the discussion of the passions ever since. The horticultural metaphor of *cultivating* one's emotions was popular with the Stoics. Some neostoics wisely split the difference, speaking of 'taming' the passions.

Horsemanship was a notable metaphor for the passions and the taming of the passions from antiquity through to the early modern period. The long-standing (perhaps archaic) tradition of regarding the donkey—Buridan's indecisive ass notwithstanding—as emblem of the emotions/passions is somewhat less evocative than Plato's image.

[20] Vernant *Tragedy and Myth* 37.

The subject of this dissertation can be located at the intersection of practical wisdom and political insight and tragedy, especially but not exclusively Shakespearean tragedy. Tragedy, giving through the passions insights into the "springs of action"[21]—that move us and, paradoxically, that we move—mediates between compulsion and purposes, between, that is, necessity and agency.[22] Tragedy on this account can have an educative, perhaps almost didactic political function. Calamities, disasters, and strife—three concepts central to the tragic historian Thucydides, and caused in large part by the passions—*instruct*.

As a Thucydides scholar says, "Thucydides is trying to educate future politicians."[23] This is echoed by another scholar, who writes: "Thucydides thus belongs, according to both his own intention and to the judgement of such men as Hobbes and Rousseau, to students of political life of whatever time and place."[24] Certainly one cannot object to the educative power or potential of Thucydides. But this is perhaps true of most history—namely, it can be taken as instructive. However, to what extent is Thucydides' *History* also tragic? There is a longstanding debate about this. Clearly it is not the case that his work "recapitulates the basic, religious themes of Greek tragedy,"[25] or that Thucydides is in some way copying the tragedians.[26] It would not be accurate to say that Thucydides deals with the downfall of characters in exactly the way that drama does. On the other hand, I am persuaded that his work should be considered tragic, in a larger sense, in that it deals with (historical) actors and 'protagonists' (states and cities) that experience *pathos* and calamitous failure owing to their erroneous choices. Moreover, the *History* "stresses the recurrent discrepancies

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[21] Lovejoy *Reflections* 10. A similarly apt but somewhat more 'mechanistic' phrase—"motors of moral behaviour"—is used in Nuttall *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure?* 18.

[22] Agency can be briefly defined as: the capacity or ability to choose between different courses of action and to act on those choices. A fuller definition would want to stress the following, too: agency is the ability to choose, where both choices *and* the act of choosing—and not merely social roles—come to define the self. See Seligman *The Problem of Trust* 56.

[23] Macleod "Thucydides and Tragedy" 146.

[24] Orwin *The Humanity of Thucydides* 4.

[25] Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" 109.

[26] A small number of scholars have gone too far, finding signs of the influence of either Aeschylus or Euripides.

between plan and result,"[27] discrepancies out of which terrible events and calamities arise. As Macleod says, "when the disaster comes, it is so related that it must be seen as a tragic reversal of fortune."[28] Thucydides might be dealing with states, but his work has relevance to 'smaller' units of explanation, like agents. For even if one does not believe that states are agents writ large (or vice-versa that agents are states writ small—though perhaps the mind is more like a parliament than a monarchy or a meeting chaired by a CEO), the same passions are in play: fear, envy, hate and ambition, to name but the ones that figure centrally in Thucydides.

Of course, all drama and all history can, potentially, be educative. But tragedy's and perhaps tragicomedy's claim to be instructive might be greater because of the kinds, and depth, of emotions that are put into play.[29] Then as now, people are intrigued by intrigue and powerfully fascinated by power. Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, but power nevertheless entertains, as do for example "anger, fear, longing, lamenting, love, emulation, malice,"[30] all things that move agents in ways that often contribute to reversals of fortune, to calamity, and to suffering. As Hobbes puts it, we

> profit more by looking on adverse events, than on prosperity: therefore by how much men's miseries do better instruct than their good success; by so much was Thucydides more happy in taking his argument, than Herodotus wise in choosing his.[31]

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[27] Orwin *The Humanity of Thucydides* 4.

[28] Macleod "Thucydides and Tragedy" 141.

[29] Aristotle and Hume both claim, for different reasons, that tragedy is special. Aristotle says it promotes 'clarification' (*catharsis*—for an overview of the disputes surrounding this 'essentially contested' term, see Halliwell *Aristotle's Poetics*). Hume emphasizes sympathy to account for our interest in and capacity for understanding the passions of others.

[30] This list is Plato's, quoted in Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 58.

[31] Schlatter *Hobbes's Thucydides* 20. Hobbes translated Thucydides sometime in the 1620s, registering it with the Company of Stationers in 1628 and publishing it in 1629. It was not the first translation of Thucydides into English: Thomas Nicolls published an English translation in 1550, relying on a French translation of a Latin translation. Hobbes knew this work, but what is interesting is, as Schlatter says, that "for seventy-five years before Hobbes' edition, Englishmen had been able to read an English Thucydides." Schlatter *Hobbes's Thucydides* xii. Palfrey conjectures convincingly that this was a "version Shakespeare might have read." Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare* 54. (Not surprisingly, Hobbes tries to assimilate Thucydides to a pro-monarchical, anti-democratic position. As Norbrook says: "Hobbes saw the history [Thucydides'] as a warning of the disasters that ensued from a state dominated by rhetoric, where 'such men only swayed the assemblies, and were esteemed wise and good commonwealth's men, as did put them upon the most dangerous and desperate enterprises.'" Norbrook "Lucan, May and Republican Literary

Thucydides does what tragedians do: as Hobbes says, Thucydides takes "the characters of men's humours and manners, and appl[ies] them to affairs of consequence." Hobbes continues,

> [Thucydides' *History*] contain[s] contemplations of those passions, which either dissembled or not commonly discoursed of, do yet carry the greatest sway with men in their public conversation.[32]

This Thucydidean position of Hobbes' has been brought up to date in contemporary political philosophy by S. Salkever, who holds the similar view, derived from Aristotle, that "fear and the pity that depends on it inspire deliberation."[33] In other words, tragedy can be educationally and politically helpful, but through a "focusing of concern rather than direct teaching or admonition."[34] Tragedy "encourages inquiry", and so one can even make the case that "the tragic art is crucial to the successful actualization of a good democracy."[35] Moreover, not just inquiry, but also a commitment to reflection is implied by tragedy. As M. Bristol says, "Full engagement in make-believe is part of a larger commitment to ethical and political reflection."[36] This insight compliments nicely P. Euben's discussion of how tragedy (tragic make-believe)

Culture" 58. The fact is that Thucydides is too complex a political thinker to be reduced to propping up a kind of regime—early modern proto-absolutist monarchism with a feeble parliament—about which he could know nothing; and it is not clear that he is anti-democratic. Instead, he could be lamenting the fragile and volatile, but important, nature of a certain kind of democratic polity.)

[32] Hobbes *Hobbes's Thucydides* 25. Hobbes also seems to argue that Thucydides' account benefits from the historian's refusal to include "conjectures at the secret aims and inward cogitations" of agents, "nor enter into men's hearts further than the acts themselves evidently guide him: is yet accounted the most politic historiographer that ever writ." Hobbes *Hobbes's Thucydides* 7. It is not clear what Hobbes is attacking here, but he is likely commending Thucydides for—in H. Baker's words—refusing "to stop the flow of his narration to speculate" about agents' motives, Baker *The Race of Time* 24. Since I hold that inward cogitations and secret aims are precisely what matter most about Shakespeare and the 'politic historians', I want to remind the reader that Hobbes' target here is not the explanatory importance of the passions but unwarranted speculation about them. Envy and fear and the like are as vital to Hobbes' political philosophy as to Thucydides', but Thucydides' is not linked to a modern reductive scientistic program.

[33] Salkever "Tragedy and the Education of the Dēmos" 295. A page earlier, Salkever provides a fascinating quotation from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: "fear makes men deliberate" 1383a.

[34] Salkever "Tragedy and the Education of the Dēmos" 300.

[35] Salkever "Tragedy and the Education of the Dēmos" 303.

[36] Bristol "How many children did she have?" 33.

and history compel us to ask hard questions about identity and agency, which in turn implies that we have (at least minimally) identity and agency. Euben makes the interesting point that the sphinx's question to Oedipus ('what is man?') is simultaneously the question "Can man be defined by men?" The answer Euben gives is that

> we are partial beings subject to forces we cannot fully control, riddles to ourselves and others but that in part because of tragedy, we are also actors capable of collective understanding and power.[37]

Euben's point that we are subject to uncontrollable forces should give us pause, and we must remember that Euben adds a caveat about our ability to action and understanding. Arguably what Euben is directing attention to is forces such as the passions, but by stressing their uncontrollability, it is as though we are inching towards the admission that we contain inherently irrational elements. (This may be so—Freudians like J. Lear and J. Cottingham hold that we ought to make this admission, and that this admission is liberating.) The premise of the Bristol exhortation just cited is that *reflection*—which may be taken to entail a fair degree of reflexivity and agency—is an essential part of ethical and political *praxis*. This seems salutary and more helpful than the pessimism of stressing our irrationality. I will return to the questions of controllability, pessimism and the passions in the next section.

...and the Tragedy of Instruction: Perils of Pessimism

> But why does Nietzsche think the night has no stars, nothing but bats and owls and the insane moon?
>
> —Yeats (marginal note in his copy of Nietzsche)

We have already considered Salkever's position, introduced towards the end of the last section, that tragedy can encourage inquiry. I want now to supplement that claim, which seems incontrovertible, with another claim of

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[37] Euben *The Tragedy of Political Theory* 202.

Salkever's, namely the additional, more radical claim that tragedy can aid ethics. Salkever opines that the

> suggestion here is not that tragedy has the power to move its audience immediately and decisively to a better course or action, but that it can make its audience more inclined to act well, or at least not to act badly.[38]

This may seem to be an overly optimistic position, and perhaps one has to add the caveat that tragedy can be ethically educative when *understood* properly, but the core of this is importantly interesting, as is his remark that we need to

> understand the function of tragic *katharsis* and *paedeia* within the context of a democratic polity, whose citizens require neither a purgative cure for emotional disorders nor ritual purification but protection against the nearly universal human inclination to act unjustly [...].[39]

The account on offer here in this dissertation is similarly premised on the idea of ethical benefits accruing to tragedy, but also on the notion that the presentation of the passions in tragedy and history can confer political, practical lessons, especially into those who—in Salkever's old-fashioned terms—act 'badly' or 'unjustly.'[40] What is important about Salkever's work on tragedy and politics can be presented as follows. Salkever's notion that calamity and misery can—through pity and fear—instruct us ethically suggests that there is a way of regarding tragedy that avoids the deservedly criticized humanist position that tragedy is an undifferentiated whole through which we repeatedly learn the empty, universal moral 'truism' that a *hamartia* (usually mistranslated as 'moral flaw') or a surfeit of hubris brings low a protagonist. But there are other merits to Salkever's position. From Salkever's notion of the ethical education of the *polis* and the *dēmos*, we can also glean the beginnings of a distinction that will be central to the argument of this dissertation: namely, the distinction between Machiavelli on the one hand, and Shakespeare and Thucydides on the other. That is, a distinction between pessimistic cynicism (Machiavelli) and a tragic realism inflected by the

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[38] Salkever "Tragedy and the Education of the Dēmos" 300.
[39] Salkever "Tragedy and the Education of the Dēmos" 296.
[40] Salkever, and I concur, urges 'instruction' for *everyone*, for the *dēmos*, and not only for the elite. Conversely, for Hobbes, Thucydides' writings are "profitable instruction for noblemen" Hobbes *Hobbes's Thucydides* 4.

power of pity (Thucydides and Shakespeare, on my reading). What is at stake here is the notion that tragedy can be informative, instructive and useful. If tragedy is educative (without of course being didactic), as Salkever suggests, then calls for the wholesale dismissal of 'traditional' (canonical) modes of literary experience can be rebutted. Possibly some conceptions of subjectivity need to be jettisoned or rethought—as has been urged by authors and theorists whose work I discuss briefly below—without the notions of self and agency themselves being jettisoned. Perhaps it is not necessarily the case that these two latter notions are coterminous with, and implicated in, the kinds of Cartesian abstract, decontextualized and asocial subjectivity currently treated with hostility and suspicion. Is it not possible to show that, once modified or shored up, notions such as self and agency are useful or even vital, and so no longer need to be vilified? Indeed acknowledging the passions as an integral part of the self is one way of adding to the 'robustness,' concreteness and complexity of the self in such as way as to counter what B. Williams calls the attenuated "characterless" and "featureless" notion of the moral self held by many moral philosophers (especially Kant).[41] This does not represent the enthronement of the autonomous liberal subject as an ideal, or norm. Rather, as S. Goldhill says—in words that recall Salkever's political, democratic reading of tragedy—in his treatment of the politics of tragic writing,

> Tragedy scrutinizes the construction of the autonomous judging individual as a democratic ideal. For Aristotle, the staging of the process of practical reasoning—the reasoned response to the archetypal tragic question [...]: 'Alas, what should I do?'—is the essential justification for the educative role of tragedy for the citizen. Yet tragedy critically explores the potential of such autonomy.[42]

Here again we find an esteemed classicist and theorist urging that we view tragedy as educative. Unlike J. Lear, Goldhill does not explicitly mention the passions, but he does emphasize the same destabilizing, liminal states of mind, if

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[41] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 159; 160.
[42] Goldhill "Political Themes of Tragic Writing" 72.

we take his reference to 'events' in the following quotation to mean something like dark but explicable motives:

> Tragedy shows humans locked into narratives over which they have no control, with partial, doubtful knowledge of events or misplaced confidence, aiding and abetting their own misfortune in violence.[43]

Tragedy is indeed a pessimistic genre, or rather, it can be. Goldhill's remarks seem quite pessimistic, but this does not make them cynical. The 'partial' knowledge Goldhill speaks of is preferable to little or no knowledge. What is more objectionable about this otherwise lucid account of tragedy's relationship to autonomy and agency—implied by or contained in the word 'control'—is Goldhill's insistence that we are locked into narratives over which we have *no* control. This seems unduly restrictive; it is not that we are always, somehow, in control. Rather it is that control—as indeed both history and tragedy teach—comes in degrees. For Galen, the passions could be divided into those that admitted of control and those that did not: "'Iracible' passions could be tamed, but 'concupiscible' passions (appetites, like sex and gluttony) were too wild and could be controlled only by starving them."[44] Part of what is interesting about the passions is that they are to some extent 'controllable': we are not always merely passive with respect to our passions. Certainly we are sometimes swept up by an emotion, and unable to resist our 'blood' (a euphemism or metaphor for our passions and emotions). As Saturninus says in *Titus Andronicus* apropos of Titus' woes, "what and if/ His sorrows have so overwhelmed his wits?"[45] But sometimes we manage or control or manipulate our passions; we are sometimes able to "life [our] blood with persuasion"—a phrase that nicely insists the

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[43] Goldhill "Political Themes of Tragic Writing" 72. Tragedy is notoriously difficult to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for, or to define. Goldhill's account quoted above is as good as any (but see Irwin's succinct "Shakespeare [... shows the] disproportion between a genuine fault and the bad results," Irwin *Classical Philosophy* 263). Conversely Wittgenstein could be pulling our leg when he says, "In a bullfight the bull is the hero of a tragedy. Driven mad first by suffering, he then dies a slow and terrible death," Wittgenstein *Culture and Value* 50e. What is missing here is a sense of the bull's culpability. What error (moral or intellectual or otherwise) does a bull commit?

[44] Ainslie *Breakdown of Will* 4. I discuss the 'taming' of the passions, and the 'shaping' of the self, in greater detail in Chapter five.

[45] *Titus Andronicus* 4.49-10.

rhetorical aspect of managing or shaping our 'selves'—or "conjure up" a passion.[46] Be that as it may, Salkever's and Goldhill's (similar) positions also avoid a different, nonetheless somewhat suspect, stance. This is the radical 'decentering' position[47] of contemporary political, poststructuralist-inflected, theory-based criticism, which has moved from the margins of literary theory and practice to occupy the center of the profession.[48]

This decentering approach (or set of aligned commitments) is not without its theoretical importance and justification, but it purchases some of the power of its provocative, subversive power at the expense of the mundane virtues of political deliberation and reflection on responsibility, ethics, agency and tragedy, which pale into ordinariness in comparison with the seductions of anti-self cynicism, but which are arguably desirable, valuable and complementary. I hasten to insist that I intend only to supplement, and gently modify, this 'decentering' tradition. There are indeed problems with the humanist tradition denigrated by current theory, not least of which, from my point of view, is the regular elevation of an abstract de-contextualized reason at the expense of the passions, and the easy assumption of both progressivism (Whiggism) and what Williams calls "redemptive world-historical stories."[49] Conversely, for all his hostility towards Kant for Kant's ignoring of such things as emotion, character and consequence,[50] Williams also draws attention to the flaws in the Hegelian position, which in the form of social constructionism dominates the contemporary intellectual landscape:

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[46] *1 Henry 4* 5.2.78 and *Henry 5* 3.1.7.

[47] Best exemplified by such works as: Dollimore's epoch-making *Radical Tragedy*, as well as greatly influential works like Goldberg *James I and the Politics of Literature* and Belsey *The Subject of Tragedy*, and perhaps Mullaney *The Place of the Stage* and Eagleton *William Shakespeare*. Any thoroughgoing criticism of this tradition should, in my opinion, focus on Dollimore's book because it is exciting, influential and representative.

[48] The irony that theory, the current center, is still touting itself as marginal is discussed in many places; for one view of this irony, see for example Wilson *Cultural Materialism*. To see *how* we got here, and to understand the history of Shakespeare studies, see Grady *The Modernist Shakespeare*, Grady "On the need for a differentiated theory of (early) modern subjects," and especially Bristol *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare*. An intelligent book by an 'observer' is Bradshaw's *Shakespeare's Scepticism*. A combative 'participant's' perspective is afforded by Dollimore *Radical Tragedy*; see also the Introduction to the Second Edition.

[49] Williams "*The Women of Trachis*: Fictions, Pessimism, Ethics" 43.

[50] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 102.

> If we identify the Enlightenment with ideas of total critique and rationalistic images of society, it is not surprising that we should be tempted to fall back on Aristotle, as on Hegel, to find a philosophy that does not abstract human beings, as pure moral consciousness, from society, but rather sees them as contingently formed by society, as people who owe their ethical identity to the world in which they have grown up. But in that direction there is a different illusion, hidden in the seductively phrased Hegelian claim that human beings are "constituted" by society: the idea that the relations of human beings to society and to each other, if properly understood and enacted, can realize a harmonious identity that involves no real loss.[51]

What I take Williams to be saying here, in the last sentence, is that a certain deeply flawed, optimistic cast of mind really believes that tragedy—*qua* reversals of fortune, calamity, and undeserved, uncompensated suffering—can be eliminated. To this one can add that the Kantian and Hegelian positions repudiated by Williams have something else in common. They share a certain view of the passions. This is the view that the passions—seen as sometimes irrational features of the mind that spur us to act both with and against ethics, to act partially and non-partially, and sometimes to act in ways that are contrary to justice—are either irrelevant to an ethics of duty, in Kant's view, or *solely* the product of cultural construction, in Hegel's view. At any rate, with respect to the 'decentering' tradition, there are three areas that stand out as being in need of this gentle modification: i) this tradition is perhaps overly hostile to the self, ignoring, in its haste to assimilate the humanist subject to *every* conception of the agent or self, the 'resources of the self'—to paraphrase Charles Taylor; ii) this tradition is arguably too quick to adopt the immoral or anti-moral cynical *realpolitik* of Nietzsche or Machiavelli, when Shakespeare or Thucydides would be a better model; finally iii) this tradition has arguably been too hasty in dismissing the idea that the *constant* nature of the passions—that is, the cross-historical but not necessarily universal nature of the passions—can be put in the service of a political psychology of the motions that move agents. The fact is that the passions are constant and fairly regular. We can identify a number of passions across cultures, though perhaps not all; and the four hundred years of temporal

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[51] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 162.

distance between Shakespeare and us has not diminished or obliterated our capacity to grasp most—if not all—of the motives that move characters. (The same can be said of course for the passions found in the works, say, of Sophocles and Thucydides.)

The Self

> A dramatic focus on the suffering individual renders "the whole question of governance in society" sufficiently generalised to apply both to the seventeenth century and today, and the political drama of the seventeenth century is admired for the extent to which it prefigures the political concerns of our own time.[52]

It is a commonplace to insist on the centrality of politics to tragedy, but I wish to distance my account from traditional accounts, such as those that have dominated late twentieth century Shakespeare criticism and theory[53] in part at least because of the hostility to the notion of self these accounts share. In contradistinction to those accounts I wish to highlight the failures, conflicts and violence not just of language but also of action and decision-making, and above all insist on—as much late twentieth century Shakespeare criticism does not—the resources of the self, even as I insist on the vulnerability of the self as well as the

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[52] McLuskie "Politics and dramatic form in early modern tragedy" 217.

[53] Any comprehensive list of the dominant strains of Shakespeare criticism and theory—about which there has been considerable unanimity within English studies—would perforce include the following works: Belsey *The Subject of Tragedy*, Goldberg *James I and the Politics of Literature*, Mullaney *The Place of the Stage* and Dollimore *Radical Tragedy*, to name but the most influential. (A sense of the preoccupations of Renaissance studies towards, and at, the turn of the century can be had from many of the essays in de Grazia, Quilligan and Stallybrass *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, the first chapter of Jean Howard *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, de Grazia "World Pictures, Modern Periods, and the Early Stage" and Belsey *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden*.) Two recent important and informative works that perhaps signify a lessening of the hold of (orthodox) cultural materialism on political approaches to Shakespeare are Jordan *Shakespeare's Monarchies* (on the romances) and Bushnell *Tragedies of Tyrants*. Historians have made significant contributions; see Sharpe and Lake's edited volume *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, Sharpe *Reading Revolutions* and Smuts *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*. K. McLuskie, whose quotation opened this section, is perhaps optimistic when she writes that we can "easily" resolve the debate between those who see tragedy illustrating "truths about the human condition" and those who insist "on its analysis of the operations of power," McLuskie "Politics and dramatic form in early modern tragedy" 217. I hope however that she is right, for the choice seems to be a simplistic dichotomy.

importance to the self of non-rational, a-rational aspects. The tragedies (*King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello, Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*) and perhaps *Troilus and Cressida* and one or two of the other 'problem plays' explore the potential and potential limits of autonomy. They explore the interlocking questions of political and ethical action. The tragedies deal with human agents locked into narratives over which they have no control—or little control—and so treat, above all, the question of agency. This inquiry is an important one, one which has been ignored in recent and contemporary thought; certainly agency has not been at the forefront of research in Shakespeare studies[54] where the goal has often been to assimilate agency to discussions of the 'subject' and to dissolve the self. Within recent and contemporary philosophy, the self and especially its agency have been accepted but not inquired into to any great extent.[55] Philosophers have tended instead to emphasize—and privilege—knowing over acting, as A. Quinton points out:

> Anglo-Saxon philosophy, with its generally rigid concentration on the cognitive, treats human beings in a strangely attenuated way. For the most part it sees them as knowers or, at any rate, inquirers. As agents it considers them either as, more or less inexplicably, following principles of morality, in a narrow sense of the terms, or as motivated by a largely undifferentiated swirl in which impulse, self-interest and prudence are indiscriminately mixed. Philosophical interest in human beings is largely confined to the forensic matter of personal identity through time, to the justification of anyone's belief that other people have a mental life at all and to the relations between such primordial mental events as perception and decision and their physical correlates of sensory stimulation and bodily movement.

Quinton concludes that the "detailed architecture of personality—the topic of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century accounts of the 'passions of the soul'—is, with few honourable exceptions, ignored."[56] The notions of a detailed architecture of personality and particularly the 'passions of the soul' are apt here

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[54] But see L. Wilson "Hamlet, Hales v. Petit."
[55] Exceptions include Taylor *Sources of the Self*, G. Strawson "The sense of the self" and works by Elster and Nussbaum. See also the essays collected in Porter *Rewriting the Self* and in Crabbe *From Soul to Self*. A recent work is Jopling *Self-knowledge and the Self*. See also Haines "Deepening the self: The language of ethics and the language of literature."
[56] Quinton "Alien Intelligences" 77.

with respect to Shakespeare, who used the category of the passions to diagnose and dissect rulers, political actors, actions and agents. An emphasis on the self as something with a material 'physiognomy,' with passions and emotions that make the self psychologically robust, is an important alternative to the kinds of linguistically constituted, textually mediated 'selves' that have dominated contemporary, late twentieth treatments and accounts of Shakespeare and early modern thought in general. As H. Grady says, in his attempt to encourage a modest rethinking of some of the issues at the heart of theory in early modern, Renaissance, and Shakespeare studies, it is not clear that literary scholars need to persist in their hostility to a robust self;[57] we can, and ought, to "grant an area of relatively autonomous psychological structuring seen to include unconscious, non-rational process."[58] The hostility to the idea of the self as having solidity is based on political arguments that have at their core a fear of acknowledging anything trans-historical about the self (somewhat ironically, there is also a deep hostility—perhaps more well-founded—to the 'thin' etiolated notions of self associated with Descartes, Locke and Kant). Certainly one would want to avoid determinism, but nor should one ignore evidence when it points to an "unflattering but plausible conception of human character and motivation."[59] There is moreover a political component to the idea that the self is not entirely plastic. The intellectual historian and theorist of liberalism S. Holmes goes so far as to hold that "Liberal political theory [...] depends less on a fantasy model of rational egoism than on seventeenth-century theories of violent and mindless passions and the extraordinary unlikelihood of self-control."[60] *Pace* those

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[57] "The great weakness of both Foucault and Althusser is their tendency to make subjectivity a purely passive outcome of determinate social forces," Grady "A differentiated theory of subjects" 40.

[58] It is important for the purposes of the present study that Grady—whom I am taking to be an ally—insists that these processes be called non-rational and not *irrational*. The important distinction between the two is that some hope can be held out for an account of the non-rational aspects of the psyche (perhaps a psychoanalytic account, as is urged by some contemporary analytical philosophers, such as J. Lear and J. Cottingham). Characterizing the mind in terms of sheer, protean, 'unminded' irrationality seems to make any account whatsoever unlikely.

[59] Holmes "Ordinary Passions in Descartes and Racine" 95.

[60] Holmes "Ordinary Passions in Descartes and Racine" 95.

postmodernists[61] who urge the dissolution of the self and see as pernicious any attempts to speculate on agents' capacities (for example emotions), I argue three things. One, it flies in the face of logic and empirical fact that the emotions are simply culturally constituted.[62] Two, as regards the implausible view that the self is plastic, it can be replied that

> the possibilities of shaping the self are constrained by a reality that exists antecedently to the reflective stance adopted toward it, and this means that self-interpretations can be assessed as 'more or less adequate, more or less truthful, more self-clairvoyant or self-deluding.'[63]

Three, reflection about and work with the passions *add* to the depth of the self. This removes one of the prime motives that some theorists have for deconstructing the self, the notion that we have been working with an all-too-attenuated sense of selfhood, a self that is too atomistic, and liberal-humanist. I hold that the Western tradition's conceptualization of the self is not without important resources; here we can adapt an expression of Charles Taylor's and speak of the *resources* of the self. I turn now to the related question of the passions in early modern thought.

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[61] For thoughtful but critical responses to the challenges of postmodernist theory by moderate, bridge-building analytic philosophers, see Luntley *Reason, Truth and Self* and, in particular, Farrell *Subjectivity, Realism and Postmodernism*. Farrell's book is an extended attempt to answer the following question: "What...can be behind the postmodern leap to a radical metaphysical account when the arguments that are available support a much smaller step away from the Enlightenment picture?" Farrell *Subjectivity, Realism and Postmodernism* 248.

[62] I discuss this further—briefly—at the beginning of Chapter two.

[63] Jopling *Self-knowledge and the Self* especially 144. Jopling is against radical plasticity, not against the idea that we can shape the self, and that the self is shaped by inquiry. He explains that Stuart Hampshire, Sartre and Charles Taylor all defend "the view that the practices of reflective self-inquiry and reflective self-evaluation both reveal their objects and at the same time shape them and their modes of evidence. This does not mean that the self is a plastic object," Jopling *Self-knowledge and the Self* 144.

Chapter Two:
The Passions in Early Modern Thought

> Reason in man obscur'd, or not obeyd,/ Immediately inordinate desires/ And upstart Passions catch the Government/ From Reason, and to servitude reduce/ Man till then free.
>
> —Milton

> Is it not clear as day that man's condition is dual?
>
> —Pascal

> Are passions, then, the pagans of the soul? Reason alone baptized?
> —E. Young, *Night-Thoughts* (1744)

The Matter of the Passions

We find references to the emotions wherever there are humans trying, succeeding, and/or failing to understand and explain each other and themselves. All explanatory roads—in the explanation and interpretation of humans *qua* planning agents—lead to the Rome of the passions and related cognitive categories. This was certainly understood to be the case by many Renaissance writers. The early modern period was one in which there was a deep and abiding fascination with the emotions. In part, interest in the passions derived from an interest in explaining motives and actions through the attribution of behavioural causes. These causes were regularly regarded as secular and non-mystical, as distinct from providential accounts, and as 'upstream' from the observable actions of agents.[1] For the early moderns, and for us today, the passions are highly useful heuristics, seen as a kind of proximate cause of behavior.[2] That is, they are less idiosyncratic than the 'moods' or 'feelings' to which they are sometimes compared. Yet they are perhaps not universal. At least neither in the

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[1] By 'upstream' I mean to suggest that the passions were causal and prior to action, but not always consciously grasped as motives or transparent to agents.

[2] Theologically speaking, writers could show an interest in proximate causes while still believing that God provided ultimate causes.

sense that all *homo sapiens* feel them the same way no matter what culture they belong to, nor in the sense that individuals respond similarly or predictably when they experience a particular emotion. Conversely, however, to deny that emotions are universal, *qua* being the same everywhere, is *not* to deny statements like the following: 'agents act on the basis of their passions.' Just because Coriolanus is not ashamed of his rage, or just because Cleopatra is not embarrassed by her displays of lust and affection for Antony, does not mean that we must conclude that emotions have nothing in common. Such a high degree of distinctness is highly implausible. The very fact that we can so easily speak of shame and embarrassment—and be understood, with respect to Coriolanus and Cleopatra—for example, suggests a considerable overlap in the understanding of passions and emotions. The fact is that past and present are not irreducibly foreign. The passions have a strong family resemblance, even as they are culturally and 'personally' variable.[3]

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[3] The passions or emotions are currently the object of study by researchers working in many disciplines. I cannot do justice to the vast—and often contentious—contemporary debate, which always seems to be picking up steam, about the role of the emotions in human life. I will say that some of the recurring concerns include questions about the universality of the emotions, the extent of cultural mediation of some emotions, the number of 'basic emotions' and the degree to which the emotions are cognitive (or judgement-based). The following is a quick and dirty account of the literature on the emotions. One of the most important contemporary works on the emotions is Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* but see also Elster *Strong Feelings*. Sorabji *Emotion and Peace of Mind* is unmatched in many respects, especially for the history of theories about the emotions from Homer through Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, to the early Church philosophers; Padel *Out of the Mind* and Padel *Whom Gods Destroy* cover a similar territory but from a more literary point of view. Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness* treats the emotions, among other topics, in ancient Greek philosophy and literature in a most stimulating way; Nussbaum *The Therapy of Desire* covers Hellenistic thought from a similar perspective; Nussbaum *Upheavals of Thought* provides some of the philosophical foundations for the whole Nussbaumian project. An important recent work, Redding *The Navigation of Feeling*, by a cultural anthropologist/historian, combines anthropological and psychological research with an investigation into the place of the emotions in Revolutionary France. Redding's book is a bridge-building ecumenical work that 'navigates' a path between constructionism and scientism. Susan James *Passion and Action* and Gaukroger *The Soft Underbelly of Reason* deal with the emotions and passions in seventeenth century philosophy and culture. Oatley *Best Laid Schemes* and Oatley and Jenkins *Understanding Emotions* are useful introductions to the literature on the emotions from a psychological perspective, as is Power and Dalgleish's less accessible book, *Emotion and Cognition*; Evans' *Emotion* and Frank's *Passions with Reason* treat the emotions from the perspective of evolutionary psychology; and Damasio *Descartes' Error* gives a vivid introduction to the neurobiological background of the emotions. R. de Sousa's *The Rationality of Emotion* has for a number of years been the most philosophically stimulating treatment; recent works by philosophers include the lucid and informative works by Pugmire *Rediscovering Emotion* and Goldie *The Emotions* (these two have superseded the likes of Solomon *Passions*, influential in its

What matters most for our purposes is that as a rule of thumb the passions are 'stable' and 'regular' across many boundaries and borders. We can after all understand Achilles and Medea, Simonides and Sappho, to name but four figures from Greek antiquity. All other things being equal—*ceteris paribus*—the passions are equally important to us and to the Elizabethans. In the early modern period, the passions were the object of study and interest for this very reason. Their importance is attested by the sheer number of references to passions and passionate states of mind. How, above all, did the early moderns see the passions? There was of course little unanimity, but on the whole the passions were seen as useful explanatory mechanisms, 'shorthanded' accounts that make action comprehensible and plausible. There is one thing that many writers share, with respect to the passions, and that is a fear of their capacity to disrupt or disturb the normal, everyday workings of the mind. That is, practical wisdom or ordinary practical rationality was threatened. (Then as now, however, the passions were seen as quite useful when they 'aligned' themselves with one's desires and interests.)

A widespread fear was that the passions are not always easily 'tame-able' or controllable, though they can be manipulated as for example when Hamlet feigns madness or induces an action-guiding rage in himself, or when Iago attempts (successfully) to induce jealousy in Othello. But there was nonetheless a tendency towards hostility to the passions, which seemed to express the vague but generalized Platonic and Stoic hope that reason could eventually free itself

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time but marred by an excessive cognitivism). Nussbaum's most recent work, *Upheavals of Thought*, makes the case for a moderate cognitivism. Griffiths *What Emotions Really Are* makes the sensible point that some emotions (e.g., anger) are evolutionarily ancient whereas others (e.g., moral guilt) vary considerably from culture to culture, while Miller's *The Anatomy of Disgust* is an important, entertaining work of cultural phenomenology (with a bias in favour of social constructionist views of emotion). Burack *The Problem of the Passions* approaches the emotions from a feminist and psychoanalytic perspective; and Stocker, with Spelman, *Valuing Emotions* is a wide-ranging work of analytic philosophy that deals with the emotions and value, somewhat unusually, from a psychoanalytically-inflected perspective. J. Lear *Open Minded*, Wollheim *On the Emotions* and Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life* are all works, in which the emotions figure largely, by British-trained analytic philosophers who have gravitated towards psychoanalysis.

from passion.[4] This attitude is implied in the Milton quotation at the beginning of this chapter, and also to an extent in Pascal's phrase. The third quotation is an effective riposte to attitudes of this kind.

How ubiquitous were the passions as an explanatory mechanism in early modern thought? S. James writes that they were the subject of philosophical, political, psychological and aesthetic treatments in innumerable discourses.

> That the passions are both wayward and destructive is one of the commonplaces of seventeenth-century thought. Plays, religious tracts, meditational manuals, educational handbooks, maxims, and philosophical treatises all emphasize this conviction, remorselessly probing the hazards posed by our emotions and desires [...probing our vulnerability] to powerful contradictory affections and [...] destructive conflicts of emotion.[5]

Such figures as Cervantes, Pascal, Montaigne, Hobbes, and many others including playwrights such as Shakespeare, explained the behavior of agents in terms of internal tempests and storms, mental explosions of desires and emotions that overwhelm the mind, and as veritable 'avalanches' of inner turmoil that similarly shunted the rational aspect of the mind aside. Other, less well known figures, such as the influential neostoic—and Tacitus scholar and expositor—Justus Lipsius, built an important edifice of political and philosophical thought based on the passions. Specifically, the vastly influential Lipsian paradigm was based on command over the passions, on control based on *prudentia* and more importantly *constantia*, those virtues contributing to the strength and peace of mind, which are themselves linked to the practices of endurance and fortitude in the face of adversity. As G. Oestreich writes

> He [Lipsius] placed himself in the ancient tradition of Thucydides, Polybius and Tacitus [...and] he wishes to examine the causes, to fathom the reasons behind men's decisions—to ask, in short, about the why and

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[4] I often characterize the Stoics as setting themselves the goal of *apatheia*, but I am also aware that—on rare occasions—they qualify this somewhat harsh and unreasonable position, insisting that there are some valid emotions, such as joy.

[5] S. James "Reason, the Passions, and the Good Life" 1358. James also says that the "equation of passion with immorality is therefore to some extent intuitively accessible," and that commonly asked early modern questions included: "How do the passions threaten virtue? How can they be kept under control?" James "Reason, the Passions, and the Good Life" 1359; 1390.

> the wherefore and link this procedure with the practical pedagogic purpose he had in mind.[6]

The passions were regarded as contributing to the discovery of motives and causes, for 'fathoming reasons' as Lipsius puts it. Montaigne too sees his project as relating to the epistemology of the passions: he writes that it is his goal to "'dive into his heart, and there see by what wards or springs the motions stirre,'"[7] *stir* being the etymology of 'motion' and 'emotion.' Somewhere Montaigne also says, in words that remind one of Hobbes' state of nature: 'we are but sedition, like poor France, faction against faction, within ourselves.'[8] And the passions were regarded as helpful—if not necessary: some accounts made the passions necessary, some accounts merely insisted on the usefulness of knowing the passions—with respect to understanding an agent's actions or possible actions. Similarly, it was thought possible to predict an agent's behavior from the passions that moved him or her. An envious courtier could be expected to promote himself and denigrate his rivals; and a vengeful prince could be expected to seek revenge; people were expected to swoon with wrathful jealousy when a rival lover showed himself or herself; an immoral usurpation minded schemer could be expected to harbour ambitions; and above all, a tyrant could be expect to be cruel, capricious, and swayed by lusts. Needless to say, much of the early modern emphasis on the passions can be understood by most Westerners today.[9] It made sense to account for people's actions in terms of their motives then, and it makes sense to do so today. The passions sometimes threaten even

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[6] Oestreich *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* 61-2.
[7] Montaigne, quoted in Miles *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* 97.
[8] As Johns explains, apropos of comments like Montaigne's on sedition and 'self-division,' the "problem of knowledge that the passions posed had not only personal implications, but also a much wider and even more serious political significance. The conflicts wracking seventeenth-century Europe were so violent, it was argued, because central to the human condition itself was a constant civil war." Johns *The Nature of the Book* 403.
[9] I say Westerners because I do not know enough about, say, African or Eastern views on the emotions. At some point, however—perhaps at the level of a small core of basic emotions—the universality of the emotions becomes difficult to deny. See the essays in Marks and Ames *Emotions in Asian Thought*. In Buddhism, an emotion is regarded as a most disagreeable disposition, which must be removed through the continual observation of 'insight'. Buddhism bears a remarkable family resemblance to Stoicism: both 'schools' are hostile to the idea and experience of nearly all emotions, seeking equanimity and *ataraxia* (freedom from disturbance), respectively.

what we now call practical rationality. Then as now, it is usually admitted that mind simply cannot function while its possessor is in thrall to a passion. But just because some passions are debilitating does not mean that all are. The early modern thinkers and writers with whom we are engaged here were cognizant of the need to avoid reconstructing the Stoic arguments against nearly all passions, so there was no talk among the more thoughtful inquirers of extirpating the passions. (The dominance of Christian-inspired philosophy and general Christian faith, with its interest in the 'passion' and suffering of Christ, helped to rout 'pagan' Stoicism with its hostility to *partiality* or emotional attachment.) Except for a minority of pro-Stoic writers, most thinkers left room for the passions, even as they worried about the virulence of the passions.

Passions and Interests

> The Huguenot leader, the duc de Rohan [...] lays it down that "in affairs of State we must never let ourselves be carried away by unregulated desires, nor by violent passions that disturb us in so many different ways". We must always consider "our own interest, guided by reason alone, which ought to be the rule of all our actions."[10]

This is not to say that there have been no changes in attitudes towards the passions. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the passions were *not* welcomed as they were for later, Enlightenment thinkers as the masters or 'legislators' of an inert reason which was unable by itself to initiate action (Hume's infamous phrase, and wish, was of course that "reason is and only ought to be the slave of the passions"). Rather the passions were seen as obstacles to the exercise of reason. Here it is worth mentioning that on my reading the early moderns did not exalt a bloodless reason—the Enlightenment enthroning of reason as procedural, and as extra-practical, standing above or over the realm of *praxis*—but rather saw reason as part and parcel of the exercise of virtue. It would perhaps be apt to say that for the early moderns, the passions were a threat

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[10] Skinner *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* 428.

to commonplace, everyday cognition (as they are according to common sense) *and* a useful means for gleaning the motives, actions and intentions of agents.

Shakespeare's tragedies, as well as the tragedies of a number of his contemporaries[11]—not to mention the likes of Thucydides and Tacitus, who inspired Shakespeare and his contemporary 'politic historians'—present a dramatic gallery of acute insights into the motivations of agents, and so can be seen as a politics of the passions or a political psychology or 'physiology' of the passions. Of course, an initial and seemingly insuperable problem is that the passions are by no means either clearly understood or predictable in such a way to allow us to 'read off' agents' intentions. My point is not that passions are self-interpreting or transparent, but that despite their volatility and despite the way they "stem from an absence of deliberative intervention,"[12] they have a perversely acute 'honesty' about them, precisely because of their volatility. As distinct from *interests* (including self-interest, so vital to post-Machiavellian political thought), which can be feigned and which are 'scrutable' because they reflect advantage, passions have a deeper link to what we can term the 'regime of truth' about an agent's desires, intentions and goals. They are, in short, harder to feign. This link of course is partly what I mean when I speak of their 'honesty.' In post-Renaissance thought, the passions and interests were often consciously opposed.[13] This willed opposition was an attempt to change the passions by promoting the idea of interests in their stead. The goal was to moderate the violent passions that inspired religious strife and warfare—such as the desire for glory and military renown—and to channel energy into equally vigorous but more peaceful activities, such as trade and the pursuit and creation of wealth. The passions were often rightly connected to and blamed for the intensely violent

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[11] Apart from works by political theorists, relevant works here would be various 'tragedies of state,' such as those by Jonson (especially *Sejanus*), Chapman, and perhaps Marston. These, however, are beyond the scope of this thesis. For the notion of 'tragedy of state' see Lever *The Tragedy of State.*

[12] Mehta *The Anxiety of Freedom* 8.

[13] As Hirschman points out in *The Passions and the Interests.*

religious conflicts of the early modern period, especially by the French writers who inspired the 'politic historians.'[14]

Shakespeare and his peers, the 'politic historians,' stand on the cusp of the modern age when self-interest and interest, and not the passions, are regarded as the best indicators of motive and action. There is something obviously appealing and important about the idea of replacing the passions, especially the virulent, debilitating passions of anger and intolerance that surround religious controversy and disagreement, as well as the martial passions of war and self-seeking honour. It is worth noting here, however, that the appeal to interest that A. Hirschman finds in early modern moral psychology, and in early modern pre-capitalist 'economic' writings, does not surface first there, or there alone. As we shall see, it also surfaces in literature, especially in one example of what I am calling 'politic history'-inspired drama: *Hamlet*. Let us first get clear about part of the conceptual background to the notion of interest. The appeal to interest was ubiquitous in *reason of state* tracts and pamphlets, written in the Tacitean and Machiavellian traditions of giving advice to princes (or to republicans). A considerable part of the early modern philosophy of statecraft[15] was devoted to the treatment of interest in the form of *reason of state* arguments. Baldly stated, these arguments had the following premises: (i) the realistic and sensible point that morally good actions could not always be guaranteed to bring about beneficial results; and (ii) the more radical, quasi-Machiavellian point that morally good consequences were not always desirable. (For example, it could be argued that sometimes a Christian King, say, had to slaughter enemy prisoners.) Given the obvious realistic truth of (i) and the apparent truth of (ii), it was widely held that the category of actions known as 'moral' actions had—sometimes—to be supplemented (or as Machiavelli held, *supplanted*) by immoral actions, if the goals of the state required it. If prudence required it, any action was now regarded as justifiable. And of course prudence and constancy figured centrally

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[14] The story of how French political thought influenced English and British political thought is best told by Salmon *The French religious wars in English political thought.*

[15] For a discussion of treatments of this literature, see Tuck *Philosophy and Government.* I treat some of these and related issues in Chapter eight.

in the related 'field' of neostoic writings. A quick glance at *Hamlet* shows how interest figures in the play. At the beginning of the play Hamlet shows his dissatisfaction with the new political arrangement. Claudius senses this or perhaps seeks to ward off criticism, and addresses those present (including the Council):

> Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death/ The memory be green, and that it befitted/ To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom/ To be contracted in one brow of woe,/ Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature/ That we with wisest sorrow think on him/ Together with remembrance of ourselves.[16]

Here Claudius makes the claim that prudent 'discretion'—interest—must prevail over the natural passionate impulse to grieve, because it is in the interest of everyone that wisdom win out. He does not, I believe, use the phrase 'our whole kingdom' by accident. Claudius intends everyone to be clear about matters. Of course it is in *Claudius'* self-interest too that everyone stop talking about the dead king. Not long after making this statement, Claudius tells Hamlet to stop his "obstinate condolement" and his "impious stubbornness" in persisting with "unmanly grief."[17] Claudius uses old-fashioned Stoical arguments against the passion of grief: it is "a fault to nature." And he uses new-ish arguments in favour of interest—"You are the most immediate to our throne"—to try to dissuade Hamlet from his passions.[18]

This detour into *Hamlet* has usefully helped to outline the nature of the appeal to 'interest' in the early modern period. One gets a sense of the political quagmire surrounding the concept of interest: that is, the real genuine interests of the state, or of the polity and the people, must somehow be separated from the more spurious claims which are self-interested. Needless to say, no political 'science' concocted so far is capable of separating legitimate interest from suspect self-interest. Not that self-interest is inherently suspect either, *pace*

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[16] *Hamlet* 1.2.1-6.
[17] *Hamlet* 1.2.92-4.
[18] *Hamlet* 1.2.102; 109. From Claudius' point of view, the dangerous thing about Hamlet's passions is that they may spur him into action, for example investigating the circumstances of his father's death.

moralism. Self-interest can perhaps be beneficial to the polity too, which certainly was Mandeville's claim for 'private vice.' Incidentally part of Machiavelli's appeal in the early modern period was that he rendered obsolete the intricate complexities of distinguishing legitimate interests from illegitimate ones.

Self-interest and interest are good and likely candidates to replace the martial passions. As Hirschman shows, this replacement helped to concentrate attention on economic enrichment and on scientific-technical investigation and 'advancement.'[19] Clear goals included getting magnates or knights to surrender their arms and quests for glory on the battlefield and to relinquish honour as the 'prime mover' behind their socio-political aspirations. To get them to trade their lance or musket for a compass and chart, or a microscope, was no mean feat, as can be seen from a study of the characters Titus or Coriolanus, and to a lesser extent Othello. These figures are warriors whose utility to the state or the polity, or for that matter the tribe or family, waxes and wanes. Alternately desired by and irrelevant to the state, these warriors suffer considerable swings in fortune. Lauded when needed for military activity, and then discarded and feared in times of peace, these figures were no doubt confused. The soldier, general and warrior are alternately vital and anachronistic, and the reintegration of such potentially passionate agents[20] into the social order does not always occur easily. At any rate, the Hirschman thesis is an apt lens through which to view early modernity, even if some doubts have to be raised about the ubiquity of the paradigm of 'interest.' For as explanatory mechanisms, the passions are ineliminable. Understanding the passions is undoubtedly essential, because smooth, stable and predictable behaviour—Elias' 'civility'[21]—is not often the norm, whereas passionate behaviour is. The fact remains that the pursuit of self-interest prescribed by proponents of interest to counter the virulent passions is perhaps unfortunately more often honoured 'in the breach than in the observance.' That is, it is

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[19] With the word 'advancement' I allude to Bacon, who was one of the first to suggest opposing the passions...with other, more moderate passions.
[20] This is of course one of the central themes of the *Iliad.*
[21] See Elias *Power and Civility.*

important to retain a measure of realism about human behaviour. To paraphrase the dictum about war and peace, one should hope for interest but prepare for passions.

Shakespeare was to all intents and purposes a child of his philosophical times. In most respects, his treatment of the passions and inner states in general differs only from that of his contemporaries in virtue of the skill and insight with which he delineated their workings. As I explain in my treatment of 'politic history,'[22] Shakespeare was part of a surging early modern intellectual interest in the passions and in using them to dissect, probe and explain the motives of agents, particularly—but not solely—powerful rulers. To grasp the passions and how they worked was to be forewarned and forearmed. Just as Thucydides turns to the passions to understand not only the tragic history of his great imperial city Athens, but also the motives that drove the ablest public figures in Sparta and beyond to fight a seemingly futilely destructive civil (and semi-civil, Hellenic) war, and just as Tacitus attributes to the malevolent, dissembling emperors a whole host of passions that helped to explain (but of course not excuse) what they did, and how they gained power, so too does Shakespeare turn to the passions to pierce the veil of the *arcana imperii*—the 'reasons of state'—behind which those decisions were made. As S. James says, since "our ability to think and behave rationally is so limited, it would be utopian to rely entirely on reason to control the passions."[23] Similarly, one could hardly turn one's eyes away from rulers and elites: they needed to be scrutinized and understood, especially if one was at all inclined towards anti-monarchical tendencies, let alone inclined towards republicanism. Any thoughtful realist (to be distinguished from Machiavellian *realpolitik*) would study the means through which the passions molded minds. To avoid tyrants, and to understand them, and to 'encourage' temperate princes, politically astute minds turned to the study of the manipulation of passions and desires. This Shakespeare did.

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[22] Chapter seven.
[23] James "Reason, the Passions, and the Good Life" 1378.

Before turning to Shakespeare's use of the passions, a topic treated here and in subsequent chapters, we must briefly examine not only the intellectual context within which he worked,[24] but also the classical legacy that may have influenced his plays and cast a glance at the use his contemporaries (broadly speaking) made of the passions.

Suffering, Action, Intelligibility

> *Pathemata* thus include both actions and reactions, both what the hero undergoes and how he feels about it. The word implies, literally, passive action, what is implied etymologically in English by its cognates "passion" and "patience," which together comprise the passive of "action."[25]

In his essay on *Macbeth* Cavell asks an important question: "how does Shakespeare think things happen?"[26] Cavell's question may be rhetorical, but it is a very good one for it foregrounds the centrality to Shakespearean tragedy of action and agency, and of speculating about and analyzing the methods, means and motives agents have for causing actions or events to be brought about. As Cavell goes on to say, "what is at stake is the intelligibility of the human to itself"; and equally vital is the question of

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[24] The question of the influences on Shakespeare, intertextual and intellectual, that is in terms of foreground (to choose a newer expression in contradistinction to the older one, 'background'), is a complicated and vexed one. Specific influences on Shakespeare are provided in Bullough's eight volumes, in the plethora of books on Shakespeare's 'sources' (an important research program in nineteenth century, and early and mid-twentieth century literary history) in introductions to individual plays, especially Arden editions, and in the relevant chapters in Konstan *A Companion to Shakespeare*, Wells *A Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, and Muir and Schoenbaum *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Two representative full-length works are: Jones *The Origins of Shakespeare* and Brower *Hero and Saint*. Rivers *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry* is useful for the English Renaissance in general; Martindale and Martindale *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* is an introduction to its titular topic.

[25] Orgel "The Play of Conscience" 139.

[26] Cavell "Macbeth Appalled (I)" 4. It is not completely clear to me that Cavell provides a satisfying answer to this question; probably the question is unanswerable, or not meant to be answered. It is nonetheless a provocative question.

> the intelligibility of human history, a question whether we can see what we make happen and tell its difference from what happens to us, as in the difference between human action and human suffering.[27]

Once again we confront the question of the passions and their relationship to suffering. However, in Cavell's account, the distinction between agency or activity and action and passivity (what is suffered) is quite clearly delineated.

It behooves us now to mention the relationship between the passions, suffering and learning. The notion here is that of *pathei mathos*, which refers to learning or illumination derived from tragedy. The phrase literally means suffering that yields or provides "insight, instruction, revelations."[28] One immediately sees the application of this idea to the concept of 'politic history,' where one similarly learns from tragedy. While it is not a phrase that Thucydides uses, it fits his *History* well, for in this work the suffering of the combatants is such that conflict becomes—once properly presented—the source of learning and knowledge. A further point deserves comment. It would seem that the doctrine of the *pathei mathos*—whether in Thucydides or in tragedy—implies that there can be no learning *without* suffering. If true, this would be a dire kind of pessimism, in which we have to suffer in order to learn. M. Nussbaum makes the point that it is

> possible to work towards [...] a just appreciation of the complexity of the claims upon us in the course of ordinary life, without tragic conflict or tragic suffering. The tragedians, however, notice that often it takes the shock of such suffering to make us look and see.[29]

As far as Shakespeare's characters go, it is this last point that seems most germane. For example, the likes of Hamlet, Macbeth and Lear are wrenched, through suffering, into what amount to practically 'new' worlds—in the sense in

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[27] Cavell "Macbeth Appalled (I)" 1. He is speaking principally of *Macbeth* but what he says applies to all of the tragedies. Interestingly, Cavell's comment echoes Walter Benjamin's cryptic remark that "the perspectives of the philosophy of history [are]...an essential part of the theory of tragedy" (Benjamin *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* 101.) One might add that the philosophy of agency is equally central to tragedy, and vice versa.

[28] Gould *The Ancient Quarrel* 38. "Knowledge comes in suffering," writes Aeschylus in the *Oresteia* 175, with which Thucydides would concur.

[29] Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness* 45.

which Wittgenstein used the expression 'the happy inhabit a different world from the unhappy.' Hamlet's grief and anger give him a sense of purpose (it seems that prior to his father's murder he was an out-of-shape student plagued by *ennui*[30]. It is not out of the question to say regarding Macbeth that despite the adventures he experienced as a soldier he does not really experience the *fullness* of life until—spurred by the *frisson* of ambition and the promptings of his wife—he seizes the throne. The learning and illumination that Lear experiences is perhaps the most extreme. Indeed he is so changed by suffering and grief (and by his new, world-shattering insights into the sufferings of others) that the shock causes him to lose his mind. E. Jones makes the point that *Titus Andronicus* "consists of two movements of feeling, the first dominated by passionate suffering, the second by purposeful revenge."[31] This corresponds to what we have been saying about 'suffering,' at least in plays where revenge is central: first there is suffering, and then—based on an increase in knowledge—there is the attempt to take revenge. But this is by no means anything more than a loose pattern. Moreover, it does not always hold, as a well-known phrase from *Titus Andronicus* serves to remind us: "Extremity of griefs would make men mad,/ And I have read that Hecuba of Troy/ Ran mad for sorrow."[32] Of course Hecuba does take revenge, and so does Titus. But the point is that suffering is not always ennobling or linked to knowledge or to revenge; it is sometimes merely stark and not illuminating.

Now the suffering experienced by the characters is not the same as the vicarious, make-believe suffering experienced by the viewer or reader. It can, however, be similar—in terms of the beliefs and emotions to which it gives rise. That is, the shock of seeing (or reading about) Lear in his intense and dire predicaments, affects us deeply: we experience compassion, pity and an increase in practical, even realistic, political knowledge. This is the gist of Aristotle's defence of the educative power of tragedy, articulated in the *Poetics*, his 'reply' to Plato. This was certainly not foreign to the early moderns. In the year of

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[30] M. Mack writes that Hamlet is a "very young man [...] suffering the first shock of growing up. He has taken the garden at face value, we might say, supposing mankind to be only a little lower than the angels." See Mack *Everybody's Shakespeare* 122.
[31] Jones *The Origins of Shakespeare* 97.
[32] *Titus Andronicus* 4.1.19-21.

Shakespeare's birth (1564), Antonio Minturno, an Italian theorist of tragedy and poetry, composed a treatise in which he argued for a version of *pathei mathos*: "The recollection of the grave misfortunes of others not merely makes us quicker and better prepared to support our own, but wiser and more skillful in escaping similar evils."[33] And as S. Halliwell says, "the Greek tragic tradition discerns in compassion the power to expand and *transform* the apprehension of others as 'like ourselves.'"[34] Presumably it is not just the Greek tradition, but other tragic traditions too (Halliwell himself mentions Homer), that can work in this manner. Halliwell continues:

> From this perspective, pity need not simply answer to a preconceived sense of identity and affinity; it can implicitly impinge upon an audience's self-image, by eliciting feelings, and therefore judgements, which cut across the practical norms of political and social life.[35]

While he does not mention it, Halliwell echoes Nussbaum's use of the notion of shock as an important factor in tragic 'illumination.' And he makes the observation that the emotions elicited in audience members or readers—especially pity—are "not voluntary."[36] (I shall have occasion to discuss the 'involuntariness' of the passions in Chapters three and ten.)

In another interesting confirmation of the claim of suffering's centrality to tragedy, we find Lipsius referring to the role of our emotions when we consider the 'tragedy' of political injustice and tyranny. Lipsius writes,

> This wicked man prospereth. That Tyrant liueth. Let be awhiles. Remember it is but the first Act, and consider aforehande in thy mind, that sobs and sorrowes will ensue vppon their sollace....For that Poet of ours is singular cunning in his art, and will not lightly transgresse the lawes of his Tragedie.[37]

This is a curious combination of neostoic fortitude, 'self-shaping' restraint, and Tacitean political analysis of the course of things in a world of wicked agents and tyrants. And Lipsius throws in a small but suspect amount of quasi-

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[33] Minturno, quoted in Kahn "Political Theology and Reason of State" 1067.
[34] Halliwell "Tragedy, Reason and Pity" 94.
[35] Halliwell "Tragedy, Reason and Pity" 94.
[36] Halliwell "Tragedy, Reason and Pity" 94.
[37] Lipsius, quoted in Monod *The Power of Kings* 81.

providentialism for good measure.[38] What is distinctive about the political and ethical reading of tragedy as educative is first, obviously, a hostility to providentialism, and secondly a greater emphasis on the role of the passions *depicted* or *represented* or *presented.* So it is not just that we gain (*mathos*) knowledge through suffering—though we arguably do—but also that we gain knowledge by virtue of viewing (depicted) agents on stage act out, with and through their passions.[39] No audience member needs to suffer directly. It is enough for us to apply our 'emphatic' or 'compassionate' capacity. That is, the staged, represented suffering is sufficient, when it is combined with our ability to 'simulate' (correctly attribute intentions, beliefs, desires and emotions) the characters.

P. Euben's important work on political thought and tragedy also similarly foregrounds the effects of suffering in such a way as to emphasize that suffering contributes to the construction of a viable, compelling political *knowledge*. In a stunning affirmation of the potentiality of tragically-founded wisdom, Euben speaks of the

> reciprocity between wisdom and suffering. In Aeschylus, the passions men and women have and the trials they experience because of them are the most powerful teachers of political wisdom. Without them, learning, knowledge and righteousness would lack depth, hold, and point.[40]

He goes on to articulate one of the ways in which this practical, political wisdom is purchased—like anything else that has contingency at its core—at the cost of a certain vulnerability:

> [A]s I have argued, not only does suffering bring wisdom in tragedy, but the wisdom tragedy offers brings suffering, a recognition that even the most awesome human accomplishments (such as the establishment of justice and the polis) are threatened by the various passions and forces whose unity constitutes the accomplishment and whose presence is necessary for its continued vitality.[41]

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[38] Assuming that the 'Poet' in question is God.
[39] And other mental states.
[40] Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory* 272.
[41] Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory* 272. Of course, suffering and its justification is at the core of most theologies, perhaps most metaphysical systems too. I have in mind Plato's attempts to deny suffering, or at least affirm a kind of invulnerability or self-sufficiency. Christ's passion

This sense of our vulnerability to—and hence our capacity for agency with respect to—tragedy, luck, contingency, Fortune, *fortuna*, and the passions is a particularly complex and thorny topic. From claims by the likes of Aristotle, Thucydides and Erasmus that we are a precarious balance of irrationality and rationality, through Machiavelli's attempts to show that even the right measure of *virtù* can 'tame' Fortune only some of the time, to Cervantes' insistence that we are passionately unbalanced and Pascal's terror-ridden speculations on the meaning of our vulnerability—a result of abandonment by God—and then on to the Shakespearean interrogation of the mutability of character and fate, one question stands out: to what extent can the contingency that the passions represent be moderated? This is not to take the extreme, Stoic question of how best to arrange that the passions be excised or extirpated. Rather, this is the question: since the passions are inevitable and ineliminable, should they not simply be managed, which in effect means giving up the long-standing Platonist goal of taming chance and contingency through philosophy? Can our cognitive self-fashioning ever be more than a haphazard affair, or should we follow Plato in thinking that we can arrive at a *technē* of self-mastery, a blueprint to be followed by all rational agents? Part of the special allure and wondrous interest of Shakespeare's tragedies is that his characters are alive to the possibility of their vulnerability: they *act* splendidly on themselves and on each other, and are so riven by their own sense of depth and mutable complexity that they constantly raise—perhaps, finally, without conclusively answering—the question of the necessity of the passions. In other words, they seem to ask: how deep does the compulsion of the passions run, and when or how can we swim against such a current? But it is not at all clear that Shakespeare insists that agents—at least on the basis of an examination of his significant characters—are, or should be, rational. It is far more agreeable to insist that Shakespeare holds merely that agents should be centers of agency, and should therefore be merely reasonable,

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and the perplexity this engenders, theologically speaking, are certainly central to Christianity. See the brief discussion in chapter ten of Gould *The Ancient Quarrel.*

and not necessarily rational. Arguably there is to be found in Shakespeare (and not Shakespeare alone, of course) a middle course between the Scylla of contingency and haphazardness on the one hand, and the Charybdis of 'philosophy' (at least as Plato conceives it in the *Republic*) on the other hand. The moderate alternative is to hold that chance and the passions can be moderated, 'influenced' and managed by *intelligence*, by practical wisdom.[42] Such a position, a loose neostoicism that allows some modification of our passions, is unappealing to some. J. Lear and Cottingham, both Freudians and analytic philosophers, would hold that this kind of sanguine neostoicism domesticates the passions and therefore subjects them to a Socratic, Platonic or rationalist/Enlightenment position.[43] Lear has a point when he says that we might learn more about the limits of *logos*—as he puts it—if we "are less interested in human autonomy and more interested in pursuing the darker threads of human behaviour."[44] I am unrepentant and hold with Aristotle that *metriopatheia* (moderating the passions according to a mean) is usually innocuous and should not be assimilated to Stoic *apatheia* (the eradication of the emotions so as to attain a state of passionless imperturbable calm). Against Cottingham's more hardline position, one has to recall that while Plato condemns the 'wailing' emotions associated with tragedy, he "finds an essential purpose and value in spirit and appetite" and is both for and against love.[45] Enlightenment positions are similarly complicated, especially the Scottish Enlightenment.

Euben's discussion of these and related matters, especially vulnerability, in his book *The Tragedy of Political Theory* is exemplary. While he does not discuss the passions in great detail, he treats tragedy throughout the book and at times he focuses on tragedy. In his discussion, the question of the passions arises in a way similar to the way it has been discussed so far in this thesis:

> Tragedy did not so much offer solutions as give depth and complexity to problems. The same is true of Thucydides, though he (in the Archeology)

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[42] There is here an allusion to L. Edmunds' fine *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides*.
[43] See J. Lear *Open Minded* and "Testing the Limits," and Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life*.
[44] Lear "Testing the Limits" 82.
[45] Sorabji *Emotion and Peace of Mind* 201.

> and Pericles (in the funeral oration) suggest that by changing our collective self-understanding we can change the world. Even Socrates of the *Apology*, though he sought to bring his fellow citizen back (and forward) to what was best in their tradition, never lost sight of human partiality. All of them regarded human folly, greed, and insufficiency as a given. But not Plato in the *Republic*. Here there seem to be solutions. Here men seem in control of their fate and character, at last self-sufficient and invulnerable....Either path risks ignoring something that is necessary to thought and action: the special beauty of a human life invigorated by passion and alive to complexity and mutability, or the sublime order of permanent form.[46]

Here Euben has isolated two important yet contradictory strands that pull against each other, evoking two of the poles or options discussed in this thesis, principally cynicism (pessimism) and realism, but also humanism and providentialism. What Euben calls permanent form or Platonism is what I have called providentialism; what he calls a life invigorated by passion, I am claiming to be pessimistic, at least in the sense that I assimilate a life of being swayed by the passions to the pessimistic (and perhaps nihilistic) view that we should merely celebrate or affirm contingency. One could perhaps say it is a contest of visions between two of the most formidable artists ever to have composed works of dramatic art: Plato and Shakespeare.[47] But one should be troubled by the somewhat dichotomous split between tragic vulnerability and Platonic invulnerability and moreover by the assimilation of self-sufficiency to invulnerability, as in Euben's long passage.

This view of Shakespearean tragedy sees it as instructive and educative, and "helpfully realistic."[48] Shakespearean tragedy, like Thucydidean tragic history and Sophoclean tragedy—as we have seen in Chapter one—can be seen as standing midway between a number of compelling poles, but on my reading, Shakespeare has taken pains to avoid being assimilated to any one of them. These poles include pessimism, whether embraced reluctantly or enthusiastically;

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[46] Euben *The Tragedy of Political Theory* 274.
[47] Construed in this manner this is uncomfortably close to a Dionysian-Apollonian distinction.
[48] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 162. Williams uses this phrase in a different context. The educative function of tragedy is discussed by Salkever "Tragedy and the Education of the Dēmos".

essentialist humanism, which is linked to providentialism (familiar to students of Shakespeare and the English Renaissance[49]); and spiritualism, theism or religiosity. Pessimism is what the classicist and philosopher B. Williams calls the ironism of "uncertainty," the "basic truth that human affairs will prove unpredictably ruinous."[50]

[49] See the discussion in Dollimore *Radical Tragedy* and Lever *The Tragedy of State.*
[50] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 150. It is Euripides whom Williams has in his sights when he criticizes literature that celebrates arbitrariness, ironism and uncertainty.

Chapter three:
Interiority and the Rhetoric of the Passions

> We conquer by art (*technē*) the things that defeat us by nature (*phusis*).
> —Antiphon[1]

> We are very far from realizing all that our passions make us do.
> —La Rochefoucauld

Shakespeare and the Motions

There is a troubling and perplexing aspect to the vexed relationship between the passions and our agency or decision-making. I refer to the deep ambiguity surrounding the passions, the confusion as to how we should regard these 'motions of the mind' and the 'necessity' they impose. This ambiguity lies buried in the nature of the concept of *pathos* but is clearly evident to us in our notion of 'suffering.'[2] *Pathos* and suffering are ambiguous between something we allow to happen, and something that just happens—without our consent—causing us deep unhappiness. So one can ask: is suffering "so called because it is something we 'suffer' [...], or does it also involve 'suffering' [...]?"[3] *Pathos* seems to be more than one event. But perhaps we should not be distracted by the ambiguity here. If, as S. Halliwell puts it, "*pathos* [...] is simultaneously the objective cause and the subjective experience of 'suffering,'"[4] we are nonetheless in a position to inquire into causes. In other words, a vital area of inquiry, not unrelated to this issue of 'suffering,' concerns the question of agency—the degree and scope of control an agent has over his or her actions and reactions.[5] Agency 'questions' involve us in the fascinating discourse surrounding what Antiphon raises in the fragment quoted above: namely, what it means to say that

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[1] Fragment. Quoted in Gagarin and Woodruff 74. Antiphon the (minor) tragedian, whose fragment we possess, is not to be confused with the better-known sophist Antiphon.
[2] Of course, *pathos* means suffering.
[3] Gould *The Ancient Quarrel* 64.
[4] Halliwell "Plato's Repudiation of the Tragic" 342.
[5] See also my definition of agency in footnote 22, Chapter one.

we can, to some extent, exercise a degree of control over our passions. As de Sousa says,

> The very name of 'passions' classically used to speak of emotions implies that they are not under our control. In spite of this we commonly blame people for their passions. Once again, emotions fall somewhere in between clear cases of activity (intentional actions) and clear cases of passivity (involuntary physiological processes).[6]

A similar question about the nature and scope of our control over our passions is also raised by Hector, in *Troilus and Cressida*: Hector asks, "Or is your blood/ So madly hot that no discourse of reason,/ [...] Can qualify the same?"[7] Here we have arrived at a question, or set of questions, central to Shakespeare and the political uses to which he put his tragedies: the degree and scope of our control or master over the passions, and what a grasp of this process can yield in terms of understanding actions in political arenas. However, it is not just that the passions can be 'manipulated' or 'coerced' or brought under the control of the agent, it is also that agents manipulate each other by acting on each other—and on others' passions—in order to bring about certain actions. By virtue of an understanding of how the passions work, and how they are worked on, we come to see that they can be a guide to motives and actions, and so can be a further guide to the art and science of politics, statecraft, practical wisdom and history. The passions, as Shakespeare and his 'politic' contemporaries show, and as I will argue throughout, can be immensely useful, at least to those that read (for) them carefully.[8] In this chapter I will treat the passions in terms of manipulation and rhetoric and persuasion, focusing on how Shakespeare's characters shape themselves and shape others. The centerpiece of the chapter is my discussion of interiority and agency in Shakespeare. *Othello* with its Machiavellian figure Iago

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[6] de Sousa *The Rationality of Emotion* 10. Orgel makes a similar point. See the quotation from S. Orgel, text to footnote 25, Chapter two. It is worth mentioning that we use the expression: 'to suffer something to happen.' This does not, of course, mean 'I have pain' but that 'I am passive rather than active.'

[7] *Troilus and Cressida* 2.2115-7.

[8] Here I allude to Machiavelli's famous description of his intentions in writing *The Prince*: "My hope is to write a book that will be useful, at least to those who read it intelligently." Machiavelli *The Prince*, chapter 15. I argue in Chapter four that we should resist the Machiavellian understanding of politics and agency.

orchestrating the action, or attempting to, is a concern here. I also touch briefly on *The Winter's Tale*, though I give neither of these plays the full discussion they merit.

Taming the Passions

> Most simply, emotions matter because if we did not have them nothing else would matter. Creatures without emotion would have no reason for living nor, for that matter, for committing suicide. Emotions are the stuff of life.
>
> —Elster[9]

In the tradition with which I am concerned (from Thucydides and other ancient writers through Machiavelli and the 'politic historians,' and on to the principal subject of this dissertation, Shakespeare) the passions are usually represented as inseparably connected to human choices and to human decision-making, even as they are also often exemplary of the forces that threaten to overwhelm the capacity to make or take decisions: "in rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire," says Richard about Bullingbrook and Mowbray.[10] The emotions might be, as Elster opines, the stuff of life, but—as motives—they are also entities by and through which we are susceptible to being manipulated by others. La Rochefoucauld's maxim on this subject is entirely apt: "A man often fancies that he guides himself when he is guided by others; and while his mind aims at one object, his heart insensibly draws on to another."[11]

Shakespeare highlights the complexity, messiness and kaleidoscopic nature of agents' motives without valorizing arbitrariness or insisting on the inscrutability or indeterminacy of the "raging motions" or "strange motions" that cause agents to act. The suspicious attitude adopted towards the passions in the early modern period is a deep-seated one, and long-standing too, insofar as it

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[9] Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 403.
[10] *Richard II* 1.1.19.
[11] La Rochefoucauld *Maxims* 9.

reflects the expressions that persist to this day: for example, one's thoughts are tempestuous; one is swept away by a passion, or swept up; one is out of one's mind; an emotion contributes to one being carried away and so on. But as Elster's quotation in the preceding paragraph reminds us, we can hardly follow the Stoic example and extirpate our emotions. For not all passions can be properly tarred with the brush of irrationality. As M. Nussbaum says, "*non-intellectual elements have an important guiding role to play in our aspirations towards understanding.*"[12] And of course sometimes one *wants* to be able to bring about an emotional state in oneself or in someone else, to calm someone down, or perhaps to whip (someone's) passion to a greater intensity. That is, one wants sometimes to practice a form of auto-rhetoric: "rouse up thy youthful blood" says Gaunt;[13] and "force his soul so to his own conceit" says Hamlet;[14] "mingle reason with your passion" says Regan to Lear;[15] and "screw your courage to the sticking-place" insists Lady Macbeth to the hesitant Macbeth,[16] to select just a few examples.

Shakespeare is not immune to the threatening aspects of the passions I have been discussing, but he also presents us with microcosms of political and ethical action, wherein the passions or motions—as so often occurs in early modern thought—are shown as needing to be tempered, balanced or moderated by reason. As Iago says,

> If the [beam] 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 prepost'rous conclusions. But we/ have reason to cool our raging motions.[17]

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[12] Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness* 214, emphasis in original.
[13] *Richard II* 1.3.83.
[14] *Hamlet* 2.2.547. Hamlet is here lamenting the ease with which actors feign emotions, in comparison with his own failure to spur himself on to 'act.' Additionally, Hamlet may be thinking of the curious process by which feigning an emotion can actually bring it about—if one simulates a passion long enough one may possess it. As Hamlet says, in phrase Pascal would echo: 'assume a virtue if you have it not.' This phenomena can be found in Pascal: one cannot will faith, but if one goes through the '*motions*' one can perhaps bring about the real thing. This is the subject of a fascinating chapter section by Elster on 'technologies for self-management.' See Elster *Sour Grapes* 53-60.
[15] *King Lear* 2.2.423.
[16] *Macbeth* 1.7.61.
[17] *Othello* 1.3.326-330. (Incidentally 'blood' is usually synonymous with passion in early modern discourse, though of course it can also refer to a familial relationship.) With respect to the

This quotation is fascinating, highlighting as it does the use of reason to counter or forestall our passions, and through this process forge or fashion our selves and the states that are 'prior' to our *selves*, or rather prior to our conscious, willed mental states. Reason cools our passions, perhaps 'mastering' them by detracting from their power by turning the mind's attention to other matters. However, Iago being Iago, one must also consider the possibility that he is less than honest even when he speaks of cooling our motions. Perhaps he is displaying his Machiavellian side in the following manner: 'cool' usually means to reduce the temperature, or to reduce the intensity of something (like a passion or 'hot' cognition). And 'cool' also occurs in *Richard II* in the following phrase spoken by Mowbray: "The blood is hot that must be cooled for this."[18] The interesting point is that according to the Cambridge editor (Andrew Gurr) 'cooled' here means cooled "by spilling"[19]—which raises the possibility that Iago could be talking about using reason not to tame his own passions but using reason instrumentally to effect the spilling of blood—Othello's blood or Desdemona's.

Earlier I discussed Iago's disputation on the need to possess the power to see one's 'passionate' or passion-based faults or tendencies *and* to have the virtù to use reason to control these passions.[20] There are a number of these, seemingly neostoic incidents at the center of many of the tragedies. Hamlet works on his passions, trying to whip them into the requisite frenzy for his murderous revenge on Claudius, yet the very 'organ'—reason—that is to perform the act of fashioning his passions, is occupied, as it were, with other matters. It is by no means always acceptable to partition the mind into reason and passion,[21] but it is possible to remain agnostic about such partitioning while acknowledging the

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reference to 'motions' in *Othello*, compare *1 Henry IV* 2.3.60 where Lady Percy (Kate) asks about Hotspur's plans and intentions: here Hotspur's "strange motions" are involuntary and there seems to be nothing reason can do to prevent them. But do they only appear on his face when he is asleep?

[18] *Richard II* 1.1.51.

[19] Gurr *Richard II* 59.

[20] I will treat *Othello* again, below.

[21] But see the relevant works by Davidson—"Paradoxes of Irrationality"—and M. Cavell—*The Psychoanalytic Mind*. There are other contemporary analytic philosophers who have found Freud's discussions about the partitioning of the mind fruitful.

usefulness of the metaphor, for it helps as a shorthand method to clarify Hamlet's behaviour. Hamlet's reason, so to speak, is concerned with the ethical question of revenge; with the epistemological question of the veracity of the Ghost; and with the tactical question of how to react to and act against Claudius and his various spies and minions. This is not to mention the antic disposition he adopts so as to allow himself the relative luxury of inspecting and investigating the intentions and plans of the other members of the court. Hamlet is also compelled, by virtue of his own personality and commitments, *and*—it must not be forgotten—by the instructions of the Ghost, to quell his most violent passions in relation to his mother. Shortly after describing his Queen as being only "seeming-virtuous," the Ghost tells Hamlet: "Taint not thy mind nor let thy soul contrive/ Against thy mother aught."[22] As far as Hamlet knows, Gertrude *may* share guilt or complicity for his father's murder, and this possible guilt or complicity is a vital concern to him. But he remembers the Ghost's admonition when the time comes.

Another interesting instance occurs in *The Tempest*, where Prospero says, perhaps optimistically hoping to steel himself, "Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury/ Do I take part."[23] By *redescribing* his reason as 'noble' Prospero adds to the justification that he has for subduing his fury.[24] Agents do not like to see themselves as having their 'noble' aspects overwhelmed by fury. Achilles is somewhat ashamed of his anger, though it is precisely his affronted nobility that causes his anger; and Sophocles' Ajax is driven to suicide by his acute sense of shame at his (involuntary) 'actions.' Macbeth's relationship to his passions—specifically ambition, and guilt and shame—is relevant here. Hamlet tried to whip up his fury so that his task—revenge—can be carried out, but he is of course aware that vengeance is ethically suspect, even ignoble to him. (I discuss the role of the passions in *Hamlet* in Chapter ten.) Shakespeare's paradoxical character, the martial, noble and archaic Coriolanus—an 'engine' of power and

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[22] *Hamlet* 1.5.46; 1.5.85-6.

[23] *Tempest* 5.1.26.

[24] The rhetorical category of redescription—paradiastole—was important to the early modern writers. Not just rhetoricians but also and especially moral philosophers agonized over its amoral applications. It is plays a key role in Tacitus' writing, where he uses it to illustrate how corrupt and dishonest Emperors and tyrants would redescribe their appalling acts as, for example, 'good,' 'honest' or 'necessary.' As Thucydides says, corruption starts when words lose their meaning.

an instrument of 'instinct,'—differs somewhat from the above-mentioned protagonists. Coriolanus is, as J. Casey points out, best described as "adamantine" in his emotionless hardness or coldness.[25] His fury *is* part of his nobility, and his relative lack of interiority (or, interestingly, has he chosen to ignore or suppress reflexivity?) means that he does not need to combat his passions—rather he seems simply to be a vehicle for their expression. Clearly Coriolanus' rage and anger and other passions have an immediacy that deserves attention, as above all does his relationship to what we can term the *partial*: namely, those aspects of life that involve our emotional attachment to others, and—as distinct from impartiality—our passions of loyalty and pity and love.

Involuntary Passions

> The passions are the voice of the body.
>
> —Rousseau, *Emile*

> The human body is the best picture of the human soul.
>
> —Wittgenstein

Rousseau's remark about the passions and the body is apt because it conveys a sense in which the passions are both voluntary and involuntary. If one can modify one's beliefs or otherwise convince oneself that the knife one 'sees' in the air is only a projected figment of the imagination, then one is that much further away from experiencing anxiety. Perhaps Macbeth knows this but cannot act on it. This is what we can term the voluntarist—or self-shaping—position: i.e., one 'manages' or 'shapes' one's actions and reactions. The involuntarist position is that one simply *reacts*. For example, one reacts thanks to fear as when one receives, as we say, a fright. By looking at the body's 'motions' and movements, we gain a picture of what is going on 'inside,' as it were.[26] From the

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[25] Casey *Pagan Virtues* 94.

[26] My 'as it were' here is intended to convey my sense of unease at using the expression 'inside' and 'outside,' or 'interiority' and 'exterior.' But these are useful phrases nonetheless.

involuntarist perspective, this reaction occurs without the intervention of reason. As W. Reddings writes,

> The involuntary character of the emotions is the basis of their polyvalent quality, their mystery. From one vantage point, our emotions are that which we most deeply espouse as our own; yet at times they appear to external forces that rob us of our capacity for reflection or action.[27]

An involuntarist view like this underlies Hamlet's interrogation of Claudius through the staging of the dumb show in *Hamlet*.[28] It also underlies Iago's appalling view of Othello, though it must be said that it is never made clear in the play if Iago believes this because Othello is black, or because he is a Moor, or because Othello is insecure about Desdemona. But the gist of the involuntarist position can be simply put: we can rely on the regularity of the passions, our passive reactions, to predict the behaviour of agents experiencing passion.[29] This much is not terribly problematic; it is a tenet of any interpretive or hermeneutic 'science' that agents' behaviour will be to some degree predictable. This view would have been held by "sceptical humanists like Vives, Montaigne, and Shakespeare."[30] As J. Bate says, Shakespeare, as "a dramatist and hence a student of what Vives calls the 'human passions', was especially interested in the classical texts in which the extremes of emotion were explored."[31] And this view of the general, *ad hoc* predictability of motives, passions and behaviour would certainly have been held by anyone with even a modest grasp of Machiavelli, and the tradition of 'politic history.'

But the expression 'science' (used several sentences above) should give us pause. What is the relationship between a run-of-the-mill expression of

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[27] Redding *The Navigation of Feeling* 316. The theme of Redding's fascinating book is not involuntariness. Rather, he has two concerns. One is to find a framework for the study of the emotions that is acceptable to moderate anthropologists who are neither poststructuralists nor psychologists. The other is to show how a theory of what he calls 'emotives'—a category of agency that is the emotional equivalent of J. L. Austin's 'performatives'—can revivify the understanding of how we 'navigate' through emotional states, *and* thereby help to explain how political change comes about, without relying on a severe rationalism.

[28] I discuss *Hamlet* in detail in Chapter nine.

[29] Hobbes, discussed in Chapter four, comes closest to positing that politics can be reduced to political *science*.

[30] Bate *Shakespeare and Ovid* 7.

[31] Bate *Shakespeare and Ovid* 6. For Bate, this meant that Shakespeare would have been especially drawn to Ovid, as seems indeed to have been the case.

predictability about emotions and responses, and *science*? If the involuntarist position is correct, human action can be seen to fall into patterns, to have recognizable and 'cognizable' patterns and contours. Wittgenstein's remark on the body as a picture of soul—as a kind of photographic negative image, and therefore a *via negativa* into someone's 'heart,' motives and intentions, and plans—expresses a similar 'involuntarist' sentiment. However the involuntarist perspective can be countered by the more plausible view that predictability is possible only up to a certain point. The passions, on this more sensible view, are best seen as a kind of grey area: they are helpful and sometimes accurate barometers, as it were, of the intentions and states of mind of others, but we can in no sense use them to formulate mechanistic covering laws about human behaviour. Conversely, we are not as bereft of insight as is suggested by the Pascalian dictum that the 'heart has reasons the mind cannot fathom.' Some 'voluntarism' must be the case. That is, we do have a degree of agency with respect to our responses, but we are not machines, *pace* Descartes (or later, La Mettrie). That is, while we engage in machinations, we are not machines. A useful, moderate position on the explication and predictability of human agents' behaviour can be found in Shakespeare, Thucydides and Tacitus. For these three, the 'stability' of the passions are a great help. Indeed the passions are our only help, given the non-viability of providentialism, with respect to gleaning the goals and intentions of others. We need a politics of the passions for its explanatory power in times of tyranny (Tacitus), factional strife and civil war (Thucydides) and tragedy (Shakespeare). However, we cannot let our moderate success in using the passions (or the body, as Wittgenstein says in the quotation at the beginning of this section) deceive us into assuming that we can generate "psychological laws determine individual choices" based on the passions as "inevitable."[32] The passions are subject to the strictures of *ceteris paribis*—all other things being equal.

So far in this chapter we have discussed the nature of the passions, and looked at some of Shakespeare's characters who have achieved some success in

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[32] Woodruff *Thucydides* xxx-xxxi.

terms of controlling, managing or taming their passions—or rather, they have learned how difficult and daunting this 'taming' attempt can be. Sometimes the battles that go on in the minds of Shakespeare's characters lead to an increase in awareness; often the awareness is belated—or delayed to such an extent that misfortunes occur. When misunderstandings result in misfortune, we have arguably reached tragedy. As A. Poole says, "Tragedy focuses on the moments when most is at stake, when the risks and rewards are at their highest."[33] It is in giving us a sense of these risks and rewards that Shakespeare's strength lies. A good measure of the political import of his tragic drama lies in his delineation of the 'inner' process of the struggle with the passions. That is to say, Shakespeare contributes a vital and vivid sense of agent 'interiority' to literature, especially when the self works on shaping itself, attempting to direct, redirect or modify passions, or to instill or forestall a passion. Before returning to this subject of interiority, I wish to treat the themes of persuasion, involuntariness and manipulation—through the passions—of Othello by Iago.

The Compulsion of Rhetoric in *Othello*

> Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil/ Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?[34]
>
> Fears make devils of cherubims.[35]
>
> Instrumentality of reason and individual humors combine to deny free will to Machiavellian individuals; for their minds are limited to stimulating existing passions without being able to transcend or change them in kind. Together with their rapacious ambition, this lack of free will makes them incapable of virtue in the classical sense: rather than actualizing a potential for virtue through reason governing the passions, Machiavellian individuals develop a capacity for vice through mind enhancing the passions.[36]

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[33] Poole *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* 211.
[34] *Othello 5.2.298-9.*
[35] *Troilus and Cressida* 3.2.66.
[36] Fischer "Machiavelli's Theory of Foreign Politics" 254.

These quotations—in order: Othello's query; a sage remark by Troilus to Cressida on the power of fear to 'transform' the object of thought; and a political theorist's insights into the flaws of Machiavelli's political thought—help to shed light on whole of *Othello* but especially on Iago. M. Fischer's observation, which would be a good but partial description of Iago and which emphasizes the denial of agency in Machiavellian thought, is useful because it highlights a flawed and old-fashioned, Stoic and neo-Platonist way of viewing the relationship between reason and the passions. For Shakespeare, the Machiavellian Iago is clearly not intended to be a piece in the academic chess-game between free will and determinism; rather he is a kind of live option, a permanent possibility. So we can ignore some of Fischer's comments, while noting the rest. Assuming as I do that this captures Machiavelli's position, it is interesting that Machiavelli should here be associated with the trio of mind, vice and the passions. This is an accurate summary of Iago's concerns.

Now however, I wish to turn to another sense of necessity as compulsion, the political *use* to which the passions could be put. A key text here is *Hamlet* where these issues are central, but in *Othello* too the question of the threatening, 'viral' and compulsive potential of the passions is foregrounded in both a personal and a political sense. I have here in mind Iago's vicious Machiavellian manipulation of Othello. Here the question is one of 'persuasive necessity': namely, can we sweep someone's mind away, as it were? How can an unethical agent effect so radical a change in someone's passions that they change their attitude to their beloved spouse? Specifically, if someone is persuasive enough, can the great general and devoted husband Othello be made to feel that it is necessary (compulsive) for him to kill Desdemona?

First of all we ought to ask about Iago. What compels him to treat Othello so harshly? One entirely plausible but perhaps only initial treatment of Iago sees him treating Othello this way simply because he wants to mistreat him. That is, on this account, Iago just hates Othello. This is Emilia's explanation. She says about Iago and jealousy:

> But jealous souls not jealous will not be answered so:/ They are not ever jealous for the cause,/ But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster/ Begot upon itself, born on itself.[37]

His animosity is still utterly inexcusable but it is in a sense the result of nothing more complex than his preference for cruelty and destruction, a bedrock desire to commit harm. Iago simply has the instrumental goal of destroying Othello, and that is that. Here I want to tack in another slightly different direction, and compare Iago with Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*. Leontes, conversely, seems to suffer from jealousy alone, and his affliction seemed to be spurred on—caused—by nothing substantial whatsoever. Aristotle says in the *Poetics* that we best perceive an agent's *ethos* or ethical character when he or she makes an "unobvious decision."[38] But just because decisions are not obvious does not mean that they are not 'motivated.' The goal of successful interpretation and interpellation is to provide an account of motives. Leontes' jealous irruption seems utterly unjustified and unjust based on the evidence. Of course it could simply be an irrational irruption of a dark unconscious force that is so compellingly 'magnetic' as it were that it bends Leontes' beliefs like a flimsy and pliable piece of metal. If this is the case, then the passion of jealousy requires no genuine foothold, as it were, in reality—it simply irrupts. Leontes' passion brings itself into being, as it were. However, this seems fairly implausible. It is not that we are free of weird and unconscious promptings—some people experience the oddest things, after all—but on the whole, jealousy is linked to a belief, however irrational this belief may be. In this case, the belief is that Hermione is unfaithful to Leontes. Or maybe it bespeaks a subtle and hidden prior resentment on Leontes' part with respect to Polixenes. Obviously what makes this different from Othello's jealousy is that it is not prompted by a scheming and untrustworthy Machiavellian. What spurs jealousy into action can be utterly insignificant. But what it reveals—as in Leontes' case—is simply his deep attachment to Hermione. The *fact* of a passion reveals something about the value

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[37] *Othello* 3.4.159-62.
[38] Aristotle, quoted in Nuttall *Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale* 17.

and valuing of an agent. As A. P. Rossiter says, "jealousy is a measure of intense love."[39] This is by no means to excuse jealousy; rather, it is to provide an explanation for it. If Leontes' passion reveals either his jealousy towards Polixenes or his love for his queen or his insecurity about his queen's love for him, then what passions motivate Iago? The same 'explanatory' method can be provided for Iago as well as for Othello. Both Iago's and Othello's actions in the play can be explained but by no means justified by virtue of explaining the passions that move them and motivate their behaviour. If we examine Iago, we find that it is envy that drives Iago; and Iago's envy in turn ultimately brings about Othello's jealousy.

This instrumental account we have just been studying—where Iago 'simply' has a goal (envy) that moves him—is unsatisfactory. It is unsatisfactory because it rests on the idea that Iago is *merely* maximizing his preferences, as some economists say.[40] But by merely positing a passion as the provenance of behaviour, we fail to inquire into the factors that bring that passion itself into being. Since the factors that are 'upstream' of a passion *also matter*, it is always worth 'decomposing' a passion to see what motivates *it*. We need to inquire into the 'cognitive support' a passion has. Indeed, as J. Elster points out, often there is a complex nexus of others' passions and other interests, lying behind a particular passion. Elster writes

> Some emotions simply have to run their course once they are set in motion. Anger grows and then subsides, when it has "spent itself." Other emotions, such as fear or jealousy, have the more disturbing feature that they can escalate more or less indefinitely. Although initially without much cognitive support, the emotion feeds upon itself and builds to a frenzy.[41]

Elster then turns to a consideration of Othello, and though he neglects to mention Iago's role in generating Othello's jealousy, his account of Othello repays study. Elster continues:

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[39] Rossiter *Angel with Horns* 189.
[40] This is not to deny that preferences exist or to deny that they can ever be used to explain action.
[41] Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 411.

> As the behaviour of Othello shows, the consequences may be disastrous. In his case, the growing fury of his jealousy did not owe anything to changes in Desdemona's behaviour. Being in the grip of causal mechanisms that we do not fully understand, he simply wished to believe the worst.[42]

Without cleaving to an extreme cognitivist account of passion, we can still see that beliefs play a role in generating passions, just as passions play a role in generating beliefs. To understand Othello's 'affliction,' we need to understand Iago's desire to afflict Othello. So we must ask what motivates Iago to have these goals, and that means we must show how the passions work in the play—through Machiavellian manipulation. What are Iago's passions and beliefs—how, that is, can we explain his motives? A better account than the instrumental one will focus on the forces and factors that are 'upstream,' so to speak, of Iago's decisions and actions, that is, on his motives and how these be can reconstructed. This would, as I see it, be the approach taken by the 'politic historians.' The object here is to explain Iago by exposing his motives, the well-springs of his animosity. Initially this might mean demonstrating that Iago has goals, which are in turn motivated by his taking revenge for being passed over in terms of advancement, and possibly for the rumours that his wife Emilia has had an affair with Othello. (To reiterate, even if these were true, it would not excuse Iago's actions.) But even this explanation is insufficient or incomplete, because it is not enough to show that Iago has *some* goals. This would be to 'leave the world as we found it,' in Wittgenstein's evocative phrase. Ethically speaking, this quietism is highly suspect. It is well and good for philosophers to refuse to dirty their hands but in politics and in everyday human interaction, we *need* to have knowledge about the goals other agents have. It is not always enough to simply posit that they have *some* goals and leave it at that. It is a cynical realism indeed that merely posits that Iago has goals without also inquiring into the justification he has for them (and in this case exposing them as fraudulent) or without showing how his goals become implicated in action.

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[42] Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 411.

Othello is equally interesting if it is seen as a drama of predation with Iago acting on the basis of a particularly virulent envy.[43] The play then unfolds as an entertaining, if horrifying, warning about the ways in which the passions can be used against us—the very strength and seeming solidity of Othello's love (of which there can be little doubt) for Desdemona is turned against Othello, so that it becomes the fuel that fires Othello's irrational actions with respect to his wife. An important question is whether Iago's envy *is* envy, or whether it is jealousy (or both). Since I take jealousy to be a worry about the 'solidity' of what one possesses, and envy to be desire to possess something someone else possesses, Iago seems to suffer from both. Envy says both 'I want to have what you have,' and 'I want you *not* to have what you have.' Jealousy says 'I am not sure about the solidity of what I (seem to) have.' At any rate, these two complex, widespread and pernicious emotions—jealousy and envy—are closely linked and probably cannot be entirely separated. This kind of insight into the passions—a mixture of studious observation, or perhaps first-person experience—such as we have just provided in the preceding few sentences has no real name. Rather it belongs to what one might call 'cultural phenomenology.' (A. Johns calls it a kind of 'skilled observation.') *This* was what the early modern practitioner of 'politic history' and the political psychology of the passions did too. Clearly, however, it entailed the study of anything from other people's emotional repertoires, books, and works of drama to philosophical treatises and speeches by politicians and sermons by priests or ministers. But no matter what we call it, it was a widespread early modern cultural practice, not least because it helped enable agents to understand the Iago figure. As Johns says,

> early modern citizens also became accustomed to concealing and "counterfeiting" their own passions. Governing the passions was essential if one were not to be left vulnerable to observers being able to deploy skilled observation, and then employ what was called 'craft' to put their knowledge

[43] Race, too, and racial tension and racism can plausibly be adduced as factors in Iago's behaviour, but I will not treat these factors here, since the issues involved would require a full study of their own. The same goes for questions about a potential 'clash' of religious cultures and convictions.

> to evil ends. Craft, to be precise, was the perversion of prudence: it was knowledge of passions dedicated to immoral ends.[44]

This seems an apt description of the dangers posed by Iago. He clearly knows how the passions *can* work. (I add the caveat 'can' because the passions are immensely variable, even if they can at times be predicted with a certain amount of confidence.) As Iago himself says, "These Moors are changeable in their wills."[45] While this smacks of racism—or perhaps 'culturism'—it is of course undercut by the play itself. It is not undercut because Othello *really* is not changeable, for he is changeable. Rather it is undercut because everyone else in the play is more or less similarly changeable too. Iago himself is a veritable nest of passions, including of course envy and jealousy. Iago's only 'constancy,' such as it is, is that he is consistently envious and jealous. And Cassio and Roderigo are themselves not much more immune to the ravages of Iago's malicious manipulation than Othello; their situations are not tragic because their characters are not redeemed by Othello's noble and admirable qualities. I want to conclude this section with a brief discussion of realism and 'evil.'

The goal of the 'politic' understanding of the passions is to understand the processes by which some motives 'metamorphose' into pernicious actions. It is arguably possible to contrive a healthy skepticism and realism about how the passions function without condoning the likes of Iago, and without having recourse to Machiavellian cynicism.[46] The British philosopher and legal ethicist J. Glover[47] seems more realistic. Without being cynical, Glover's account is more realistic about the immoralities we are capable of than most other accounts. His account of the seemingly uncountable barbarous acts committed throughout the twentieth-century has the merit of an unrelenting honesty, and a willingness to posit a vivid and emotionally deep account of moral psychology, in contradistinction to the 'thin' accounts of agency and moral psychology favoured by most philosophers. Similarly, the American philosopher J. Kekes—in his

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[44] Johns *The Nature of the Book* 402.
[45] *Othello* 1.3.347.
[46] I discuss Machiavelli's cynicism in detail in Chapter five.
[47] Glover *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century.*

Facing Evil—holds the interesting view that we are not (*pace* the likes of Socrates, Christianity, Rousseau and Kant) inherently good beings, compromised only by a patina of corrupting influences. Rather, he holds that we are mixed 'all the way down.' Therefore, some aspects of our nature—certain passions—need to be developed, and others tamed and curbed. This is where morality and ethics play a role: "If we see evil as the natural human response to an inhospitable world, then we shall be disposed to look to morality as a device for curbing it."[48] What is fascinating here is that this notion of 'a response to an inhospitable world' seems to bear an uncanny resemblance to tragedy. But what is disturbing is that what makes the world 'inhospitable' is not sufficiently delineated or outlined by Kekes, other than to say 'evil'. My objection is not to the notion of evil, which certainly seems to name something actual in the world—*pace* pious readers of Rousseau and assorted social constructionists for whom 'evil' is merely a nominalist fiction—rather my objection is to the inexactness of Kekes' explanatory categories of the 'inhospitable' and 'evil.'[49] Above all it is essential that an acknowledgment of a richer, deeper and 'thicker' description of moral psychology focusing on the passions not concede much terrain to cynical or pessimistic realism. So, what deserves investigation is not just Kekes' 'morality' or a generalized 'tragic' sense of cosmic 'inhospitability' but crucially also the *political* understanding offered by the 'politic historians' with their interest in agents and actors, and above all kings, princes and rulers. This interest can be summed up by the following quotation from the neo-roman, republican James Harrington's *Oceana*:

> If the liberty of a man consist in the empire of his reason, the absence whereof would betray him into the bondage of the passions; then the liberty of a commonwealth consisteth in the empire of her laws, the absence of whereof would betray her into the lusts of tyrants.[50]

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[48] Kekes *Facing Evil* 143.
[49] Admittedly, 'evil' is a much-abused term, flung around and used to terminate rather than to initiate inquiry.
[50] Harrington, quoted in Scott *England's Troubles* 337.

Here Harrington links the notion of liberty with the freedom that comes from escaping the 'government' of the passions, and escaping being governed by the capriciousness of tyrants and tyrannical agents such as Iago.

Interiority and the Rhetoric of the Passions

> It is more difficult to avoid being governed than it is to govern others.
>
> —La Rochefoucauld

> Man is born to seek power but his condition makes him a slave to the power of others.
>
> —H. Morgenthau

As can be seen from this chapter's treatment of some of Shakespeare's characters, Shakespeare's politics shunts back and forth between the social (obligations, duties and normative constraints, sometimes upheld and sometimes violated) and the psychological (the self's "continuing process of choice and consequence"[51]), and the fluid relations between these. Importantly, a powerful sense of interiority is given to us, as we view Shakespeare's investigation of the minutiae of the self's interactions with the world of which it is inescapably a part. This is presented to us in Shakespeare as a world which invades and sometimes evades the self and the self's powers, and above all which includes other agents, other personae, other characters, all with their own motives and motivations, plans and goals. Interiority is at the very center of the plays. This is true too of those plays that are either 'straightforwardly' tragic—assuming that it is ever straightforward—such as *Hamlet* and *Othello*, and those that 'merely' contain tragic elements, like *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* or *Troilus and Cressida.* Shakespeare weaves interiority right into the language of the play, as well as presenting it at the level of action and performative. Reflecting on the use of the word 'intrinse' A. Poole writes, "'Intrinse' cunningly binds together the sense of

[51] Poole *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* 228.

inwardness (*intrinsecus*, inside, inwardly) and weaving (*intrico*), to produce the sense of 'woven together inwardly.'[52] As we have just seen, inwardness and interiority are precisely the means—by being 'carriers' of the affections and hence bonds—by which a polity and a family, or a friendship *and* the ideology of the feudal order, can be held together.

Speaking of the "motives which most deeply shape the plays," K. Gross writes that in "Shakespeare, rumour, slander, and curse turn out to be ways of creating a world, as well as ways of creating a character."[53] I wish to add to Gross' remarks the following list—lengthy but nonetheless incomplete—of important notions, crucial to an understanding of the "forms of life, the quickening powers"[54] that ground dramatic meaning and provide insight into the plays' worlds, and into the heart of tragic theatre's power. I have in mind here the likes of affect and effect, revealed and iterated intentions, motivational implicature, passionate action, reaction and 're-reaction,' and rhetoric and theatricality. What these notions have in common is that they involve the relationship not just between self and self, but also self and other. And they are all, in some way or another, a way of speaking of 'viruses of the mind'—the frightening ease by which we are affected by others and can affect other's states of mind, and so action. The concern here is with how we are designed to uncritically "soak up the culture" of other people. Our "brains are gullible, open to almost any suggestion, vulnerable to subversion, easy prey."[55]

Suggestibility and like notions are at the heart of tragedy; and they are the things that populate Shakespeare's plays, give the tragedies their political and ethical import, and "give Shakespeare's characters their distinct, cognitive life

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[52] Poole *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* 229.
[53] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 3-4. Appropriately enough, he footnotes S. Cavell, H. Berger, Jr., and A. D. Nuttall as critics who have made related inquiries.
[54] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 4.
[55] Dawkins "Viruses of the Mind" 13-14. Speaking of the ear, Gross says something uncannily similar: the "human ear a place of power and danger"; "the public world starts to look like a wilderness of uncircumcised, impure, and uncontrollable ears [...that] belong to listeners dangerously eager for knowledge, however uncertain" Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 35. Of course it goes without saying that Shakespeare's plays—with their tentacles or roots deeply sunk into culture—are themselves remarkably long-lived, successful and compelling 'viruses.'

[...and] psychological density."[56] This is also the subject of Gross' engrossing book; Gross writes of noise, and utterance as action, whereas I have in mind passion, affect, and emotion as action. That is to say, the concern here is rhetoric—charming, conjuring, persuading and compelling, and indeed forcing. Rhetoric can of course refer to selves working not only on themselves, to effect and to affect their own states of mind, but also working on the passions and hence the states of mind of others. Since to know is to be forewarned, and to be forewarned is to be forearmed, it is important to understand persuasion and the threat from fashioning or managing by others. And so we have to be realistic about the capacity of others to practice "a wounding energy" and to apply force through the "psychological weight" of rhetoric, indeed the gamut of "Machiavellian activity," to attain their ends.[57] Of course what is common to both Gross' account of Shakespeare and my own is the centrality of being forced, moved, of being *stirred*—the etymology of the word emotion. And central, too, are the notions of interiority and agency, though perhaps in a muted form. Interiority (and for that matter agency) is a notion that has been somewhat neglected in Shakespeare studies.[58] This is particularly so with respect to criticism and theory in the second half of the twentieth century when critics and theorists evinced a desire to avoid those things—self, interiority, agency and "depth of characterization," as Bate puts it[59]—that smack of the attributes for which Shakespeare was explicitly valorized in earlier generations.[60]

In his depiction of character, *ethos* in action, and self-directing selves, Shakespeare provides a remarkably multifaceted picture of self-management or what can be termed 'self-shaping.' This is the process whereby the reflexive agent examines his or her own motivational states and tries to modify them as far as it is possible (how far depends on the emotion or motive in question and the

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[56] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 210-11.
[57] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 4, 81. Rene Girard's notion of the destabilizing 'threat' of mimetic desire, it seems to me, is something that meshes nicely with Gross' notions of slander and noise as potential violations. See Girard *A Theatre of Envy.*
[58] But see Maus *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance.*
[59] Bate *Shakespeare and Ovid* 196.
[60] While this is not the place to argue the point, I believe that the link between agency or interiority and the likes of Bardolotry and elitism is spurious.

degree to which it has control over the mind, a question which is beyond the scope of the present work and which would involve inquiring into the perennially fascinating notion of *akrasia*). As R. Miola puts it, it is as though Shakespeare's characters have a self that is allowed "momentary reflection on the vast forces about to overtake it"[61] whether these forces come from within or without.

We can plausibly conjecture that Shakespeare had—understandably—ambivalent feelings about the power of the passions. The passions are what make us human, and make life worth living in a way it perhaps would not be to an emotionless 'block.'[62] This is particularly true of the highly socially inflected ones like shame and embarrassment, and love and hate (not to speak of such ostensibly paradoxical yet eminently 'graspable' compound emotions such as love/hate). Nonetheless, in holding that we can work on the passions, fashioning ourselves—and our future selves—perhaps using that intriguing capacity known as the 'will,'[63] it is not claimed that passions are simply entities of the mind that can be 'managed' as we please. Part of their fascination and the paradoxical nature of their being is that there is a solid implacability about them, a robustness that does not allow them to dismissed. So we can say not only that they ought not to be extirpated in the rigidly cold and mechanical way that the Stoics insisted on, because they are what make us fully human, but also that the most self-destructive of them *do* need to be curtailed, even though this is often futile and at best extremely difficult.

The passions, moreover, can be significant contributors to our worst impulses and undertakings, and so play a role when the question of realism comes up. By realism I mean a clear-eyed recognition of the viciousness and cruelty humans are capable of, and above all, a recognition that one of the most crucial distinctions we can make is that of differentiating between what 'humans ought to be like and what they are really like,' as Machiavelli put it in an

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[61] Miola *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy* 96. Miola is here discussing Macbeth, but I believe his insight can be applied to other characters.

[62] 'Block' was the preferred term of abuse directed at Stoics, perhaps for their inordinate woodenness or coldness—their 'apathetic' inclination.

[63] See the discussion in Charlton *Weakness of Will*, Ainslie *Breakdown of Will*, and the chapter on will in antiquity in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*.

infamous phrase cited by both Bacon and Hobbes among others, including Philip Sidney.[64] Of course, it is not this insightful yet fairly innocuous statement that makes Machiavelli a proponent of viciousness, or of unethical 'reason of state.' Nor does it distinguish him from the tragedians or Thucydides. Rather, it is his explicit endorsement of a non-ethical politics that makes him ethically dubious. Thucydides, Shakespeare, the practitioners of 'politic history'[65] and Tacitus—on my reading of them, at least— are not blind to 'grasping' opportunists and their ilk, but *rue* their cruelty. Machiavelli, conversely, urges opportunists to use whatever method works, including cruelty and deception. As Machiavelli puts it, "since men are wicked and will not keep faith with you, you need not keep faith with them."[66] And:

> A ruler [...] cannot conform to all those rules that men who are thought good are expected to respect, for he is often obliged to break his word, to be uncharitable, inhumane, and irreligious.[67]

To reiterate, I argue that Shakespeare adds a secondary and no less important aspect to his treatment of the vicissitudes of the passions of the mind. Namely, he shows us richly and vividly articulated agents with whom we are in some sympathy (Hamlet, Lear, Coriolanus, Macbeth) reacting to what we may term cynical or ethically suspect agents (Edmund, Volumnia, Iago, Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth) that attempt to 'invade' or force their will on the minds of others. Here it should perhaps be pointed out how interesting it is that the former have such a rich inner life, and the latter group, whose cruelty and viciousness in part sparks and deepens the inner life of the former group, should be weakly delineated in comparison. (But perhaps Macbeth, and especially Iago and Richard the Third, was an attempt to show aspects of the immoralist.) It is not as if Shakespeare merely calls them 'evil' and has done with it.[68] Rather, he displays

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[64] See also my discussion of realism in footnote 27, Introduction. Machiavelli is echoing a similar comment by Aristotle.
[65] For 'politic history' see, in particular, Chapter seven.
[66] Machiavelli *The Prince* chapter 18.
[67] Machiavelli *The Prince* chapter 18.
[68] Going against the grain of contemporary critical categories, H Berger, Jr. reverts—not unsuccessfully—to the vocabulary of 'evil' in discussing *Macbeth*. See the relevant chapters in *Making Trifles of Terrors*.

their amorality or immorality but allows his audience to apply their own terms of opprobrium. While the so-called unethical characters are not as deeply, crisply or satisfyingly outlined as the so-called heroes, they are vital to the 'investigation' I am claiming Shakespeare is undertaking. Shakespeare focuses our attention directly on the question of how an ethical polity can be formed, let alone survive, when there is a high probability of morally malignant agents in the offing—which is certainly the case in Jacobean tragedy. These figures are hardly the stuff of tragedy; they are not the great and noble minds 'overthrown' by misjudgement or error, with which we have considerable sympathy.[69] But they represent a direct challenge to the health of the polity, and therefore need to be understood. The passions figure prominently in accounts of why and how suffering and calamity occurred. For example, Thucydides applies the diagnostic tool of the passions. He uses *fear* to explain the originating condition of the Peloponnesian war, and *envy* to explain the horrors of the Corcyrean revolt. Thus does he provide accounts of the "causes and motives"[70] of crucial events. As Thucydides says, it was Spartan fear of Athens that first provoked them, compelled them to take action. But it is not just fear that brings about war (that "harsh teacher"[71]), for other passions are evident too. Regarding Corcyra, he writes

> In the confusion into which life was now thrown in the cities, human nature, always rebelling against the law and now its master, gladly showed itself ungoverned in passion, above respect for justice, and the enemy of all superiority; since revenge would not have been set above religion, and gain above justice, had it not been for the fatal power of envy.[72]

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[69] As Nehamas reminds us, "tragedy [...] glorified the inevitably doomed efforts of all great individuals to tame and use for human purposes those aspects of the world that are totally indifferent to our fate and to which we are of no account." Nehamas *The Art of Living* 134. This talk of 'taming' and 'using' aspects of the world should resonate in the minds of those interested in seeing the passions as (akin to) these indifferent aspects.

[70] Macleod "Thucydides and Tragedy" 146.

[71] Hobbes has this as "violent master." *Hobbes's Thucydides* 222.

[72] Thucydides *History* 3.84.1-2. For 'fear' see 1.88.6. There has been debate for centuries about Thucydides' famous invocation of fear. Most scholars however are untroubled by the idea that Spartan fear (of the growth of Athenian power) is the main cause of the war. My point about the passions—e.g., fear, envy and ambition—is unaffected by these disputes. I hold not that Thucydides is necessarily right all the time, but that he had recourse to the passions to explain behaviour. (Incidentally, Thucydides himself mentions three passions: 'fear, honour, and interest.' To this trio, some scholars also add 'greed and envy.' See the discussion in Bagby "Thucydidean Realism" 175.)

The passions are the cause of discord. Realism is the attitude we must adopt towards other people, insofar as they are agents subject to the whim of passions, as indeed all humans are. In the Greek world, temperance was a much-admired virtue and *pleonexia* (overreaching, grasping, 'tyrannical' desiring or excessive 'wanting') was deplored—just as it was in Shakespeare, as we have seen. But as we want to understand *pleonexia*, and as we have reason to want to distinguish it and a host of other passions so as to mitigate their power, we must inquire into the nature of the passions.

Rhetoric can be, as Clausewitz said of war, an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our wishes. This is nicely paralleled by a sentence from Hobbes' translation of Thucydides: "For in peace and prosperity [...] men are better minded, because they be not plunged into necessity of doing any thing against their will."[73] At any rate, what Clausewitz and Hobbes are insisting on here is the idea that a realistic understanding of the rhetoric of the passions is in large measure an understanding of violence, force, necessity and compulsion by and of the passions. The passions as understood by the 'politic historians' were a kind of shorthand for the process of becoming 'better minded'—more stable and constant with respect to the passions, but crucially also in terms of understanding the minds of others, and the minds of princes. Gross raises this point, somewhat obliquely, when he writes that "it is within or behind the king's ear that all secrets are to be adjudicated—lodged within the ideologically privileged space of *arcana imperii*, not scannable by ordinary minds or courts."[74] One wants to both agree and disagree with this statement. Gross' comment about 'behind the ear' is somewhat flippant, as what matters is hardly his aural cavity or cranium or what have you; what matters are the king's decisions, intentions, ideology and the like—and here we are talking about 'mind.' The notion of understanding the

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[73] Hobbes *Hobbes's Thucydides* 222.

[74] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 81. Tacitus' phrase *arcana imperii* is probably first introduced into English thought by Henry Savile (Philip Sidney's friend and traveling companion) in his translation of 1591 translation of Tacitus' *Histories*. In his footnote, Savile explains that by the phrase Tacitus meant "'the secret truths or appearances in affairs of estate; for [adds Savile] the mass of the people is guided and governed more by ceremonies and shows than matter in substance,'" Savile, quoted in Worden *The Sound of Virtue* 257.

'mental world' of the prince or ruler is an important theme in early modern, especially Tacitean, analytical thought, so I want to linger briefly over this theme.

One agrees with Gross' statement because it is eminently sensible to acknowledge the difficulties involved in gleaning the intentions of others, at the best of times, let alone the intentions and plans, and so on, of an often unseen king. Hence, in part, the emphasis on observation and seeing, vision and eyes, especially in *Hamlet*. As Duncan famously says, "There's no art/ To find the mind's construction in the face."[75] This is paralleled by a comment made by Richard the Third (after Gloucester has been presented with the head of Hastings), after he has been 'machiavelled':

> I took him for the plainest harmless creature/ That breathed upon the earth, a Christian,/ Made him my book wherein my soul recorded/ The history of all her secret thoughts./ So smooth he daubed his vice with show of virtue.[76]

However—to return to the question of whether one should agree or disagree with Gross about minds containing 'secrets' that are not 'scannable'—one disagrees if Gross' comment is taken to mean that it is impossible in principle to know the contents (or at least the motives for that content) of others' minds. If Gross holds this view, one can counter with the remark that it is precisely Shakespearean and other 'politic historical' thought, and especially tragedy, that offers itself as a kind of scanning device, a means of at least partially reconstructing and grasping the motives, decision-making procedures, protocols of obfuscation and rhetoric of compulsion of kings, queens, rulers, princes and indeed other agents. One might not know the mind from the face but if one knows the passion *on* the face, one will know at least something about the mind. As Othello knows, there is no substitute for careful observation: "You shall observe him,/ And his own courses will denote him," as he says to Lodovico.[77]

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[75] *Macbeth* 1.4.12-13. Incidentally, the face was the object of a considerable body of early modern painting, drawing and general philosophical inquiry, all of which focused on the face as the site of internal expressions, volitions and emotion. The eyes were an index, and the keys, "to the secret motions of the soul," writes Harrison; see P. Harrison "Reading the passions" 58. See also the discussion in Allen "Painting the passions."

[76] *Richard III* 3.5.24-28.

[77] *Othello* 4.1.278-79.

Of course, sometimes even close observation yields no information about other agents. This is because agents' states of mind—their passions and their ostensible beliefs—can be feigned, sometimes very successfully. When Hamlet wishes his thoughts, and hence his possible plans, to be opaque to Claudius and the rest of the court, he hides them by adopting the 'antic disposition,' which allows him to seem unstable and therefore probably innocuous. An interesting variation on this is when Cleopatra threatens to pretend to be more foolish than she is: "I'll seem the fool I'm not."[78]Agents can dissemble—none more persuasively than those agents who also deceive themselves—though whether dissembling is successful will depend on an enormous host of factors. So to understand the wishes, intentions, beliefs and desires of others, the passions were probably not necessary and usually not sufficient, but they were helpful. It is not necessary to wish for the utopian situation—being 'God's spies'—that Lear speaks of when he imagines himself and Cordelia grasping the 'hidden workings of the world':

> "So we'll [...] Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too-/ Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out-/ And take upon's the mystery of things/ As if we were God's spies."[79]

The position advanced in this dissertation—that agents can be understood via the 'motions' (passions) that move them, or affect them—is not incontrovertible, but I hope it is convincing. However, the view that an understanding of the 'passions of the mind'—to take the title of Thomas Wright's early seventeenth century work—will yield a science or a *technē* with comprehensive predictive and explanatory power is a view we should seek to query. Two of the most interesting—both nearly unsurpassed in terms of their long-lasting impact and their influence—early modern attempts to use the passions to ground a science, proto-science or hermeneutics of socio-political

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[78] *Antony and Cleopatra* 1.1.44. This is of course spoken as a feigned aside only, because Antony is present within earshot. Indeed he is the addressee, not the Messenger. The taunting Cleopatra wants to make Antony more *akratic* (weak-willed) than he already is, by working on his passions. This play is just one of several that deserves more attention than I have been able to give it here.
[79] *King Lear* 5.3.11-17.

explanation in the passions are Hobbes' and Machiavelli's.[80] Let us therefore turn to a discussion of these figures and Stoicism.

[80] Of course this is not to imply that Hobbes and Machiavelli had the same goals. Hobbes sought a social *science* of peace and peaceable relations; Machiavelli was a pragmatist, open to using any means, scientific or not—unethical or not.

Chapter four:
Teaching the Passions: Shakespeare's Predecessors

> The social sciences did not exist as an independent field of inquiry in the ancient world; they were the province of historians, philosophers, and even pets. For anthropology we look to Homer, Herodotus, and Tacitus' *Germania*; for social analysis, the satirists and the comic poets; for political theory Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero; and for political science Thucydides and Tacitus. Ancient psychology began when Greek poets created the splendid characters—Oedipus, Electra, Medea, Penelope, Achilles—who have long been analyzed and psychoanalyzed for the light they shed on the human condition.[1]

> Men have and have had always the same passions.
>
> —Machiavelli

> And many and heinous things happened in the cities through this sedition, which though they have been before, and shall be ever as long as human nature is the same, yet they are more calm, and of different kinds according to the several conjectures. For in peace and prosperity [...] men are better minded, because they be not plunged into necessity of doing any thing against their will. But war [...] is a most violent master, and conformeth most men's passions to the present occasion.
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> —Hobbes' Thucydides[2]

Shakespeare's Predecessors

The discovery of a myriad of important classical works—works in the genres of history, political thought, philosophy, drama, poetry and biography, and so on—in the Renaissance was a spur to tremendous research and fruitful imitation, reconstruction and inspiration. Plato and Aristotle did not, in the early modern period, loom as large as they perhaps do now. Rather, apart from the Church Fathers, the ever-influential Augustine and assorted minor theologians, it

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[1] Mellor *Tacitus* 68-9.
[2] Hobbes *Hobbes' Thucydides* 222.

was Roman (including Stoic) thinkers who were the most studied in early modern England.[3] The Stoics were a significant part of the humanist curriculum, and of course so were a host of other thinkers who were influenced by Stoicism but who either proclaimed themselves hostile to Stoicism (Plutarch) or else had an ambiguous relationship to Stoicism (Cicero). It is illuminating to inquire into some of the approaches to the passions—and the question of their 'manageability'—adopted by Shakespeare's philosophical contemporaries and their predecessors, and by other early modern thinkers and writers. In this chapter, I examine the Stoics and the neostoic critique of Stoicism, as well as Hobbes on politics and the passions.[4]

Most philosophers in the early modern period attempted to geometrize the mind.[5] This is what Descartes and Spinoza do, namely follow the Stoic example and try to show that when properly understood the passions are a grievous impediment to neither the rational order of the mind nor the rational order of the universe. When understood, the passions just dissolve away, maintains Spinoza. On the Stoic or quasi-Stoic account, the passions are a kind of mistaken judgement. Descartes' contemporary Hobbes placed the passions at the center not of his philosophy but of his political teachings, though the two are related. Hobbes enlisted the passions in his founding of modern political *science*,

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[3] A good picture of the early modern English curriculum in provided in the relevant chapters in Skinner *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*.

[4] The historians Tacitus and Thucydides are notably absent from this group, but this is not to suggest that they are not important to Shakespeare either as influences or as precursors who think along similar lines. Tacitus had little to say about the passions explicitly, though of course he is an expert on lies, dissimulation and self-deception, not to mention cruelty and suspicion. I treat Tacitus briefly in this chapter, and in subsequent chapters, especially Chapter eight; he is also lurking in the background whenever I discuss neostoicism and early modern English political thought in the 'politic historians.' My treatment of Thucydides is spread throughout this work, especially in the Introduction, in Chapter one, the first section of Chapter nine, and in the present chapter. Neither Thucydides' nor Tacitus' works are overtly theoretical. Their theoretical commitments—and their own political views—are not stated explicitly and have to be inferred. The difficulties surrounding their views have been the cause of much confusion over the centuries. (Tacitus has been seen as a republican and—somewhat implausibly—as a ruthless cynic eager to support tyrants. Thucydides has been enlisted by Hobbes as an anti-democrat, pro-monarchist but is regarded by others as a pro-Periclean democrat.) Montaigne too is missing; his work is too complex and singular to treat in this dissertation.

[5] I will not attempt a survey. See the book length treatment of the preeminent seventeenth century philosophers (Hobbes, Descartes, Malebranche, and Spinoza) by S. James, *Passion and Action*. Hobbes' views on the passions are discussed in Martinich *A Hobbes Dictionary* 103-105.

emphasizing the naturalistic reduction of passions to the desire for survival, and ultimately to the mere motion of bodies. Not every philosopher was as reductively inclined and as enthralled by Galilean methods as Hobbes (who on his travels met the Italian scientist).[6] Some no doubt heeded the words Oedipus was compelled to hear from Creon: "Do not expect to have command of everything."[7] Of course, just because Sophocles is right it does not mean that we cannot have control of *something*; the goal of the moderate realist is to understand when, where and why Creon's utterance is applicable, and not to be frozen into pessimistic immobility upon learning that there is much we cannot have command over. However, the moderate realist must take care not to bend too far the other way, lest he or she come to resemble Machiavelli who celebrates every passion in the passionate pursuit of every kind of self-interested end. Here it is worth noting a contrast between two related, but distinct maxims by La Rochefoucauld on the passions. The two maxims (102 and 103) are: "The head is always the dupe of the heart" and "It is not all who know their heads who know their hearts."[8] The point is that the first maxim does not allow exceptions ("always"), whereas the second is more nuanced ("not all"). So it is with the passions: with passions, we are in the realm of the 'not all,' or the 'tragic *must*.'[9] That is, we are in the realm of Thucydidean necessity *qua* compulsion, and not the Galilean necessity of physical laws of, say, meteorology.

I have already discoursed at length about the passions, but let me add a point made by a recent Shakespearean editor and critic. In a footnote to his edition of *Titus Andronicus* that we have already glanced at, J. Bate says that the *passion*, meaning "outbursts of feeling [is] a new sense of the word that emerged around 1580-90."[10] This is interesting but uncertain. The Latin *passio*, well-known in earlier decades and centuries, has always carried with it the semantic

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[6] Or Spinoza, who proposed to examine "human passions [humanos affectus] like love, hate, anger, envy, pride, pity and the other feelings that agitate the mind, not as vices of human natures but as properties which belong to it in the same way as heat, cold, storm, thunder and the like belong to the nature of the atmosphere." Spinoza, quoted in da Fonseca *Beliefs in Action* 90-91.
[7] Sophocles *Oedipus* 1522.
[8] La Rochefoucauld *Maxims* 17.
[9] See the brief discussion of this 'must' at the beginning of Chapter nine.
[10] Bate *Titus Andronicus* 201.

sense of 'feeling,' as has the original Greek root word *pathē*. (Perhaps Bate means the new verb 'passionate' which he also refers to later in the book.[11]) What is more likely—and more germane to the present dissertation—is Bate's reminder that the notion of the passions as central to *transformations* of ('metamorphoses,' in the Ovidean sense) the human agent. Shakespeare is, as I have argued throughout, interested in the passions for political reasons.

Stoicism and neostoicism[12]

> For the Stoics, reason was of the utmost importance, protecting the individual against the passions and against misfortune.[13]

> but, Stoique, where (in the vast world)/ Doth that man breathe, that can so much command/ His bloud, and his affection?
> —Jonson, *Every Man out of his Humour*

There is a long-standing tradition of which Stoicism is but one 'tributary,' as it were, in which the passions are identified with capriciousness and inconstancy and represented as something alien to the healthy mind that must be excised because the passions "will never succumb to reason."[14] Stoicism encompasses a broad variety of views but all Stoics share the view that passions or emotions affect our minds and cloud our reason to such an extent that decisions taken when under the influence of passions are irrational and flawed.[15]

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[11] Bate *Titus Andronicus* 206.

[12] My account differs from that of H. Haydn, who sees neostoicism as a theological movement. Haydn *The Counter-Renaissance* 84. There are three points to make: what Haydn says is perhaps true of Lipsius; it is admittedly hard to find an out-and-out secular-minded, atheist thinker in early modern Europe (Raleigh, Marlowe and Hobbes were unusual); and neostoicism is hardly a 'movement.' I hold, however, that neostoicism is not theological, at least not in the sense of offering providentialist accounts. And emphatically not in terms of realism—neostoics are not naïve about the inherent 'goodness' of agents (equally, however, they may not necessarily be as cynical as Machiavelli).

[13] Dollimore *Death, Desire and Loss* 332.

[14] Seneca, quoted in Sorabji *Emotion and Peace of Mind* 73.

[15] Dollimore *Death, Desire and Loss* assimilates desire to passion/emotion. This makes for an exciting and wide-ranging brand of intellectual history but it does not seem to me to be the right thing to do. The Western tradition has usually, and I believe correctly, distinguished between desires and passions or emotions, between desires and feelings, and between feelings and passions or emotions.

The Stoic position is that freedom is best achieved by the active suppression of those states of minds (passions) that perturb or disturb tranquility. Freedom simply is, for the Stoics, freedom from emotion (*apatheia*). Sir William Drake, a Stuart nobleman whose copious reading notes have survived, wrote along Stoic lines when he wrote, "Most of the disorders of our lives proceed from the darkness of our understanding or from the command or sway that our passions have over our reason."[16]

It is perhaps prudent to follow custom, and Drake's admonition, and to regard the passions skeptically and to eye them suspiciously. Many have done so—and Stoicism has indeed been influential in this respect. But Stoicism's very implausibility, and failure to provide a realistic account of the passions and the motives of agents, has resulted in other, less appealing and indeed quite ethically suspect doctrines (such as *raison d'état*) stepping into the breach. Similarly, by virtue of reason ignoring rhetoric—to paint with broad strokes a picture that is compellingly detailed by Q. Skinner vis-à-vis Hobbes[17]—rhetoric has made inroads with those who find reason, or rational accounts, too austere and removed from the real world of imperfect agents. (Plato's late attempt to rework his theory of the soul so as to distinguish the problematic 'appetitive' part from the useful 'spirited' aspect was exactly that: late.)

Since the valorization of emotion and sentiment in various European Romantic movements, Stoicism has fallen on lean times. Passion and emotion have been regarded more favourably, and they figured prominently in, for example, the works of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers. It is not yet clear that the current, late twentieth/early twentieth-century upsurge in interest in the emotions across many disciplines has solved very many of the vexing questions about the passions, or moved beyond all of the strictures of the Stoic legacy. In recent decades—at least within the culture of academic Western philosophy—the

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[16] Drake, quoted in Sharpe *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* 212. See the brief discussion of Drake in Chapter seven. Similar views can be found to permeate every level of thought—political, philosophical and psychological—in early modern Europe. Burton's *Anatomy* is, for example, filled with statements like the following: "we give too much way to our passions." Burton *Anatomy of Melancholy* 109.

[17] Skinner *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*.

emotions have come to be regarded as complex patterns of judgement that reveal saliencies of value. This is unobjectionable, even valuable; but in becoming valued members of the cognitive family, the emotions have become cognitive.[18] In recent and contemporary philosophy, the emotions have been treated as features of the mind that entail beliefs or judgements, and it is held that this cognitive aspect of the emotions gives them their character.[19] As one contemporary Anglo-American philosopher eloquently puts it,

> If they [emotions] are also a function of our *value*-judgements on the world as we believe it to be, then they will further respond (and be responsible) to the development of our moral and aesthetic sensitivity. Thus, far from being alien and impervious to Reason, and to be shunned in preference to it, emotions are tractable to insight and susceptible to revision and refinement in its wake because they are continuous with cognitive assent and dissent.[20]

Revising earlier non-cognitivist views of the passions has been important. The philosopher just quoted does this, too, in a fair-minded and innocuous way. But some have made the passions or emotions well-nigh identical with cognitive assent or dissent. Others have reacted against aspects of the domestication of the passions, arguing that we should perhaps countenance the view that the passions—in some manifestations—are not necessarily so easily assimilated to reason, and are darker, more opaque and threatening to reasonable action than some cognitivists have acknowledged. Finally, there have arisen suspicions that the idea that 'learning through the passions'—as when we turn to fiction, and to

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[18] I have not attempted to do more than scratch the surface of a vast debate about the nature of the emotions. Moreover, as Elster points out, it is not even clear that there is an agreement on the nature of the phenomena to be explained: "The lack of agreement about what emotions are is paralleled by lack of agreement on what emotions there are." Elster *Alchemies of the Mind* 241. That said, cognitivism is widespread.

[19] In contemporary philosophy and cognitive science, where the history of philosophy is sometimes treated with disdain (cf. Quine's comment to the effect that 'there is the history of philosophy and then there is philosophy'), the similarity of standard, current views of the emotions to Stoic views sometimes go unnoticed. There are however considerable differences. I mean only to point out that many Stoics articulate rigorous and complex defenses of 'judgement-based' views of the emotions. See Hankinson; and for a hostile but eloquent critique of the (alleged) rationalist bias of contemporary philosophy, see Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life*.

[20] Pugmire *Rediscovering Emotion* 9.

tragedies, to learn about the passions and to expand our moral and political[21] imagination—cannot simply be a matter of acquiring a number of new beliefs, as seems to be required by the cognitivists. One can counter that judgementalism/cognitivism itself provides a skewed vision of what the passions or emotions are. The cognitive account that emotions are, or entail, beliefs or judgements, is flawed because it implies that "learning emotionally"—through reading or attending a play—is "essentially the acquisition of beliefs."[22] As a contemporary philosopher has observed, this seems to fail to do justice to what actually happens. For during the process of reading, or the experience of attending a play, the learning involved in each of these "seems to be emotionally educational, rather than just the eventual acquisition of beliefs."[23] Here J. Robinson has articulated a telling critique of cognitivism, at least in its least moderate incarnation. It is not a position held only by current philosophers and ancient Stoics, as can be seen from the use of a similar treatment of emotions as cognitive by R. Tuck, a leading historian of early modern thought.

As Tuck explains in the preface to his survey of early modern politics and philosophy, one of the concerns of intellectual historians of early modern thought is to outline the rise and spread of *raison d'état* thinking, buttressed by an underlying skeptical Stoicism—which I am calling 'Tacitean neostoicism'—as vital pieces of a radicalized, Tacitean, post-Ciceronian style of reasoning. Tuck similarly sees this style of reasoning as a common humanist culture spreading "across Western Europe at the end of the sixteenth-century in which skepticism, Stoicism and *raison d'état* went together."[24] As we will see shortly, the passions are central to this new movement, which rejected the tenets of Cicero and traditional (Christian, providential) humanism, both of which were 'convicted' largely for postulating the inherent goodness of agents. *Reason of state* thinking was especially good at demolishing this implausible view. Traditional humanism,

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[21] For discussions of narrative and the political imagination, see the many important essays in Horton and Baumeister *Literature and the Political Imagination.*
[22] Robinson "L'Éducation Sentimentale" 34.
[23] Robinson "L'Éducation Sentimentale" 34.
[24] Tuck *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651* xiii. Machiavelli is an important precursor to this kind of political thought.

therefore, ironically paved the way for the fascination with unscrupulous Machiavellians by being laughably unrealistic. Cynicism will always appear appealing simply by virtue of being less blatantly naïve about political realism's themes of security and power than its competitors. Cynical realism will have an easier time of demonstrating its relevance because it is not committed—as Stoicism was believed to be—to an unrealistic optimism about 'taming the passions.' Charting the rise of *raison d'état* thinking out of earlier movements of thought, Tuck stresses that one of the important links was the "connexion" between skepticism and Stoicism "often neglected by historians." As Tuck explains,

> The connexion arose because Renaissance skepticism [...] was not fundamentally an *epistemological* position, but rather a *psychological* one: the skeptic [...] believed that he found [wisdom] in the complete elimination from his mind of the beliefs which cause harm [...]. The Stoic has the same kind of ambition, though he believed that the same self-protective wisdom was to be found in the elimination of *passion* and desire rather than in belief. The close kinship between the two attitudes is clear enough, particularly as it is reasonable to suppose that there is a cognitive element in most emotions, and that passion can in the end only be controlled or eliminated by the control of belief.[25]

The importance of self-control and the concomitant tempering or taming of the passions was a central and recurring concern in this period. Tuck confesses that it was this theme of "self-control" that led him to call his book *Philosophy and Government*, "since the government not just of a state but of a self is one of [his] principal subjects."[26] Moreover, he continues, "the political analogue of this kind of self-discipline was naturally going to be a kind of *raison d'état* theory."[27] The difference between Stoicism and neostoicism, in short, lies in the attitude towards the passions. Instead of hostility, the neostoics urge the 'cultivation' of the passions.

> With Lipsius, we are the roots of what was to be a recurring theme throughout the seventeenth century: that wisdom comes not through the

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[25] Tuck *Philosophy and Government* xiii.
[26] Tuck *Philosophy and Government* xiv.
[27] Tuck *Philosophy and Government* xiv.

> repression of emotion by reason, but through the cultivation of helpful passions, like plants in a garden.[28]

This 'horticultural' sense just outlined represents a major shift in attitude to the passions, away from Stoicism's antipathy—anti-*pathē*.

The neostoic or 'tragic' acceptance of the passions opened up the possibility of using the passions, cultivating the passions of oneself (for example, Hamlet's attempt to 'enrage' himself enough to act) and of others (for example, Richard the Third's wooing of Anne and general attempt to manage or shape his world; Lady Macbeth's helping to swing Macbeth into murderous action; Marcus trying to calm Titus[29]; and Iago's attempt to induce jealousy in Othello). Interestingly, theatricality *and* history were both vital to Lipsian neostoicism, as the following quotation reveals:

> Lipsius had adopted, like Machiavelli and Muret before him—or inspired by them—Polybius' notion of the *similitude temporum*, the idea that certain ages are similar to others; this led him to see imperial Rome as a 'simile' of his own age. This he expresses clearly in his commentary on Tacitus: *velut theatrum hodiernae vitae*, "a theatrical representation of the life of today, as it were."[30]

Neostoicism's acute sense of tragic contingency—how how practical wisdom is at risk to the chance and fortune that the passions carry in their wake—can be liberating, and ethically important. The complexity of the social world could be reduced and hence explained. This was effected not by the reduction of all emotions to either attraction or aversion as in Hobbes (although yoked to Hobbes' insights, this approach has its merits), but through the emphasis on understanding rhetoric, traditionally intimately linked to the passions since Aristotle. The neostoic, or Lipsius-led Tacitean attack on conventional humanism, and the neostoic revision of Stoicism, was an acknowledgement of the importance (and ineliminability) of the passions. But

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[28] Tuck *Philosophy and Government* 54.
[29] It is worth quoting Marcus in full: "O calm thee, gentle lord, although I know/ There is enough written upon this earth/ To stir a mutiny in the mildest of thoughts/ And arm the minds of infants to exclaims." *Titus Andronicus* 4.1.83-6.
[30] Oestreich *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* 61.

with this acknowledgement came the need to be prepared for the threat posed by the persuasion and suasion of other agents. We are not, nor can we be, as self-sufficient as Plato urged.[31] Nor can we assume that the Stoics are right about our capacity to completely steel ourselves against the passions. (As we shall see, Machiavelli celebrates this weakness.) Finally we cannot expect the humanist, providential account to present a viable, let alone thriving, option.

Stoicism proper

> It has often been asked whether it is better to have moderate passions or no passions. We Stoics expel them, whereas the Peripatetics temper them. I do not see how any moderate condition of a disease could be healthy or useful.[32]

At any rate, the Stoic attack on the emotions culminates in an exhortation to become as indifferent as possible to the goods of the world, and thereby to the pains and pangs of contingency and fortune 'that flesh is heir to.' One ought to render oneself immune. For Seneca, the goal is not even to "moderate" the passions; rather, one must "abolish the passions."[33] In early modern England, Stoicism was known and somewhat popular in some learned circles. Of course it was to some extent difficult to distinguish from neostoicism, which I take to be a more moderate, 'passion-friendly' position.[34] Under James' rule, we can find an example of a Renaissance Stoic who seems almost to echo Seneca: Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland. The Earl wrote:

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[31] See the discussion of self-sufficiency vs. tragedy in Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness*.
[32] Seneca, quoted in Irwin *Classical Philosophy* 342.
[33] Seneca, quoted in Dollimore *Death, Desire and Loss* 31.
[34] I have refrained from trying to define the term neostoicism, even though I have persisted in using it. Writers use it in many distinct ways. What is common to those who use the term is an interest in the passions and in constancy: the passions are interesting for some of the reasons discussed in this thesis; and the latter, constancy, is interesting because of its link to the capacity to resist the passions and to be able to resist the 'sway' of others. Neostoicism in the early modern period was generally espoused by figures who sought to strengthen the ability to resist corruption by tyrants (Tacitism) and by others ('politic historians'), warning us about the dangers of having our mental states shaped, fashioned or managed. The key distinction between Stoicism proper and neostoicism however is probably that neostoics are not as hostile to the passions as Stoics. The account of neostoicism given by M. Nussbaum in *Upheavals of Thought* is slightly different than my account (see my Chapter eight), as is G. Aggeler's account in *Nobler in the Mind.*

> A well-fashioned mind I call it [...] when it is free from perturbations and unseemly affections...for the very means to quit ourselves of these ugly perturbations are to esteem nothing of the world at an over-value, for so shall we sorrow ever....[35]

This Stoic *via negativa* to tranquility and peace of mind is too negative: it effaces the very virtue of emotions, which is to make us care about people and situations. (Of course that is precisely the point: caring is a burden of sorts; Stoics recommend lessening this burden by lessening the caring.) Stoics aver that since the world cannot be changed—or only moderately changed—one should therefore strive to modify oneself, revising one's 'desire scheme':

> Do not ask things to happen as you wish, but wish them to happen as they do happen, and your life shall go smoothly.[36]

This *seems* clear and straightforward. However, in spite of the general Stoic 'optimism' about the malleability of the passions, or more specifically the judgements that contribute to the passions ("Death is nothing terrible, [...] the terror lies in our own judgement about death, that death is terrible"[37]), it is not clear where the passions belong on the continuum that runs from actions we are responsible for as agents to 'actions' that we must 'passively' experience as 'patients.' The issue is carefully skirted in Epictetus' opening statement in the *Handbook*:

> Some things are up to us and others are not. Up to us are opinion, impulse, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever is our own action. Not up to us are body, property, reputation, office, and, in a word, whatever is not our own action.[38]

Epictetus is by no means clear on the location of the passions: do they belong to opinion, and impulse or desire, or to the body?[39] The standard Stoic position is

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[35] James *Society, Politics and Culture* 90.
[36] This is from his *Handbook* in Epictetus *The Discourses* 290.
[37] Epictetus *The Discourses* 289.
[38] Epictetus *The Discourses* 287.
[39] Of course unanimity on this difficult issue has not been achieved in the intervening centuries, despite the interest in the passions or emotions evinced by many philosophers (Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant and Schopenhauer, to name but the most well-known). Spinoza

that they are an aggregate of judgements—and so cognitive—and bodily reactions. But this view does not differ significantly from Plato's, or Aristotle's, or Epicurean views, for they too hold more or less cognitive or judgemental views. What matters is where the line of agency and control is drawn, *and* how these bodily reactions or physiological processes are to be construed. As M. Cavell says, "A full-blown theory of the emotions would have to articulate [...] carefully the ways in which emotions are and are not like actions."[40] At any rate, no-one is happy with the Stoic position, which is distinctly morbid[41] in its denial of what most people have regarded as essentially normal 'partiality' or 'particularity' (by which I mean things like loving a son or daughter or father or spouse). In short, in advocating that we consider the *pathē* as pathological, Stoic therapy is a cure that threatens to become worse than the affliction itself: in Eramus' words, the Stoic goal of approximating the sage who has excised emotions is folly:

> Yet in doing so he leaves him no man at all but rather a new kind of god, or demiurgos, who never existed and will never emerge. Nay, to speak more plainly, he creates a marble simulacrum of a man, a senseless block, completely alien to every human feeling.[42]

What are the alternatives to Stoicism? One is a Hobbesian account. Another is a Machiavellian account, treated briefly below. Yet another alternative is a theological reading of the passions. In general the theological debate about the predictability (and general perniciousness) of the passions is a dreary one, not redeemed by the excitement of Hobbes and Machiavelli, let alone Shakespeare. Theological perspectives tend to creep into many early modern accounts, and are certainly central—if only as a kind of 'background' theodicy—to providential accounts of human action, and justice. But it is a perspective that is unlikely to appeal to contemporary sensibilities, for obvious reasons having to do with the

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merely avoids the issue when he says somewhere that the difference between acting and being acted upon is less a matter of category than a matter of degree.

[40] Cavell *The Psychoanalytic Mind* 146.

[41] Nietzsche somewhere calls the Stoic Spinoza, in whose geometric method other people reduce to a conglomeration of causes, a 'sickly recluse.' Recall the reduction of passions to 'meteorology' above.

[42] Eramus, quoted in Miola *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy* 63.

decidedly secular (and sometimes naturalistic) nature of the explanations favoured in modernity. Moreover, even if it were established (as it has not been) that Shakespearean tragedy is theological, religious or providentialist readings of this genre are not going to seem as politically vital or interesting as readings or accounts that stress how the passions can contribute to a political psychology of tyranny, for example.[43] The fact is that early modern theological accounts are unlikely to provide anything useful on the passions, which are simply dismissed, or else assimilated to a discussion of original sin. The following quotation is fairly exemplary:

> We know that before his sin man was not the slave but the absolute master of his passions and that with his will he could easily arrest the agitation of the spirits causing them.[44]

Here Nicolas Malebranche links prelapsarian cognitive virtue, or at least tranquility, to the absence of passionate agitation, and appeals to the notion of will as the capacity to master or still the passions. The theme of controlling the passions is the crux of this passage (many others could have been adduced), but in assimilating the passions to sin, the early modern theological investigation of the passions simultaneously betrays its commitment to generally attempting to eliminate mutability, tragedy and politics. As Judith Shklar says, "Political philosophy is tragic thought.... Without a dramatic sense of fate and mutability no rational intelligence would turn to this...subject."[45]

Hobbesian 'corporeal nominalism'

> [T]he evaluative disorder Thucydides had regarded as a sign of the deterioration of human social life was seen by Hobbes as a normal attribute of the human condition.[46]

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[43] And we can provisionally bracket theological questions, since we are here inquiring into the proximate (and not ultimate) causes of human action—that is, among other proximate causes, the passions.

[44] Malebranche, quoted in Sutton "Controlling the passions" 115.

[45] On the occasion of Hannah Arendt's death, quoted in Euben *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* ix.

[46] Johnston "Plato, Hobbes, and Practical Reasoning" 46.

Hobbes' influential and important position is mechanistic, and therefore reductive.[47] The reductionist bent to Hobbes' philosophy gives it a certain appeal, especially to the empirically minded. To some extent his followers feel that his work is vitiated by the rise—and success—of the kind of science he worked to promote. He attempts to reduce behaviour to self-interest, and to reduce features of classical virtue theory, such as the norm of prudence, to a machine-like functioning. All prior ethics, especially Greek and Christian ethics, are replaced by a new ethics of right grounded in the passions, especially the passion of fear (fear of death). However, the reductive nature of Hobbes' approach is ultimately fatal, because it is austerely inhuman—human agents cannot partake of a self-image that reduces their passions to appetites, and at best to simple (and simplistic) motives such as fear and aversion, without also taking into account such higher, more complex socially-inflected states as shame, guilt, embarrassment, grief and love.

Moreover, from a normative point of view, Hobbes is ultimately too pessimistic because he leaves no room for such 'tender' passions as pity, because he reduces agency to mechanical responses, and because he construes the need for power as an insatiable need. Above all, the accounts we find in Shakespeare are more representative or 'truer' to the experience of the passions because Hobbes deals only with the most basic of passions (and fears, aversions, and appetites); Hobbes shows far less interest in the more complex socially inflected emotions, such as shame, embarrassment and guilt, or envy and jealousy. These higher, more complex—and more interesting—passions are of course the subject of most tragedies. Much more could be said on this vast subject of the degree to which the passions lend themselves to predictable generalizations. The point to take home from this discussion is that predictability and law-like reductionism are not the same thing. We can have the one without the other, and I believe we can retain the important sense in which the passions are 'mechanisms'[48]—where we explain by finding causes—without being mechanistic, or reductive, *or* going

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[47] Ironically, Hobbes calls the passions "voluntary" *Leviathan* 37.
[48] Most of Elster's books are about mechanisms in this sense.

to the other extreme and saying that the passions have no explanatory potential whatsoever. Hobbes is right about one thing: the importance of the provision of security to agents. I hold that the 'politic historians' focused on the passions for whatever help this discourse of the passions could provide; however, it is not claimed here that an understanding of the workings of the passions could solve all political problems. This proto-political neostoic 'science' of the passions was superior to the stoic advocacy of either stoical endurance (or suicide) as the best means of dealing with the threats of Machiavellian agents or living under a tyrannical state.

The reader may now be wondering why there has been little or no mention of Descartes who, after all, could claim to be the most influential of all early modern philosophers, and who wrote a valuable and interesting book on the passions, *The Passions of the Soul*. I would be remiss if I had nothing to say about Descartes' contribution, which is important, not least because the French philosopher seems to reconcile the irreconcilable in holding simultaneously that the passions can both be reduced to corporeal events, along Hobbesian lines, and that the passions can remain opaque to reason. Nor is Descartes simply regurgitating Stoic views (as might be thought from reading his late comment: "instead of finding ways to preserve life, I have found another, much easier and surer way, which is not to fear death"[49]); rather, for Descartes "the ethical consideration of the passion now comes to be formulated in terms of the action of the will":

> The affections, which he treats as the soul's motions, cannot simply be referred to as a criterion of rationality, as the Stoics had urged, but must be assessed in terms of the act of will from which they arise, and 'if the will is wrongly directed the emotions will be wrong; if the will is right, the emotions will be not only blameless but praiseworthy.'[50]

Descartes has room in his philosophy for certain passions, such as those privileged by the Christian tradition, especially love. As the Descartes scholar and editor Cottingham says, "We now have a striking paradox: Descartes, the

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[49] Descartes, quoted in Gaukroger *Descartes* 388.
[50] Gaukroger *Descartes* 395.

very thinker who is so often glibly accused of having a naïve theory of the 'perfect transparency of the mind', is actually telling us that our emotional life as embodied creatures [...] is subject to a serious and pervasive opacity."[51] In spite of the genuine interest Descartes' novel views arouse, there is much that is suspect in his 'anthropology' of the passions, as Hobbes and Spinoza point out. What these two thinkers, and others too, object to in the Cartesian undertaking is Descartes' attempt to explain the passions as "states straddled between the mental and the corporeal."[52] Notoriously, many of Descartes' difficulties, here and elsewhere, stem from this mental-corporeal dualism.

So far, then, we have not encountered any roadblocks on the path to showing that while some passions and some aspects of Fortune cannot be tamed or brought within the purview of a moderate practical reason, other passions *can* be managed and shaped. This neostoic sentiment is an appropriate stopping point. I close with a restatement of it—he calls it a 'new moral attitude'—by L. Strauss, whose discussion of Thucydides and Hobbes' reading of the Greek historian is germane:

> The new moral attitude first appears within the horizon of the traditional ideals. [...] phenomena such as the passions, characters, temperaments, intentions, and motives become central interests. Knowledge of these phenomena is provided not by (traditional) philosophy, but by history, and among all historians according to Hobbes's view by none more than by Thucydides.[53]

But we can interject that it is not only history that provides knowledge of 'these phenomena. In spite of being counterfactual and not 'actual,' fictions too--including dramatic fiction—have from the time of Homeric epic and probably earlier provided (through imagination, make-believe and analogues of agents on stages) insights into agents' motives and behaviour. Strauss seems to acknowledge as much when in the following paragraph he speaks of 'concrete experience.' He continues:

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[51] Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life* 92-93.
[52] James "Explaining the Passions" 26.
[53] Strauss *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* 108.

> Thucydides is "the most politic historiographer that ever writ". Not because he teaches the *arcana imperii* better than any other, but in the first place because [...] he helps the reader to gain thorough and independent insights into the precepts as into teachings which are gained from experience. [...] By thus revealing "the ways and events of good and evil counsels" by his account, and allowing the judgement on the connexion between motive, plan and result to arise from concrete [i.e., dramatic and tragic] experience, he teaches the reader much more thoroughly than any philosopher could. Thucydides is concerned primarily with motives. The most powerful motives are the passions. Thucydides stands out above other historians particularly because he reveals those usually unavowed passions which primarily determine social life.[54]

We have examined and found wanting Stoic and Hobbesian approaches to such topics as the passions, agency, and ethics. (A more challenging alternative is Machiavelli's, whose work I consider in the next chapter, Chapter five.) The reading just provided in this chapter is of a tragic realist, but not pessimistic or cynical, neostoic but not Stoic 'philosophy.' By treating some of Shakespeare's predecessors (the Stoics) as well as one of his contemporaries (Hobbes was born in the year of the Armada, after all), I have shown a small aspect of the 'options' that were available to dramatic 'philosophers' of the time.

Stoic, Hobbesian and Machiavellian ideas were part of the context in which Shakespeare thought and wrote, and which influenced—without 'determining'—his work. Of course it is difficult if not impossible to say exactly when, where and by whom he was influenced, nor can his tragedies be reduced to the ideas that swirled, clashed, spread and finally dissipated around him in the early modern period. By arguing that Shakespeare rejected—or could be shown to reject—most Stoic and most Hobbesian (and most Machiavellian) ideas, I have dialectically also revealed them as 'live' options for early moderns such as Shakespeare. That is to say, while Shakespeare rejected Stoic and Hobbesian approaches, he *could* have adopted them; and indeed some of Shakespeare's peers, and others in seventeenth century thought, did adopt them.

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[54] Strauss *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* 108-9.

The same is true of Machiavelli, whose ideas—or a bastardized but still accurate version—I will show were similarly rejected by Shakespeare, for normative reasons. Certainly Shakespeare can be linked to—for example—Machiavelli only circumstantially, in the sense of showing that he *could* have been influenced—as I have just argued. The argument I have just provided is not an obtuse or uncommon one; Shakespeare has profitably been compared to other thinkers many times *sans* the ironclad certainty that we have, say, in the case of Ben Jonson, where we know what he read.[55] Eliot promulgated one well-known treatment of Shakespeare and his reading and knowledge. Here one encounters the idea that 'the thought behind Shakespeare is of men far inferior to Shakespeare himself'[56]—namely Seneca and Machiavelli. Casey adds Montaigne.[57] I would add Tacitus at least for his compelling insights into power and cynicism; and I would add Thucydides, for reasons already mentioned, in this chapter and by Palfrey.[58] Eliot has this right, for on the account offered here, Shakespeare challenges both Seneca and Machiavelli. Shakespeare challenges and counters Epictetus' and Seneca's attack on the emotions, Senecan and Stoic providentialism in general, and the insistence that we ought to become like the Stoic sage. And Shakespeare challenges Machiavelli's cynical realism, offering in its stead a moderate, middle position between Plato and Machiavelli, between *technē* and *tuchē*, that is, between a blueprint or 'method' for happiness and felicity, and 'chance.' *Tuchē* is the Greek word for luck and chance or more specifically the element of human existence—akin to the most recalcitrant, dark passions that escape *logos*—that just happens, that humans cannot and do not

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[55] For a comparison of Shakespeare with Nietzsche, and others, on the question of value see Bradshaw *Shakespeare's Scepticism*. Nietzsche is also a mainstay in the poststructuralist tradition. For a comparison with Aristotle and other virtue theorists, see Beauregard *Virtue's Own Feature*. Poole compares Shakespeare to the Greek tragedians *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example*. McAlindon makes the following interesting claim, but does not substantiate it: "Although the new science had already begun to change the whole picture of the universe and of humankind's relation to it, there are no signs of this revolution in his work. On the contrary, he made full use of the established synthesis of cosmological ideas derived from Aristotle, Plato, and the Presocratic thinkers Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Empedocles." McAlindon *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos* 4. See also Jones *The Origins of Shakespeare*.

[56] Eliot "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" *Selected Essays* 135-6. See the brief discussion in Casey *Pagan Virtue* 225.

[57] Casey *Pagan Virtue* 225. I do not have the space to treat Montaigne in this thesis.

[58] Palfrey *Late Shakespeare* 52-3.

control.[59] Wyndham Lewis, incidentally, sees this split as vital and central to Shakespeare—asking us "to arrive at some idea as to whether Shakespeare saw the world as the expression of *techē* or of *tuchē*"[60]—but he does not seem to realize that the choice itself begs the question. That is, we should instead see Shakespeare as rejecting both the stultifying certainty of Plato's approach and the unedifying ironism of randomness. Keats' 'negative capability' view of Shakespeare might seem precious, to some, but in this context it must be applauded for not forcing us into a flawed choice. On the relationship between the passions and what we cannot control, Nussbaum also makes an interesting contribution. She draws an explicit connection between the passions and *tuchē*, speaking of the "internal ungoverned *tuchē* of the passions,"[61] though Shakespeare emphasized the dangers of others' passions and others' malicious manipulation of our passions, too. Nussbaum's connection here is precisely the kind of link I am positing between Fortune and the passions. We have returned full-circle to the problem raised by J. Lear about our ability to give an 'account' of the passions, not having solved it but having rejected approaches found to be flawed. Building on my arguments for Shakespeare's 'rejection' of most Stoic ideas and most Hobbesian notions, I now turn to a discussion of Machiavelli and Shakespeare.

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[59] Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness* 89.
[60] Lewis *The Lion and the Fox* 18.
[61] Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness* 383.

Chapter 5:
Machiavelli and the Physiology of Politics in *Macbeth*

Machiavelli

> The "unending struggle for survival and power" [Morgenthau] regarded as the inescapable essence of [...] politics. Like the ancient Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, and Goethe, he was possessed by "the tragic sense of life, the awareness of unresolvable discord, contradictions, and conflicts which are inherent in the nature of things and which human reason is powerless to solve."[1]

The Machiavellian perspective is in many ways diametrically opposed to the Stoic position. For Stoics, the cosmos is rational and ordered; for the Machiavellian, the cosmos is a mixture of predictable, perhaps law-like activity, and unpredictable fortuitous contingency. Confronted by a world as rife with struggle as that described by the cynical arch-realist H. Morgenthau in the above quotation, Stoics would urge a form of *apatheia*, that is to say, quietism. Machiavelli would concur with the stress on the inability of reason to solve the problems mentioned, and on the permanence of discord and conflict, but would see this as presenting opportunities. Thucydides, while certainly not sentimental or naïve about struggle, power and discord (*stasis*), urges yet a third position. He rues discord, even as he acknowledges that it is a permanent, even likely, *possibility*. But this is not the same as seeing discord as inevitable. And he would champion the power of an evocative, dramatic and philosophically-informed political history to understand and explain—and thus in some way *prevent*—causes, factors and passions that brought *statis* into the world. Now I wish to outline Machiavelli's political metaphysics.

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[1] Honig "Totalitarianism and Realism: Morgenthau's German Years" 305. Morgenthau's (and Honig's) version of Greek tragedy is not necessarily one that I would endorse. Certainly—following B. Williams—we can agree that Euripides' works often insist that reason is 'powerless' but it is not clear that this is Aeschylus' position at all: when Aeschylus writes in the *Oresteia* of the farmer who takes in the lion cub that matures and ravages the family, it is clear that the farmer's naïveté is to blame *and* that it could have been avoided. Similarly it is not clear that Shakespeare's or Goethe's works can be adduced in support of this conception of the 'tragic sense of life,' at least not without more evidence.

Machiavelli's position is exceedingly deep and fascinating, and it has inspired countless thinkers and writers—pro and con[2]—not least in Renaissance England. His theory is an admixture of pessimistic quietism about human agency, moderate reason or rationality and practical wisdom on the one hand, and the capacity of certain powerful individuals to create 'new orders,' to found states and to seize power on the other. While Machiavelli

> affects to admire the ancients, the education that he has in mind is neither Greek nor Roman, neither Aristotelian or Ciceronian: it is not a product of moral training and habituation; it is in no way aimed at liberating men from the dominion of their passions; and intellectual virtue is not its completion.[3]

Machiavelli's goal is "to shape, direct, and fortify the spirited passions, and the prevalence of Christianity is the greatest obstacle to this accomplishment in his day."[4] Machiavelli insists that since the only 'rules' concern the capriciousness of Fortune, we should strive to seize as much as we can, indulging our needs and whims. In short he urges us to cultivate what the Greeks called *pleonexia*: avarice, grasping (or "desire lurching out of control"[5]). As Machiavelli says in an extraordinary letter to the nephew of a friend:

> And truly, anyone wise enough to adapt to and understand the times and the pattern of events could always have good fortune, or would always keep himself from bad fortune; and it would come to be true that the wise man could control the stars and the Fates. But such wise men do not exist; in the first place men are shortsighted; in the second place, they are unable to master their own natures; thus it follows that Fortune is fickle, controlling men and keeping them under her yoke.[6]

This remarkable acknowledgement of the power of Fortune and the paucity of human responses to this power deserves to be quoted as often as the more well-

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[2] There has not been nor is there now anything approaching unanimity about Machiavelli's works' meaning or significance. I. Berlin has written an influential survey of competing, conflicting and contrasting approaches. Berlin "The Originality of Machiavelli." See also Skinner *Machiavelli.*

[3] Rahe "Situating Machiavelli" 294.

[4] Rahe "Situating Machiavelli" 294.

[5] Lear "The Place of Tragedy in Aristotle's Ethics" 70.

[6] Letter to Giovan Battista Soderini, quoted in Masters *Machiavelli, Leonardo, and the Science of Power* 251.

known remarks on inherent evil: that is, it is essential "to assume that all men are wicked ["bad" in some translations] and will always give vent to their evil ["malignity" in some translations] impulses whenever they have the chance to do so."[7] In his discussion of Fortune's indomitable power, Machiavelli stresses the inability of agents to master their nature, that is, their lusts and passions. His vaunted *virtù* is sometimes (and in this case, more than sometimes) impotent in the face of necessity and contingency. Or rather, in the absence of other-regarding passions, on his account *virtù* simply *is* the instrumental pursuit of preferences. The important consequence Machiavelli draws from this is not that ethics occasionally goes 'on holiday' but that human selfishness and cruelty will always necessarily trump our other-regarding tendencies, such as they are. (Sometimes of course it is necessary to be less than ideally other-regarding.) For Machiavelli, all that is left is for us to study and apply the correct lessons from history that deal with the acquisition and maintenance of power, irrespective of how the acquisition of power threatens the 'fragility of goodness.'[8] It is precisely this aspect of Machiavelli's teachings that causes him to be regarded as a proponent of hardcore (or immoderate) realism and *realpolitik*. Although this is not always appreciated by those who do not distinguish between Machiavelli's and Thucydides' realisms, this is in stark contrast to Thucydides' interest in "exploring the conditions essential for, the circumstances conducive to, and the fragile character of what we would now call civilized life."[9]

I hold that in certain key respects Shakespeare challenges Machiavelli's treatment of ethics, politics, realism, agency and the passions, just as Thucydides can be said to do. While Machiavelli might be right, perhaps even most of the time, that we should not place our ethical eggs in as flimsy a basket as human beings, and that we should have grave doubts about the motivating power of an abstract Justice, or an inherent Goodness, we can still worry about the fragility of 'goodness,' lower-case. However, the strongest rebuttal of Machiavelli consists in the following claims. In the battle between 'chance and intelligence,'

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[7] Machiavelli *The Discourses* 1.3.
[8] I allude, of course, to Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness.*
[9] Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" 110.

randomness and agency, we have the capacity to feel and to expand upon a number of other-regarding emotions that are neither simplistically naïve nor implausibly pietistic; we have a greater capacity to effectively 'manage' and fashion our contingent passions than pessimists acknowledge; and we have the possibility that the likes of Shakespeare, Tacitus and Thucydides are debunking hardcore realism from a moderate realist position by a "graphic depiction of the consequences in store for those who embrace and publicly endorse the theory and practice of Realpolitik."[10]

Of course with as complex and enigmatic a writer as Machiavelli, it would be surprising if my argument did not meet with opposition.[11] D. Ivison articulates a different view of Machiavelli, one which sees the Florentine as more moderate and less pessimistic than the Machiavelli I have delineated. For Machiavelli, writes Ivison,

> Politics and the arts of the republic—including law, persuasive speaking, and brute force—must shape and educate the passions and life plans of its citizens and foster a republican ethos. Individuals, in all their various social settings, need to be transformed into citizens.[12]

Certainly this is an attractive vision of a republican Machiavelli. But as we have just seen in the course of discussing his views, Machiavelli does not always allow that we *can* 'shape and educate the passions.' Ivison also directly addresses the thorny question of Machiavelli's pessimism, concluding that "[w]hatever his pessimism about human nature, human conduct remains an object of Machiavelli's conception of republican government."[13] This image of Machiavelli as stressing the passions in order to foster a healthy sense of citizenship is remarkably like the vision I have of the early modern, moderately realist 'politic historians' who attempt to provide instructions in the ways of the passions. But there are some differences to be sketched out, and some questions that need answering. One is perhaps the oldest question of all directed at

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[10] Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" 110.
[11] I. Berlin's famous article surveys some of the history of (wildly diverging) approaches to Machiavelli. See Berlin "The Originality of Machiavelli."
[12] Ivison *The Self at Liberty* 72.
[13] Ivison *The Self at Liberty* 72-73.

Machiavelli: if republicanism is the goal, then why all the tutoring of princes? Machiavelli cannot easily avail himself of the answer that works for the sometimes similarly ambiguous Tacitus: that despite what he says, he is *really* teaching agents how to understand and so resist tyrants and princes. And secondly, it is not clear that Machiavelli can so easily sidestep his usual strictures—which I consider unduly pessimistic—on the inherent *incapacity* of agents to exercise human conduct or agency in the face of the sheer contingencies of Fortune. By human conduct Machiavelli means *virtù* and the capacity to compel fortune to assent to one's wishes. This is something Machiavelli often disallows, in that he insists on the unmanageability of vicissitudes and of Fortune. At the very least there is some confusion here.

Finally there is the related question of Machiavelli's ethics. In an astute comparison of Machiavelli with Thucydides in a way that has implications for these questions, S. Forde writes that there is an "important difference between the two" which is found "in the fact that Machiavelli's realism extends to a denial of moral principles altogether, while Thucydides seeks to preserve the moral achievement that can be found in political community."[14] This is L. Bagby's view too. She writes: "a prudent moderation is often the closest thing to the exercise of morality [...]. To the extent that such moderation can be called moral, Thucydides can be said to believe that morality and expediency can coincide."[15]

For an alternative, moderate—albeit suitably 'tragic' in that moral luck and contingency are never entirely absent—realism, we can turn to Shakespeare, who has a more capacious and more appealing sense of the power of practical wisdom. That is, Shakespeare offers a sense of the complexity and instability—but emphatically not the irrelevance—of ethics. He simultaneously offers a more plausible account of agency, wherein a multitude of motives, some conflictual, some often conflicting, some rational and some not, nonetheless cohere in a way that some control and responsibility is accorded to the agent, however vulnerable to contingency that agent might also be. As P. Rahe says, we need to situate

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[14] Forde "Varieties of Realism: Thucydides and Machiavelli" 387.
[15] Bagby "Thucydidean Realism: Between Athens and Melos" 191.

Machiavelli in order to understand his appeal, utility and influence.[16] For Rahe, Machiavelli is Heraclitean, in a way that leads to Hobbes and Hume:

> Politically, Machiavelli can perhaps best be described as a disciple of Heraclitus. The foundation of his teaching concerning politics is his claim that "all the things of men are in motion and cannot remain fixed." By this he meant to convey something closely akin to what Thomas Hobbes and David Hume had in mind when they asserted that reason is the slave of the passions. As Machiavelli put it by way of explanation, "the human appetites" are "insatiable."[17]

Another writer on Machiavelli reaches the same conclusion regarding the Florentine's work, by focusing in a similar way on an exegesis of the notion of affects and passions. Fischer writes that Machiavelli divides humans into two sets of properties: 'first' and 'second' nature. By first and second nature is meant the idea that humans possess both necessary and contingent features, with first nature being the former, necessary properties shared by all humans irrespective of culture and history, and with second nature being the latter, contingent features that come and go, but which on occasion can modify first nature, but not "alter or displace it." "Machiavelli understands first nature to be licentious, taking it to consist of passions, mind, ambition, and 'humours.'"[18] Presumably second nature includes the likes of reason and the mind. Fischer continues, showing how this relationship plays out, in ways that recall precisely the account of reason and the passions we have just encountered—thanks to Rahe—in the reductive accounts of reason and the passions in Hobbes and Hume:

> Regarding the passions, human beings selfishly desire preservation, glory, domination, wealth, and sexual pleasure. The mind has two principal faculties: ingenuity and imagination. Ingenuity seeks to satisfy the passions by finding new means in the face of changing circumstances. Imagination produces more or less accurate images of reality and creatively recombines them to fantasies. Since both of these mental faculties aim to satisfy the passions, human reason is inescapably instrumental.[19]

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[16] Lewis says that "Webster, Massinger, Ford, Marston, Tourneur, Middleton are all indebted to him so heavily that either in the form of revulsion or delight they could be called the children of Machiavelli." Lewis *The Lion and the Fox* 66.
[17] Rahe "Situating Machiavelli" 293-94.
[18] Fischer "Machiavelli's Theory of Foreign Politics" 252-53.
[19] Fischer "Machiavelli's Theory of Foreign Politics" 253.

Now, the appetites may be insatiable as Machiavelli insists; that is, we may have to be vigilant with respect to our appetites and passions. And there surely is no doubt that, in some form, Hume's account of passions provides reason with its goals and motives. But neither of these claims is adequate. With respect to the insatiability of the passions, making this claim is not the same thing as demonstrating convincingly that *reasonable* agents cannot tame, modify, manage, shape or fashion the passions up to a point. As Hume's critics have pointed out, an instrumental account of reason is compelling but clearly wrong if it means that reason—or practical reason—cannot guide the passions. M. Hollis asks, "Are preferences a newer name for what used to be called passions?"[20] A point worth making is that it seems as absurd to insist that passions cannot be modified by reason as it is to insist that preferences are similarly left 'untouched' by reflection.[21] An instrumental account of reason is dangerous for reasons adumbrated in modern times by Weber and his epigones, but it is also troubling because it presents our passions/preferences as unreasonable, that is, *sui generis* and unmodifiable. To paraphrase S. Blackburn, we can 'rule' our passions; perhaps not completely but certainly up to a point.[22]

Admittedly it sometimes seems that Machiavelli holds a non-Hobbesian, non-reductive position on the passions, even as he approximates Hobbes in places as we have just seen. But on the whole, and when it counts, and in spite of some obvious republican sympathies, Machiavelli is like Hobbes a cynical or hard-line realist in that he endorses *realpolitik.* He also relishes cruelty and explains behaviour in terms of basic emotions such as fear and hatred. And for Machiavelli, "politics is therefore a study in humoral metaphysics and psychology."[23] However Machiavelli leaves much more scope for the notion of unpredictability. And he puts "vitality before stability,"[24] insisting in a most non-Hobbesian fashion that 'tumults' and some strife can be the basis of health—

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[20] Hollis *Trust within Reason* 21.
[21] *De gustibus non est disputandum* is open to dispute.
[22] Blackburn *Ruling Passions.*
[23] Scharfstein *Amoral Politics* 107.
[24] Worden "English republicanism" 467.

surely a martial health—in a polity. It is part of the capriciousness and *unpredictability* of the passions that they cannot do more than "issue in generalizations which may furnish maxims for enlightened practice" as A. MacIntyre says in a discussion of Machiavelli. I find this notion that the best 'science' of the passions and motives of agents we can arrive at is not going to be rule-government or deterministic. The best we can hope for is 'maxims for enlightened practice,' but this is surely all that Thucydides or Tacitus thought was available to us. First of all, this kind of 'practical' political wisdom is better than most of the alternatives: Thucydides clearly thinks that his rigorous but not determinist account of strife, change, war and politics is superior to Herodotus' charming but anecdotal history; Tacitus clearly thinks that his careful probing and exposure of the *arcane imperii* of the despotic and cruel emperors is superior to Stoic resignation and even to Horatian satire or Lucan's poetry. So, I believe that this sense of maxims for enlightened practice is not anathema to Shakespeare or to the barely affiliated practitioners of 'politic history,' superior as it is to quietist providentialist accounts, or to accounts stressing the indeterminacy or the determinancy of action or interpretation. In fact it meshes nicely with the picture I am trying to generate of Shakespeare. In contrast, the problem with Machiavelli, as I have been suggesting, is that he takes our lack of determinate knowledge to serve as a license for cruelty and acquisitive rapaciousness by the powerful. Rather than attempting to achieve a practical wisdom of the regular but not determinate nature of the passions, and rather than attempting to understand the origins of strife and Thucydidean *statis* in order to affirm the fragility of civilized action, Machiavelli affirms the growth of power by any and every means. A paradoxical quietism can be found at the center of the Machiavellian creed, for it is as though we have to strive to control as much as possible, precisely because 'real' control (control of Fortune) escapes us. As MacIntyre says, for Machiavelli, we "can by improvements in our knowledge limit the sovereignty of *Fortuna*, bitch-goddess of unpredictability; we cannot dethrone her." Machiavelli, MacIntyre continues,

> believed that no matter how good a stock of generalizations one has amassed and no matter how well one reformulated them, the factor of *Fortuna* was ineliminable from human life.[25]

In contrast, Thucydides and Shakespeare take the recognition of limits as the cue to inquire into the means of improving knowledge. They, and others like them, attempt to establish as much control over fortune—and the passions—as possible, without conceding too much to unpredictability and without attempting to make our insights law-like, and *pace* Machiavelli, without celebrating the possibilities for "personal *pleonexia*"[26] that the liberation from determinism allows. W. Sanders quotes the German historian F. Meinecke on the dangers of Machiavelli's contradiction-mired exclusion of moral thought:

> So *raison d'état* is continually in danger of becoming a mere utilitarian instrument without ethical application, in danger of sinking back again from wisdom to mere cunning, and of restraining the superficial passions merely in order to satisfy passions and egoisms which lie deeper and are more completely hidden.[27]

As the moderate tragic realist I am insisting he must be seen as, Shakespeare must be careful not to concede too much to Machiavellian unpredictability. This would be to fall into the Euripidean trap B. Williams warns against: ironism and the arbitrariness of chance, and ultimately pessimism. But Shakespeare must not concede too much to Hobbesian reductionist scientism, either.

To conclude, however exciting and appealing Machiavelli seems to be, especially when the alternatives are Platonic control of the appetitive and spirited by a philosophically inspired reason, Christian providentialism, Hobbesian reductionism, and Euripidean arbitrariness, and especially in light of the exciting use made of Machiavellian and quasi-Machiavellian ideas by Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedians,[28] it is important to be unrelenting in pointing out

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[25] MacIntyre *After Virtue* 93.
[26] This phrase is found in an insightful essay by Wilbur Sanders on Renaissance political consciousness. Sanders *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* 67.
[27] Meinecke, quoted in Sanders *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* 67.
[28] See these excellent studies: Corballis "Some Machiavellian Moments in English Renaissance Drama"; Freeman "Shakespeare's Kings and Machiavelli's Prince"; Jordan "*King Lear* and the

Machiavelli's flaws. This is especially important when there are better accounts available, such as those provided by Shakespeare and Thucydides—admittedly vastly different writers—who provide a moderate or 'minimalist' realism, and so are less prone to pessimism. As Rahe says, "Machiavelli's understanding of [...] politics would appear to have a certain Augustinian flavour: it presupposes as ineluctable the human depravity that the ancient Greeks and Romans thought it possible by way of *paideia* to transcend."[29] That is, education and practical wisdom/reason and reflection can moderate the passions. Needless to say, this does not mean that reason and reflection, etc., will necessarily be ethical. As Casey explains,

> A man may pursue a wicked end determinedly, intelligently, and boldly. This is why Kant said that moderation in the affections and passions, self-control, and calm deliberation are not unconditionally good, although they have been esteemed so by the ancients, for a cold villain might have all these qualities and hence be even more villainous.[30]

Rahe spells out in detail once and for all why we need to be on guard with respect to Machiavelli:

> [Machiavelli] rejects the common Greek and Roman conviction that man is a political animal and that his political character stems from his capacity to discern and make clear to others in rational speech the linkage between the advantageous, the just, and the good. When he rejects this conviction, he reduces reason to mere calculation, and he transforms the virtues from ends in themselves into mere means for personal defence and material gain [...] and rendering the civic ideal of social solidarity utterly implausible.[31]

In the absence of Christian or Stoic providentialism—incidentally a point made repeatedly in the theory, criticism and secondary literature on Renaissance and Shakespearean drama over the last thirty or so years of twentieth century Shakespeare studies, and earlier in some instances—and because of the

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'Effectual Truth' of Machiavellian Politics"; and Strong, T. B. "Shakespeare: Elizabethan Statecraft and Machiavellianism."

[29] Rahe "Situating Machiavelli" 302.

[30] Casey *Pagan Virtue* 70. No reader of Shakespeare can fail to be reminded of Claudius, that smiling villain, in this context.

[31] Rahe "Situating Machiavelli" 305.

unconvincing nature of Plato's position, with its arguments for invulnerability to fortune through a rationalist *technē* of self-mastery, Machiavelli or Machiavellianism looms as a serious alternative. I have sketched an outline of this Machiavellian position, but have urged that it be seen as inadequate. To reiterate, I want to juxtapose the Florentine theorist to Thucydides, to an alternative—a 'politic' Thucydides-like realism that makes sense of Shakespearean tragedy's contribution to politics and philosophy[32]—which stresses the Stoic emphasis on the importance of the passions, though emphatically *not* to insist on either the extirpation of the passions or political quietism. This alternative also stresses the Machiavelli-inspired notion of being stuck between the competing poles of *virtù* and *fortuna*, though without sacrificing—as Machiavelli does—the notion of ethics itself.[33] We can conclude this discussion of the ever-influential Machiavelli with the words of a prominent twentieth-century political theorist, L. Strauss, for whom Thucydides and Machiavelli have some shared interests but are nowhere near equivalent. Strauss writes:

> Contemporary readers find in both authors the same "realism", that is to say, the same denial of the power of the gods or of justice and the same sensitivity to harsh necessity and elusive chance. Yet Thucydides never calls into question the intrinsic superiority of nobility to baseness, a superiority that shines forth particularly when the noble is destroyed by the base. Therefore, Thucydides' *History* arouses in the reader a sadness which is never aroused by Machiavelli's books.[34]

I want now to turn to the topic of Machiavelli, persuasion and the 'politic' art of interpreting others in *Macbeth*.

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[32] And to central questions in philosophical politics/political psychology, such as understanding motivation and the scope of agency.

[33] My allies—and sources—regarding this position include Aristotle, Nussbaum, Salkever, J. Lear, Williams and P. Rahe.

[34] Strauss *Thoughts on Machiavelli* 292. Machiavelli seems to feel little or no pity with respect to the cities, figures, princes, and so on, whose various downfalls he charts. There is never a sense of the tragic in his work. Conversely Thucydides' *History* is suffused with a tragic sense, and this is *secular* tragedy, "for the Athenians themselves, not the gods, [were] responsible for the city's downfall." Colaiaco *Socrates against Athens* 83. The question of the influence of tragedy on Thucydides is discussed by Macleod where the conclusion is reached that Thucydides' work contains tragic elements even though he may not have been influenced directly by Aeschylus or Euripides (as some have thought). See Macleod "Thucydides and Tragedy."

Macbeth, Machiavelli and Politics

> [In setting up a republic or laws one must] presuppose that all men are wicked and that they will make use of the malignity of their spirit whenever they are free and have occasion to do so.
>
> —Machiavelli

> Kings, princes, monarchs, and magistrates seem to be most happy, but look into their estate, you shall find them to be most encumbered with cares, in perpetual fear, agony, suspicion, jealousy: that, as he said of a crown, if they knew but the discontents that accompany it, they would not stoop to take it up.
>
> —Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*

It has been alleged that *Macbeth* was written for King James, and was 'most likely' performed before the King and court with James' brother-in-law Christian IV in attendance.[35] It is not necessary for my purposes to show that it was, or was not, written as a Royal Command Performance, to use M. Hawkins' expression.[36] I intend rather to show that Shakespeare evinces familiarity with then-current political philosophy, which he exploits and interrogates. This section unfolds as follows. First I sketch an outline of some of the political and theoretical ideas that undergird the play: namely, the rise of political history as practiced by the Taciteans and 'Machiavellians'[37] of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period, vital for understanding Shakespeare's political achievement. Then I turn to the details of the

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[35] Kernan *Shakespeare, The King's Playwright* 72.

[36] Hawkins "History, Politics and *Macbeth*" 175.

[37] I have placed this word in scare-quotes because of the uncertainty about just which works of Machiavelli the Elizabethans had access to and when. *The Art of War*, an innocuous work dealing with tactics, was the only work of Machiavelli's translated openly into English until *The Prince* and *Discourses* were printed in 1640 and 1638, respectively. However, we know there was a gamut from inaccurately translated versions, basically snippets culled from attempted refutations of Machiavelli, scholarly footnotes and references in other Latin works, to surreptitious translations printed by the 'rebel' printer John Wolfe—who also printed John Hayward's Tacitean *Henry IV* in 1599, with its infamous dedication to Essex in London in the 1580s—and in all likelihood homegrown translations done by republican intellectuals whose manuscripts were probably circulated privately. K. Sharpe *Reading Revolutions* relates that Drake had one such Machiavelli manuscript. A commonly noted irony is that by placing Machiavelli on the *Index* the Church did more to popularize, through titillation, 'Old Nick' the 'murderous Machiavel' than anything else. See Donaldson *Machiavelli and Mystery of State*, especially, but also Raab *The English Face of Machiavelli*.

play itself, where I make good on my claim that it represents a 'politic history' play that engages with issues raised by Machiavelli, though not in the exact sense argued for by B. Riebling, whose arguments I will also treat. The centerpiece of the play is the treatment of the notion of the face, the visage, and the distinction between appearance and reality.

With the writing of *Macbeth* Shakespeare evinces a particular interest in questions of kingship. He also shows interest in the questions of how power is obtained and how both tyrants and Machiavellians (sometimes these are identical) can be understood and thwarted. It is in this sense that the play is political. *Macbeth* is in a manner of speaking a commentary on the nature of Jacobean political and monarchical authority, but it is also a philosophical primer in the dangers of Machiavellianism. Moreover it is a commentary that foregrounds Shakespeare's, and broadly speaking his generation's, method of sifting through snippets of the recent as well as distant historical past in order to create dramatic works that 'intervene' in the political present. Intervention here does not necessarily mean specific concrete actions, let alone rebellious insurrections (like that Essex). Rather, I mean improvements in analysis of current policy and governmental behavior in light of a range of political theories and models, some continental—Justus Lipsius, Jean Bodin, Machiavelli—and some inspired by continental thought, but still homegrown—Francis Bacon, and two lesser, Tacitean historians, John Hayward and Henry Savile.[38] Here I refer to the analysis of politics in light of the skeptical humanist, neo-Tacitean 'politic historical' methods that emerged in England and on the continent in the late sixteenth century.[39] As Rebecca Bushnell says

> Shakespeare and Jonson owed much to the Humanists, not only for their portrait of the tormented tyrant, driven to evil by his own passions, but also for their accounts of how factions, propaganda, and policy play such an important part in shaping that image.[40]

The play is the product of the specific political context of James' early rule, when issues such as proto-absolutism, monarchical prerogative, and the legitimacy of

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[38] Worden mentions—as contributing the "leading texts of the new 'civil' or 'politic' history"—the likes of "Sallust, Tacitus, Machiavelli, Lipsius, Bodin." Worden *The Sound of Virtue* 21.
[39] See Levy "Hayward, Daniel, and the Beginnings of Politic History in England."
[40] Bushnell *Tragedies of Tyrants* 115.

resistance to tyranny, and the possibility of not just a rational (non-providential) world-view but also rational politics were much debated. This last notion of a rational politics is where the play contests the political debates of the day. As a number of critics and historians have shown, James and many other monarchs and their apologists and theorists cleaved to varying degrees to the idea that the monarch or king governed by means and according to reasons that were best left largely to the monarch or king alone.[41] In other words, a king's methods, however mad, were arcane subjects to be shrouded in a reverential secrecy, and not to be pried into closely. The term of art that covered this was, of course, *arcana imperii*, the political mysteries or mysteries of state that were the prerogative of the ruler and, on occasion, well-placed counselors. Hence, in part, the expression *Privy* Council.

> [For] most Tudor theorists "right reason" was the "monarch" of knowledge. It taught men how to govern, and how to obey. It revealed order and government rather than horror and confusion.[42]

As Robert Mason put it in his 1602 tract *Reason's Monarchie*, "Right and true reason...hath a place above all earthly and corruptable things."[43] This was in a sense contradictory. Reason was the faculty that simultaneously demanded obedience, yet it was also the means by which subjects could understand that the prince (understood in the sense of ruler, king, queen or monarch) deserved to rule. It was encouraged and cultivated in subjects as a 'monarchical faculty' which was analogous to the monarch in the body politic and which allowed them to justify their political dispensation. Reason or right reason helped subjects grasp the legitimacy of a specific chain of command, not to speak of legitimizing 'great chains of being.' Yet these same subjects were at one and the same time barred entry into the private arenas of power—the arcane 'arcades,' so to speak, of princes and counselors. Jacobean and indeed earlier writers found many ways around this, not least by establishing the genre known as 'tragedies of state.'[44] By setting plays in court and monarchical settings, though often with topicality played down by the

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[41] See the essays on absolutism, tyranny, resistance, and rule and kingship in Burns and Goldie *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700.*
[42] Collins *From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State* 24.
[43] Mason, quoted in Collins *From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State* 24.
[44] See Lever *The Tragedy of State.*

use of exotic foreign and historical settings, playwrights could demystify the processes and products of rule. *Macbeth* implicitly foregrounds the question of a rationalized world view by means of a politicized unmasking of the irrational, not least the manipulation of rivals, which is shown to depend less on mystical forces than an astute understanding of agents, foes, allies and the times.

My claim is that *Macbeth* is a play that belongs in this genre of unmasking. However, it not only demystifies, it also participates in the construction of what Wittgenstein would call a tool-kit or a coherent vocabulary for the extension of unmasking to past, present and even future contexts. While this is not articulated as such in the play, the 'future' is present in the sense that an astute Stuart audience would have seen the events unfolding on stage as possessing relevance not only to their own times, but to other times too. The play was if not deliberately then potentially topical, as a number of critics have observed, and as censorious state organs such as the office of the Master of the Revels knew.[45] One thing that afforded Shakespeare some freedom in the writing of this play is the lack of a definitive knowledge of the principals. Scottish pre-feudal or feudal history was simply too distant. The search for topical references in the early Stuart period focused on the reference to royal or court figures, or policy. Hence, any difficulties that Shakespeare would have faced with *Macbeth* would have centered on imputed parallels between Duncan and James. So it would be appropriate in this context to speak of the play's 'weak' topicality, to be distinguished from a 'stronger' topicality that insisted on fairly direct, if veiled, references to political figures. These two senses of topicality are however not to be differentiated in kind, but in degree.

Also part of the 'politic history' tool-kit, though, was a means for unmasking not only the nature of something akin to the supernatural—namely, the *arcana imperii* ('secrets of state' is how Henry Savile translated this) of political power, ambition, and ascendancy—but also what one can call the irrational supernatural: the world of ghosts, omens, prophecy and witchcraft. The

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[45] For the Master of the Revels and censorship, see Dutton *Mastering the Revels*. By topical I do not necessarily mean a 'strong' topicality, that is a strict identification of contemporary figures; a play could of course allude to events and could refer obliquely to relevant political debates, including arcane ones such as that surrounding *reason of state*.

play is pervaded by the distinctly irrational, such as the mysterious apparitions, ghosts, and above all witchcraft, but this is what is demolished by the Machiavellians Lady Macbeth and Malcolm, who cut through it as so much archaic dross, by the shrewd, fox-like manipulation of the credulity of others. It is, in other words, not only the trappings of kingship that are demystified.

Indeed, ambition is also demystified. It is shown in *Macbeth* to issue from a range of sources. Much of the treatment of *Macbeth* has consisted in seeing the play as a commentary on the hazards of ambition. If this criticism—exemplified for the twentieth century by the likes of L. B. Campbell, L. C. Knights, and I. Ribner, to choose but the most important critics—were to be summarized briefly, one could say that in this work the play reduces to a "political-moral fable:"[46] watch out for ambition. Of course Macbeth is, like Iago, ambitious. But he is also 'cursed' by his sense of pity and his conscience. He understands what his usurpation and unethical action will represent in terms of the 'health' of the polity. But he hopes that he will find it in himself to live up to Lady Macbeth's idealized image of him as a conquering warrior-king who fully deserves to rule. Similarly, while he knows he is violating the core moral practices of his polity, he hopes that the metaphysical sanction that seems to have been given to him by the cryptic utterances of the Weird sisters will somehow redeem his acts by making his rule successful. He is not the last political figure that is not only ill-suited for the powerful position he has seized, but also is mistaken in his belief that once he has attained his 'ends,' the 'means' he used to attain them will be forgotten. But while he resembles Iago, Macbeth is nonetheless not like him. If he were, he would not be

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[46] Riebling "Virtue's Sacrifice" 274. More recently the play has been treated as commentary not on Macbeth's anguished and existential response to the fruits of his earlier ambition, but as a commentary on contemporary political discourses. Here the focus has broadened to take in the understanding Shakespeare had of the history of eleventh-century Scottish nobles striving for preeminence, as well as the understanding Shakespeare had of James' writings on Divine Right, as well as those of his former tutor George Buchanan, the militant Scottish resistance theorist and political philosopher who also, for a time, tutored Montaigne. (Buchanan apparently gave James many nightmares, which could have been brought about by either recollections of Buchanan's personality or by his theoretical advocacy of 'monarchmach,' the legitimate resistance—to the point of regicide—to unpopular kings.) Work by M. Hawkins, R. Bushnell, and D. Norbrook exemplify this more recent kind of criticism. See, for example, M. Hawkins "History, Politics, and *Macbeth*," Bushnell *Tragedies of Tyrants*, and Norbrook "*Macbeth* and the Politics of Historiography."

tragic whatsoever (Iago certainly is not tragic). The reason that Macbeth is tragic is that he is a complex and many-sided character who is somehow not out of the ordinary—one of Aristotle's explicit criteria for tragedy—in any respect. That is, he is not particularly vicious or cruel, despite the many references to him as a tyrant. Of course he does, and sanctions, appalling things but he is not wicked in the way that Richard the Third, Iago or Aaron are, or even in the way Lady Macbeth is. And he is not as cold and unsympathetic as Volumnia. Macbeth has genuine pity and it goes without saying that he has a conscience. Moreover, the very things that contribute to Macbeth overcoming his conscience and killing Duncan are at least graspable.[47] There is the prompting or priming—by way of cryptic utterances—by the supernatural Weird sisters. There is Machiavellian persuasiveness of Lady Macbeth, whose rhetoric calls his manhood into question. As she says, "When you durst do it, then you were a man."[48] And of course there is his own understandable ambition—perhaps even 'normal' for a ranking political (and aristocratic) figure—that he could have something to offer his war-torn state, or that he could be a successful ruler. Before I return to this topic of Macbeth's sympathy, let me make a brief digression and say something about his relationship to Fortune and chance.

The point just made about the various things that compel Macbeth to act against his king is worth underscoring, for to my mind a significant element of Macbeth's actions is that he *feels* himself being carried, as it were, on a swell of Fortune. In fact, he displays an entirely understandable sense of taking advantage of the smile of Fortune. Early on, one of the warriors (the Captain) describes Macbeth in battle as fearsome, valiant and effective: as the Captain says, "For brave Macbeth—well he deserved that name— / Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel/ Which smoked with bloody execution."[49] But—and this is a theme that is crucial to the play as a whole, and to which I shall return below—appearances can be deceiving. (As we learn in the play: "nothing is but what it is not" and "Fair is

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[47] That is, they make sense and are intelligible in terms of Cavell's straightforward question: 'how does Shakespeare think things happen?' While Shakespeare nowhere tells us how things happen, in *Macbeth* he arguably shows us. (For Cavell's question, see also page 42 above.)
[48] *Macbeth* 1.7.49.
[49] *Macbeth* 1.2.15-7.

foul, and foul is fair."[50]) The Captain is not completely accurate; Macbeth is effective and brave, but he is not so utterly Machiavellian that he can disdain Fortune. As a matter of fact, one of the things that make Macbeth so compelling is that he hopes he can will Fortune's approval...without doing anything himself. He wants to obtain the throne not via Machiavellian force and *virtù*—which are not exactly qualities he possesses in abundance, until it is too late—but without having to 'stir.' As he puts it himself in an aside: "If chance will have me King, why chance may crown me,/ Without my stir."[51]

Whatever sympathies we have for Macbeth stem largely from Shakespeare's decision not to carefully delineate Macbeth's victims. We, the audience, are not given much chance to generate sympathy for Macbeth's victims, since we do not learn much about them. We *know* that murder is wrong, and that the Macbeths' violations—not least in terms of killing a trusting guest—are egregiously unethical, but because we know so little about the victims (say, Macduff's family), it is our principles that are offended and not our passions. Similarly, had we been given more details about Duncan's rule—and so picturing him as a kind, benevolent and fair monarch—our empathy for him would have been greater, and our sense of Macbeth would be different. The picture we would then have of Macbeth would be of another, more prosaic Richard III. That is, Macbeth would be seen as an unappealing murderer and tyrant,[52] unredeemed by Richard's suavity, rhetorical energy and contradictoriness. As it is, the play is subtly powerful precisely because Macbeth does just enough to horrify us, but not enough to disgust us. Of course, to reiterate a point already made, part of the reason why we find it possible to feel some compassion for Macbeth is that he is not entirely—or not solely—responsible for what happens in the play. He does not act alone, nor does he act with full, considered comprehension; both Lady Macbeth and the 'Weird sisters'/witches play a role in the provenance of his action, factors which contribute to a modest (but not negligible) diminishing of his responsibility. There is also the implication that a warrior like Macbeth is unsuited for resisting a powerful passion like ambition.

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[50] *Macbeth* 1.3.42-3; 1.1.11.
[51] *Macbeth* 1.3.145-7.
[52] Of course, this *is* how he is seen by most of the other characters.

Finally, Macbeth *is* of course a tragic figure. That is to say, like other tragic figures his suffering is seen to be excessive with respect to his responsibility, and his fate seen as out of proportion to his character. Of course this is why Macbeth cannot be depicted as thoroughly bloodthirsty, Duncan cannot be seen as thoroughly saintly, and Macbeth does not commit all of the murders himself.[53] Macbeth, then, can be neither innocent nor too morally repugnant. He is an admixture of nobility and baseness.

Macbeth or Mach-beth? The Physiology of Politics

> I know him subtle, close, wise, and well read/ In man, and his large nature. He hath studied/ Affections, passions, knows their springs, their ends,/ Which way, and whether they will work.[54]

> Men judge of meanings by actions and read in the eyes, and face, the most secret motions of the soul.
>
> —J. F. Senault

These quotations frame the central concern of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The first, spoken by the character Tiberius—the infamous tyrant who inspired so much of Tacitus' brilliant analytical commentary—is from Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*. These lines of Jonson's could serve as a manifesto for 'politic history' and for the need of agents to be versed in the reading of others, to study and know their passions, motives and, in short, their 'springs.' The final quotation is from Jean Senault, a seventeenth century Catholic priest who wrote *The Use of Passions* (translated into English by Henry, Earl of Monmouth in 1649), one of the early modern period's most interesting works of political psychology. The goal of Senault and a number of other writers who discussed the passions in books, tracts and treaties was to diagnose the passions. But it was also to use the passions as a means of diagnosing their present political situations. For many such writers, the exemplary tales of humanist lore proved to be less than helpful, so they turned to the passions to

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[53] He has moreover plenty of disdain and scorn for the murderers he dispatches.
[54] *Sejanus* 3.2.694-7.

supplement and in some cases to supplant traditional humanist accounts.[55] The problem was simple: our knowledge of others and their plans and intentions is infuriatingly incomplete, and the passions can help to overcome this by no means trifling epistemological problem. A greater problem was *political*: those without the requisite knowledge of the passions—including those subjects who lacked an understanding of the passions of their ruler—were at the whim of others because, as they were unarmed, they could be easily swayed or affected. As A. Johns puts it,

> Those without such knowledge [of the passions] would soon be forced to confess that "our Passions are chains, which make us slaves to all such as know how to manage them well."[56]

Without an understanding of the passions, it was said, one could not hope to adapt to the vicissitudes of life and Fortune. And force is insufficient; understanding, insight and some guile are necessary too. In an infamous passage in *The Prince* Machiavelli discusses a young prince who defeats Fortune by use of force.[57] But here as elsewhere it is not clear that Machiavelli accepts his own arguments, for elsewhere he has already provided arguments that imply that force is insufficient: in an earlier chapter his book Machiavelli explains that the successful prince will be an combination of fox and lion. The fox is crafty and can avoid the snares that trap the lion, whereas the latter is powerful and so can defeat the wolves that would kill the fox. Power, or force, is not enough. Similarly, Macbeth has force and power, but lacks guile and self-control. By this I do not mean merely the self-control that would have prevented (on ethical grounds) him from undertaking a coup against Duncan,[58] but the self-control required to master his own fears. Macbeth cannot apprehend the vicissitudes of fortune, let alone shape fortune or his own

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[55] The following writers are some of those who turned to the discourse of the passions: Thomas Wright, Walter Charleton, Edward Reynolds, Descartes, Hobbes, Timothy Bright, Burton, Drake, Meric Causabon, John Earle, and Jean Senault. I discuss some of these figures briefly in Chapters seven and eight.

[56] Johns *The Nature of the Book* 398. Johns is quoting Senault.

[57] Machiavelli *The Prince* 69.

[58] Macbeth, as well as being intemperate, is not continent: the temperate person has emotions that "are internally in a mean state" and the continent person "controls herself with regard to emotions that fall short of a mean state." Sherman *Making a Necessity of Virtue* 38. Macduff interestingly enough relies on the notion of the mean when he says, "Boundless intemperance/ In nature is a tyranny." *Macbeth* 4.3.66.

'motivational apparatus,' that is, his passions and desires and interests. Initially Macbeth shown as just weak enough and just ambitious enough, so that the suggestion that Fortune will crown him—combined with his wife's suggestion that if he is man enough to seize the throne he *must* do so—drives him to treason. When the time comes for him to don a dissembling mask of coldness and competence—at the feast—he cannot muster the will to 'smile' like the proverbial villain. (This is precisely because he is not like the proverbial villain.) Just when it is most important, his self-control abandons him—or rather, the force of his guilty conscience pushes its way to the fore, as it were. Macbeth says:

> Then comes my fit again;/ I had else been perfect— / Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,/ As broad, and general, as the casing air;/ But now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in/ To saucy doubts and fears.[59]

This stands in contrast to the later Macbeth, who as his end draws near and his enemies surround him, reverts to his warrior-like self:

> Bring me no more reports, let them fly all:/ [...] Then fly false/ thanes,/ And mingle with the English epicures;/ The mind I sway by, and the heart I bear,/ Shall never sag with doubt, nor shake with fear.[60]

Here it is as though Macbeth recalls his earlier states exactly and then refutes them. He speaks of overcoming 'doubts' and 'fears,' the very states of mind that earlier troubled him so much. And he speaks not in Stoic terms of obliterating his passions, but in neostoic terms of swaying his mind and heart, eliminating doubt and fear, but retaining courage, and a kind of restrained and even noble—because it is non-blustering—anger.

Machiavelli states the basic truism of hard-hearted political realism, which is echoed throughout the play in terms of actions and events, and which is also echoed verbally by Lady Macduff in words that would not be out of place in cinquecento Florence: "But I remember now/ I am in this earthly world, where to do harm/ Is often laudable, to do good sometime/ Accounted dangerous folly."[61]

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[59] *Macbeth* 3.4.20-5.
[60] *Macbeth* 5.3.1-10.
[61] *Macbeth* 4.2.77-80. I rely here on N. Brooke's 1990 Oxford edition but I have also consulted the introductions and notes to A. R. Braunmuller's 1997 New Cambridge edition, and to G. K.

Apropos of this kind of Machiavellism, S. Hampshire speaks eloquently of the vertiginous feeling induced when a powerful moral prohibition has been violated. Though he is not discussing *Macbeth*, what he says is relevant. Hampshire writes that it is worth dwelling on what is

> usually associated with morally impossible action, on a sense of disgrace, of outrage, of horror, of baseness, of brutality, and, most important, a sense that a barrier, assumed to be firm and almost insurmountable, has been knocked over, and a feeling that, if this horrible, or outrageous, or squalid, or brutal action is possible, then anything is possible.... In the face of the doing of something that must not be done...the fear one may feel is the fear of human nature....[62]

Macbeth is 'about' the appalling violations of moral limits and of the acts that so challenge the possibility of human kindness (and ethics) that they provoke—in most of Shakespeare's characters, with the exception of the cold-hearted villains—a visceral sense of the "cost of self-displacement"[63] incurred by them. I allude of course to the shocking killings that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth undertake or arrange, and which Hampshire's passage—while not about Shakespeare—'speaks to' so eloquently. What makes *Macbeth* such a remarkable work is that Shakespeare causes the reader or viewer to attempt to balance incongruous views. By this I mean the sense that we both feel for Macbeth and we feel that his acts, undertaken to attain his ambitious goals, are appalling and wrong. His cruelty and ambitious striving is somehow noble, and there is a sense that his nobility distinguishes him from the merely pedestrian cold-blooded killers who perform some of the other killings in the play (some on Macbeth's orders, of course). In terms of the useful quotation by L. Strauss with which I closed the previous section on Machiavelli, the noble and the base are difficult to disentangle. Strauss, it will be recalled, argues that there is in Thucydides an appreciation of the distinction between nobility and baseness that Machiavelli cannot appreciate, but which we should. While I believe that Strauss is probably right on this score—that is, right to insist that nobility and baseness are distinct—it is nonetheless difficult to establish criteria by which the

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Hunter's 1967 New Penguin edition, which has a brief but interesting introduction. And I have also consulted K. Muir's 1951 Arden edition.

[62] Hampshire *Morality and Conflict* 89.

[63] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 77.

two can be told apart. The notion of an 'epistemology' of baseness or nobility seems fanciful, not least when we are confronted with a character such as Macbeth wherein these two qualities are commingled. *This* of course is Machiavelli's appeal: namely, Iago-like he provokes doubts about the drawing of ethical distinctions by whispering in our ears that 'what agents actually do' and 'what agents ought to do' is a contrived distinction. Really, says Machiavelli, good and evil, appalling and acceptable, noble and base are so indistinguishable that we have to *treat* everyone the same way. Friend and foe alike have to be mistrusted. Machiavelli, it seems to me, is wrong to urge this position. While it is true that a moderate realism is both necessary and inescapable, especially in cutthroat contexts such as those dissected by Tacitus and by Machiavelli himself, as well as those depicted in the tragedies of the early modern stage, it is arguably also the case that a cynical, pessimistic realism is uncalled for. The injunction to distrust everyone and to suspect them of malignity is flawed because it represents the death of civil society, just as it represents the death of such factors as virtue, civility and trust upon which every polity ultimately rests. At the core of politics is the need not to treat friend and foe alike but to distinguish friend from foe. This is one of the themes of *Macbeth*. The friend-foe relationship is a topic raised by the early modern English poet John Norden in his poem *Vicissitudo rerum* (1600). In a stanza in which he laments the inconstancy that cause human relations to deteriorate, he writes,

> What passionate *inconstancie* have *men*,/ Which shew *affections* so contrarie?/ No *creature* to a *creature* worse hath ben,/ Then man to man, who in hot enmitie,/ Hath wrought each other deadly destinie./ Yea, some that deerely lov'd before, comes foes,/ And foes come friends: some work work themselves their/ woes.[64]

The theme of trust and distinguishing friend from foe is implied by Senault's quotation at the beginning of this section, and is explicitly mentioned here in Norden's quotation. It is also at the heart of *Macbeth*. Senault's quote about 'reading' motives should remind us of Duncan's self-confessed inability to glean agents' motives, and also raises the question—familiar to us by now—of the 'motions' of the mind, and the relationship between the appearance of the face, and

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[64] Norden, quoted in Kiefer *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* 285.

the reality of the intentions, plans, interests and passions that *really* motivate an agent.[65] What Duncan says is that "There's no art/ To find the mind's construction in the face./ He was a gentleman on whom I built/ An absolute trust."[66]

It is a matter, then, of contriving to know other agents' minds. But it is emphatically *not* to know them in terms of Descartes' stringent introspection-based, incorrigible self-knowledge, nor is it necessarily to know them in terms of agents' blushes, glances, raised hackles, sneers of hatred and other Bulwer-like manifestations, although these can be useful. John Bulwer, an amateur rhetorican and professional physician, attempted to "fulfill Bacon's program for a modern science of gesture."[67] He held that interior states manifested themselves in external or exterior significations, and extended his work to include gestures, which he saw as governed by rhetorical conventions. Those who investigated the passions had a number of different—and perhaps irreconcilable—agendas, and this was true of Descartes and Bulwer who represented the two extremes. Descartes' dualism makes it difficult for him to countenance the idea that the body or the passions can reveal much about the mind, which was to be known only through first-person introspection. Bulwer, on the other hand, seems to move too hastily from the idea that we can sometimes predict the 'intent' behind a gesture to the idea that we can develop a science of this practice. On the other hand, when Bulwer emphasizes the rhetoric of gesture, he seems to make gestures depend entirely on convention. A middle path between these alternatives would be to acknowledge that since the passions and emotions are so fine-grained and so susceptible to variation, we are therefore wise to preface every statement about the passions with the word *may*: as when we say that passion

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[65] Machiavelli's use of the word 'malignity' is apt considering the commonplace (from Coleridge via A. C. Bradley) that Shakespeare gives us villains (especially Iago) whose behavior is motiveless and 'malign.'

[66] *Macbeth* 1.4.12-5. Muir provides Johnson's 'translation': "We cannot construe or discover the disposition of the mind by the lineaments of the face." Johnson, quoted in Muir *Macbeth* 23, footnote.

[67] Roach *The Player's Passion* 33. See Bulwer's *Chirologia: or the Natural Language of the Hand* and his *Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric.* These were published together in 1644.

may influence judgements, and judgement may influence passions.[68] And different passions may give rise to similar behaviour, while the same passion in one person may give rise to different behaviour in another person. The subject is clearly both vexed and complicated. On the one hand, honesty forces us to acknowledge the complexity of the passions, and the difficulty of understanding them rigorously. On the other hand, however, necessity—the need to interpret other agents—nonetheless forces us to rely on the passions. They are an imperfect but necessary form of explanation.[69]

These then are the boundaries of the play. But let us return to the notion of 'understanding' that is denied by Duncan's ironic (because Macbeth has just approached the king) and rueful remark that: there's no 'art' available, no method or practice, with which to / To find the mind's construction in the face."[70] Here we have a reason, an explanation, for the horrors that can—and if Machiavelli is correct, will and perhaps *ought* to—beset any polity, any commonweal. As the play's theme has it: we are in an epistemological or hermeneutical quandary because we cannot glean or grasp each other's plans and intentions.[71] These plans and intentions are not manifest; they must be imputed, which means there is the threat that they might well be conjured. A pessimist would say that our intentions can seem so impossibly recalcitrant and opaque, perhaps to ourselves too, that we might as well avail ourselves of witchcraft or divination. But is this pessimism entirely justified? Can we not follow the politic historians' cue and raise as S. Cavell says, "the question of human intelligibility" in spite of the "catastrophe of

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[68] And, of course, passion may influence—or cause—other passions, as when I feel ashamed about being embarrassed, or guilty about being angry. This is just to say that we have second-order passions.

[69] As J. Elster says, " Objectively emotions matter because many forms of human behaviour would be unintelligible if we did not see them through the prism of emotion. The recent civil wars in the former Yugoslavia or in Africa may to some extent be explained in terms of rational preemption, but that is a very incomplete explanation and a very impoverished account. To fully explain the mass slaughters we must take account of emotions of fear, anger, contempt, hatred, and resentment." Elster *Alchemies of Mind* 404.

[70] *Macbeth* 1.4.12-13.

[71] It is perhaps unsurprising that two recent volumes of research on primate mindedness, and animal manipulation and deception, have the title *Machiavellian Intelligence.*

knowledge"[72] which I have just outlined? The question therefore is not to show that Duncan's wish—to read the hearts of his warriors—is naïve and then replace this with a knowing cynicism, say of Machiavelli's, but rather the question is one of examining the resources available in the play and coming up with a convincing case for a middle ground between naïve optimism and vicious hard-core realism. This middle ground, which as I will show is foregrounded in the play, is a politic realism that carves out a modicum of 'human intelligibility,' to use Cavell's phrase again, by way of grasping aspects of the passions.[73] In his important essay on *Macbeth*, D. Norbrook writes, "All Shakespeare's political plays are arguably as interested in emotional and unconscious motivations for political action as rational principles."[74] What Norbrook says here is both insightful and apt. I also hold that *Macbeth* provides an example of how the passions can play a role—in the service of a non-cynical realism—in illuminating the dark forces and opaque motivations that impel, and also 'rationalize' action. I wish now to defend the claim that *Macbeth* must be seen as part of Shakespeare's contribution to the 'politic historical'[75] style of political discourse.

To return to Duncan's claim, it is true that there is no tried-and-true method of inspecting the contents of others' minds. However, to acknowledge this is not to urge first-person solipsism, or skepticism about other minds. We have no hermeneutic 'art' that approaches a 'science', but we can know *something* when we know the passions, and through the passions. Through the 'intermediary,' as it were, of the passions we can know the motives of agents—not the whole mind, of course, but at least something about an agent's next move. This interest in an agent's interior 'contents' being somehow available to others was a widespread concern in the early modern era. Of course it provoked both excitement and interest, yet also fear, for the understandable reason that it was worrisome that one could be read like

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[72] I want to be clear that I have borrowed these felicitous phrases from Cavell who uses them in his *Macbeth* essays. Cavell *Macbeth (I)* 1, 2. He speaks rather obliquely of *philosophy* (and of privacy expressed in philosophy) as the catastrophe of knowledge, whereas I assimilate this catastrophe to intersubjective understanding, though perhaps his point is not so remote.

[73] Wittgenstein gestures in this direction, with his remark that the 'human body is the best picture of the human soul.' I have used this phrase already in Chapter three, page 56.

[74] Norbrook *Macbeth* 99.

[75] See the works by F. Levy in the Bibliography.

a book. For if one was a 'book,' one could be written, and re-written. And this is exactly what was so frightening about persuasion. As Johns says,

> What made the passions especially problematic [...] was the prelapsarian state of humanity. Before the Fall, everyone agreed, human apprehensions had been in perfect accord with nature.[76]

Prior to the Fall, the senses were reliable and had not proven themselves to be 'false.' When apprehension 'worked' properly, one could read the intentions and motives of other agents, and at least prepare oneself for Machiavellian 'manipulation.' But after the Fall, the

> corrupted senses of a representative early modern reader were therefore thought to be "subject to a thousand illusions." Guided by their passions, the mind was certain to go wrong. [...] At stake were the discrimination of truth from falsity and the moral propriety of all actions resultant upon such discrimination.[77]

As K. Sharpe has shown in his study of ideas, meanings, politics and analogues in early modern English thought, at the time it was thought that "Men's characters and qualities were read from their faces."[78] "I would I knew thy heart," says Anne to Richard in *Richard III*. "'Tis figured in my tongue," replies Richard lasciviously, referring perhaps inadvertently to his physical tongue as well as to his language.[79] Inadvertent or not, the implication of the context is clear: despite Richard's half-hearted protestations, both he and Anne, and the audience, knows that neither the physical features of the body nor the language of the speaker is inherently 'readable.' As Lady Macbeth says to Macbeth, "Your face, my thane, is as a book where men/ May read strange matters."[80]

This theme of faces and reading persists throughout *Macbeth*. The play is rife with references to faces, references which confirm the link I have attempted to establish between the play and the discourses of agents' 'legibility.' The play teems

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[76] Johns *The Nature of the Book* 401.
[77] Johns *The Nature of the Book* 401.
[78] Sharpe "A Commonwealth of Meanings" 45.
[79] *Richard III* 1.2.197-9.
[80] *Macbeth* 1.5.61-2. In a footnote, A. R. Braunmuller quotes Dent's proverbial saying from Juvenal that (most likely) lies behind Shakespeare's use of this image: "the face is no index to the heart." Braunmuller *Macbeth* 119, footnote. But clearly Lady Macbeth thinks that at least on this occasion, the face *is* an index to the heart.

with instances of characters being troubled by their inability to 'read' their circumstances, and having their desire to distinguish appearance and reality frustrated. As Macbeth himself says when he has decided—thanks in large measure to the persuasive machinations of Lady Macbeth—to kill Duncan,

> I am settled, and bend up/ Each corporeal agent to this terrible feat./ Away, and mock time with the fairest show,/ False face must hide what the false heart doth know.[81]

The theme of dissembling, or more exactly the need to penetrate the veil dissembling action and discourse is rife in the play. Even the witches participate in the discourse: "He knows thy thought,"[82] but it is Macduff who avails himself of it the most. He speaks on a number of occasions about Macbeth's tyranny,[83] but he also mentions the face on at least three occasions. Having just attributed Macbeth's 'good nature' being corrupted by power (an 'imperial charge'), here he speaks of the problems that afflict the time, expressing his hope that 'grace' has escaped the ravages of the generalized Machiavellian malaise: "Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,/ Yet grace must still look so."[84] This 'must' is of course only a plea, an optimistic hope that there is still something standing firm in the storm of dissembling. In spite of this plea, Malcolm has not availed himself of providentialist thinking; he knows he, and others, must take up arms and act. Rather, his comment is a tacit confession that the enemy is a serious one: "The time you may so hoodwink."[85] That is to say, there is a genuine fear that good and bad, to put it simplistically—or noble and base—cannot be differentiated. If not, Macbeth may appear as fit to rule as Malcolm, if not fitter. As Malcolm says to Macduff, what if "black Macbeth/ Will seem as pure as snow, being compared/ With my confineless harms"?[86] Near the end of the play, when Macduff is preparing to battle Macbeth, he provides an answer to the worrying queries raised by Malcolm: Macduff will get Macbeth to 'show' himself. Macduff repeats the

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[81] *Macbeth* 1.7.80-3.
[82] *Macbeth* 4.1.85.
[83] See my brief discussion in Chapter seven, footnote 17.
[84] *Macbeth* 4.3.23-4.
[85] *Macbeth* 4.3.72.
[86] *Macbeth* 4.3.52-5.

image of show, with its underlying metaphor of seeing, sight and revelation: "tyrant show thy face,"[87] he cries. When he engages Macbeth, or rather when Macbeth says he will not fight Macduff, Macduff's reply is similarly couched in terms of show and public demonstration. That is to say, he announces his intention to put Macbeth's head on a pole, making the tyrant 'face' the world so the world can see him:

> Then yield thee, coward,/ And live to be the show and gaze o'th' time./ We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,/ Painted upon a pole, and underwrit/ 'Here you may see the tyrant.'[88]

It is as though he is going to use Macbeth as a quasi-empirical, public 'verification' of revealed, visible and 'shown' tyranny.

Machiavelli says that "[T]here is no one who can speak to a wicked prince, nor is there any remedy other than steel."[89] This is true, but a realism about possible behaviors, motives, and the recognition of commonplaces about opportunities for insurrection and 'malignity' would certainly help to remedy a wicked prince, not only once he has assumed the throne but before. In fact, with the right 'art' of interpreting and 'reading' for motives, the rise of at least *some* wicked princes and ambitious tyrants can be prevented. It is my contention that Shakespeare is politic enough to have offered this kind of realism, and that he did so—in *Macbeth* and elsewhere—based on the need to grasp other agents' passions. As *Macbeth* shows, this can be a difficult business, fraught with uncertainty. In the play there is hardly any hope held out for this sort of political understanding. But since the alternative can be appalling, an effort must be made.

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[87] *Macbeth* 5.7.15.
[88] *Macbeth* 5.7.53-7.
[89] Machiavelli *Discourses* 119.

Chapter six:
Self-Shaping and the Passions in *Troilus and Cressida*

> The desire for autonomy is at the heart of what it means to be human, and yet the desire for autonomy is not autonomy. It is perhaps closer to a hatred of being ruled. The obstacle for any project to attain autonomy is that on the one hand no assistance can be received from without, for that would be heteronomy. On the other hand, to attain autonomy from within means to be autonomous already. For that reason Nietzsche saw the problem as "*wie man wird was man ist.*"[1]

Autonomy and Self-shaping

We have, according to my interpretation of Shakespeare, a varied and 'myriad-minded' motivational apparatus.[2] This apparatus is a distinct challenge to the possibility of a good life, because it throws us off-balance thanks to the workings of chance and necessity. It is quintessentially protean, often irrational, and regularly impulsive. But we have, as we have been discussing, a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis our passions. As I shall argue in this section, the passions are neither absurd nor rational. That is, we are so constituted as to possess a means, fragile though it may be, of trifling (some of) our terrors: the cunning of emotional reason can work to counteract at least "some of the self-defeating properties of this motivational apparatus."[3] Bacon raises a similar point in a long and illuminating discussion that links the dangers of the affections to political sedition:

> Another article of this knowledge is the inquiry touching the affections; for as in medicining of the body, it is in order first to know the divers complexions and constitutions; secondly, the diseases; and lastly, the cures: so in medicining of the mind, after knowledge of the divers characters of men's natures, it followeth in order to know the diseases and infirmities of the mind, which are no other than the perturbations and distempers of the affections. For as the ancient politiques in popular estates were wont to compare the people to the sea, and the orators to the

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[1] Davis *Ancient Tragedy and the Origins of Modern Science* 3.
[2] This phrase is Haslam's. Haslam "Husbandry of the Appetites."
[3] Haslam "Husbandry of the Appetites" 29.

> winds; because as the sea would of itself be calm and quiet, if the winds did not move and trouble it; so the people would be peaceable and tractable, if the seditious orators did not set them in working and agitation: so it may be fitly said, that the mind in the nature thereof would be temperate and stayed, if the affections, as winds, did not put it into tumult and perturbation.[4]

There is of course much that is objectionable here in this Hobbesian-sounding passage,[5] which seems tailored to royal readers (and not the 'politic' audience of his last work on the reign of King Henry the Seventh), but the underlying framework is interesting. Also, Bacon naturalizes the mind, and so in a sense seems to naturalize sedition, to such an extent that he hurries to explain that the people are naturally peaceable, until the 'heteronomy' of orators introduces tumult. Bacon does not follow the Stoics in suggesting that we can extirpate the passions. He does blame the passions, and he does suggest that we are inherently peaceable and temperate. (This latter view—the postulate of human 'goodness'—is of course wishful thinking of the sort challenged in the Henry the Seventh book.) More importantly, there is the notion of rhetoric as dangerous, and the notion of 'politic' orators as working on the passions as (literal) agitators. The passage is on the whole remarkably inferior to ancient and early modern republican discourses on the passions, where the passions are seen as natural responses that, while they may lie dormant, can be awakened from their slumbers by tyranny, cruelty and monarchical excesses (though of course orators and agitators can play a role too).

The passage also reveals the prevalence in the early modern period of following the longstanding, indeed ancient, practice of symbolizing the workings of the passions or emotions in terms of ships, sea, and pilots, which brings to mind the following lines from *Macbeth*, with which the Bacon passage should be compared for *political* reasons as well. Rosse is speaking:

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[4] Bacon *Of the Advancement of Learning* 163.

[5] After the Revolution, Hobbes blamed the troubles on sedition aroused by people seeing too many plays and reading too many ancient writers; that is, 'too many books of policy' and history. See Worden "English Republicanism" 444.

> But cruel are the times, when we are traitors,/ And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumour/ From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,/ But float upon a wild and violent sea,/ Each way and move.[6]

Here Rosse and Lady Macduff are attempting to explain Macduff's reasons for fleeing, rationalizing the flight in terms of the complexity of the situation. Incidentally, Shakespeare uses the decent Rosse to convey the sense in which sedition and war against even a usurper were viewed with apprehension. But overall, *Macbeth* also shows that people do not need orators to grow to hate tyrants. The play implies that there is something to the idea that passions are inherently aroused by hatred of being ruled, by restrictions on autonomy, and of course by principled objections to tyrants, not just by persuasion.

At any rate, in terms of harnessing the passions for an understanding of politics, a key undertaking first and foremost is to show that the conventional (extreme) dichotomy between reason and emotion is a false one. But then one must reverse this almost immediately, turning the tables somewhat and insisting that sometimes reason—but importantly here revitalized as emotional reason—must work against the emotions. As Bacon says, we must learn "how, I say, to set affection against affection, and to master one by another [...]. For as in the government of states it is sometimes necessary to bridle one faction with another, so it is in the government within."[7] Against the most pernicious of the self- and other-damaging passions, we must bring to bear a kind of moderate neostoicism that places value on *shaping* our passions, and being aware of our passions and interests being shaped by others, especially when those others have—or can have—Machiavellian 'minds.' So, some passions are, *pace* the Stoics, worth retaining.

We have come a considerable distance in terms of grappling with the complex notions in play regarding the politics of the passions. If the Stoics are

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[6] *Macbeth* 4.2.18-22.

[7] Bacon *Of the Advancement of Learning* 164. In the Introduction I discussed Dawkins' notion of 'viruses of the mind.' Dawkins has another remark that is apposite in the context of Bacon's idea that we must set passions against each other to tame or 'master' them. Dawkins writes: "Returning to possible uses of viruses for positive purposes, there are proposals to exploit the 'poacher turned gamekeeper' principle, and 'set a thief to catch a thief.'" Dawkins "Viruses of the Mind" 17.

wrong about the passions, we will have to modify their position, jettisoning their hostility towards emotion, and keeping what seems sensible about the Stoic position: namely, a suspicion of those passions that in their intensity cause us to act irrationally or unreasonably. That is, we ought to become neostoic. In addition, the Stoic position is suspect with respect to politics. The Tacitean alternative to Stoical indifference or resignation is to act, and failing that—if the tyranny is too unrelenting and too formidable—we must at least overcome our indifference and seek to understand, as Tacitus did, the causes, interests and reasons behind 'matters of state' and empire. This means (as we will see especially in Chapter seven and eight) that the playwrights influenced by 'politic history' would inquire into the passions and similar states of mind that motivate agents, rulers and princes, and give insight into their 'interests.' It also meant a moderate realism, over against either Stoic indifference or Stoic cynicism.

We arrive, then, at the neostoic and the Tacitean contributions to early modern political/ethical thought: the first says that tyrants must be understood, and not just endured stoically—we can term this the 'invulnerability through understanding' claim, as distinct from the classical Stoic insistence on invulnerability through indifference; the second encourages the adoption of an incisive, realistic—as in realism—and skeptical understanding of the vagaries of power and court life, though this Tacitean and Thucydidean position should arguably be distinguished from Machiavelli's position. Shakespeare, it will be argued, combines these two positions: namely, neostoicism and Tacitean-Thucydidean realism. Moreover, what emerges here, especially in Shakespearean tragedy, is also a sense of the importance of theorizing or conceiving of the self as a certain kind of agent. What kind of agent must the Shakespeare self turn out to be? This agent must be tragic, that is, neither Stoic nor Platonic in the sense of being able to predict the results of our actions with certainty, or in the sense of having a blueprint for happiness, felicity and success; that is to say, not capitulating to an unreasonably rationalist position.[8] This agent must be a

[8] This is Cottingham's phrase: "blueprint for *eudaimonia*." Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life* 26.

political realist, aware of the dangers of manipulation by unscrupulous agents, though this realism should not approach the cynical realism of Machiavelli. And this agent must be capable of i) suffering (*pathē*) while not being overwhelmed, of ii) celebrating suffering along Romantic, irrationalist lines, whether Rousseauians or rational-choice economists with their unassailable 'preferences' that cannot be criticized but merely acted on—and above all capable of iii) a moderate amount of self-direction. Finally, as has been argued already in this paragraph and in the preceding one, this tragic self must not be Stoically indifferent. Rather, importantly, the self must exercise agency, over and above modifying merely judgements so as to eliminate passions.

With respect to the notion of agency and self-direction, I've chosen the odd phrase 'self-shaping' because the more apt name ('self-fashioning') has already been put into wide circulation by S. Greenblatt to signify a different but related notion, namely that of an agent's social presentation.[9] Before I return to this idea of self-shaping or self-managing, let me briefly describe Greenblatt's influential notion of self-fashioning. Greenblatt's notion is an important revision of earlier treatments of early modern selfhood, especially Jacob Burckhardt's sense of the self as a liberating force in the Renaissance. Greenblatt keeps the Burckhardtian sense of the classical past as crucial and fascinating to the early moderns, but adds the twist that the early modern discovery of and investigation into the classical world was not as healthful and serene as Burckhardt and many of his predecessors held. The confrontation with the past was in some ways akin to the courtier's, the playwright's and indeed the general early modern intellectual's confrontation with the increasing power and social and ideological control residing in the king, court, state and government.[10] That is, both confrontations—with the past and with authority—provoked remarkable anxiety, which was masked or somewhat assuaged to ease anxiety by the adoption of the attitude of self-fashioning. While the stimulating Greenblattian account of self and agency—though agency is a notion interrogated so mercilessly that it is

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[9] Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning.*
[10] Likened to a 'politburo.' Greenblatt *Self-Fashioning* 15.

practically swept away—is an unerringly accurate account of many phenomena, I believe it must to some extent be supplemented.

One prominent virtue of the Greenblattian self-fashioning account is the degree of autonomy the self is considered to retain, in the face of the shaping of the self's identity by its context: the "the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control."[11] But where we can supplement this account is in the following area. Greenblatt contrasts More and Machiavelli, linking—as I probably would not—the Florentine closely to the providential historians. For both the providentialists and Machiavelli, "the political world is transparent."[12] That is to say, the "the massive power structures that determine social and psychic reality" can be cut into, as it were, so as to reveal the way the world is.[13] By this Greenblatt means that once we strip off the layers of deception we can see how the likes of 'ambition and fear,' are manipulated by deceptive princes. For More and for Shakespeare, conversely, the political world is "opaque," especially to "rational calculation," and *especially* "absurd": at the heart of the power of the social world, there is nothing but power, 'all the way down,' as the saying has it.[14] But between absurdity and rational calculation lies a vast swath of the mental (and political) landscape—that is, the passions. The passions are neither absurd nor do they belong to the province of rationality. They can of course irrupt into the mind as utterly non-surd events; and they can, on a cognitivist construal, be acted on and shaped by rational or reasonable agents. Presuming that we keep the passions away from these two extremes—the extremes of irrationality (absurdity) and rationality (*techē* or what Cottingham calls 'ratiocentric' ethics[15])—then a degree of agency, and with it a modicum of optimism, emerges that allows us to move beyond what is on offer in

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[11] Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 3.
[12] Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 15.
[13] Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 254.
[14] Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 14-15. Greenblatt tellingly uses the words 'absurd' or 'absurdity' five times on page 15.
[15] Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life*, chapter two. Incidentally, as I discuss below, Cottingham's treatment of the passions is marred by an excessive hostility to reason, which he unfairly assimilates to extreme rationality.

Greenblatt's reading of More and early modern politics. On Greenblatt's account, More finds opacity, absurdity and above all frenzies at the center of political life:

> The actual texture of his long public life is thick with the ceremonies of power. And yet when he tried to explain why the great bother with these ceremonies, why they stage elaborate theatrical rituals, he concludes ultimately not in a sense of rational calculation but in a sense of the absurd: because they are mad, possessed by "fond fantasies," incapable of distinguishing between truth and fiction. It is not only Machiavellian calculation but humanist reform that finds its limits in this madness: political life cannot be resolved into underlying forces, cannot be treated as a code that the initiated understand and manipulate, because it is fundamentally insane, its practitioners in the grip of "frenzies."[16]

While it is inaccurate to reduce Greenblatt's account of social life and politics to More's, I want nonetheless to propose that More—and perhaps Greenblatt too—misses an opportunity (as I see it) to seize the middle ground between absurdity and rationality. What are these unspecified 'frenzies' that More mentions? Is it not reasonable to construe these as passions? If so, they can be fleshed out and explained, and so related to the 'motions' that move agents, including rulers. That is to say, instead of positing these 'frenzies' as the terminus of behaviour, or instead of positing them as unexamined motives, perhaps it would be worth inquiring into the constituent blocks, so to speak, of these frenzies. This would mean inquiring in the manner of a Thucydides, who investigates the delusions, drives and divisions found in the warring city-states of his world, and in the agents who were involved. This would also mean inquiring in the manner, moreover, of a Tacitus, whose own accounts of political and imperial decadence, corruption, perversity and perfidious actions have inspired so many writers to understand their own and other social worlds.[17] It would also mean—following the lead of Shakespeare—inquiring into the passions both as motives and as consequences; and inquiring into passions as factors over which agents, buffeted though they are by contingency, have some *agency*, some control. Finally it means taking John Marston's character Mendoza seriously when he says, in a

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[16] Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 15.

[17] As 'politic historians' John Hayward and Henry Savile "saw the writings of Tacitus as offering guidance on how men might survive under the rule of tyrants." Levy "Francis Bacon and the Style of Politics" 151.

Tacitean turn of phrase: "Prevention is the heart of policy."[18] And it means, *pace* Cottingham for instance, drawing a distinction between "moral wisdom" and "rational plans," and not reductively collapsing the former into the latter because of an otherwise healthy suspicion of ratiocentric thought.[19] However, wisdom is arguably a posit of commonsense, and it refers in this context to a moderate sense of control and agency in the shaping of one's motivational apparatus, as when Hamlet says "Hold, hold, my heart" or Lady Macbeth says "make thick my blood," to take just two examples of self-shaping.[20]

Certainly it may be replied that is to negate the force of the passions, and the awesome ineffability of something like frenzy, wrongly assimilating it to mere, and so manageable, passions like hatred or ambition. That is, to my insistence on the usefulness of the passions, and their necessity in understanding the human actions that are so central to culture and politics, it may be replied that the passions are best understood as dark and mysterious forces to which—to paraphrase Wittgenstein—we can only point, and about which we must be silent. It might be correct, then, to say as Cottingham does, that our best response to the passions is to insist on their opacity, their absurdity. Cottingham makes his argument convincing by linking his defence of the passions as irrational (or more accurately, *a-rational* or non-rational) to the Greek tragedians who are set over against the classical philosophers.

> The defining myths of Greek culture, so brilliantly explored by Aeschylus [...] by Sophocles [...] by Euripides in the *Medea* and the *Bacchae*, presented a world of terror and anguish, a world in which ordered rational planning was always in danger of being overwhelmed by the forces of unreason, either externalized in the inexorable power of fate and implacable anger and fury of the gods, or internalized in the blind passions, driving the tragic protagonists to irrevocable horrors of arrogance, cruelty and lust. To those reared on such a cultural diet, the confidence of Platonic, Aristotelian and Hellenistic ethics in the powers of human rationality may well have appeared quite extraordinary.[21]

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[18] *The Malcontent* 2.5.73. Despite this—and a few other—apt quotation and some ingenious and witty dialogue, Marston, it must be said, is only rarely a serious Tacitean in the 'politic history' mode. Usually he is a cynic, and at best an 'unmasker' of pretention in court life. Most of the characters Marston contrived are little more than cynical Thersites-like characters.

[19] Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life* 26.

[20] *Hamlet* 1.5.93.

[21] Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life* 33.

Cottingham is disarmingly open about his biases, but we should remark on his failure to understand the role of the passions in tragedy (arguably not only classical tragedy). He holds that rationality is overwhelmed by the passions—termed, inappropriately, 'blind'—and that accounts of the gods being motivated and moved by passions bespeak a failure to acknowledge the power of the 'forces of unreason.' What has escaped him is that the classical practice of inferring the states of mind of gods, goddesses and of course other agents is not illegitimate, but rather *is* to give a rational account.[22] It is not the case that the passions are *a-logical*, or 'outside' 'behind' or 'beyond' the account (*logos*) we can provide of agents' actions. The passions are perfectly legitimate explanatory mechanisms; they tell us what 'moves' an agent. Rather than being the surrender to absurdity (or faith), the use of the passions in this manner is a means of making actions surd. Not necessarily admirable, or ideal or commendable, of course, but nonetheless comprehensible. Of course it is unlikely that Cottingham would be swayed by my arguments. He says elsewhere that the idea of "enlarging and educating our understanding" is "optimistic" by which he means that it is part of the fallacious thinking underpinning 'rationalistic,' 'ratiocentric,' and 'synoptic' ethics and thought—the very targets of his book.[23] Conversely, I hold with the likes of M. Nussbaum that educating our passions and striving for practical wisdom—moderately construed—is one of the best things open to us as political agents.[24]

Against Cottingham and More, and in defence of the notion that a 'politic history' of the passions can provide a sense of the motives and intentions and forces that inspire agents to act, I enlist the aid of Ben Jonson. We can turn to Jonson's (1604) epigram written on the occasion his friend Henry Savile's knighthood, wherein Jonson calls for an explicitly politic—and 'politic historical'—understanding of the state and rulers, precisely the understanding of politics given by Tacitus in Savile's 'englishing' of the historian:

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[22] We can put this more modestly, and speak of a 'reasonable' account.
[23] Cottingham *Philosophy and the Good Life* 28.
[24] See, e.g., Nussbaum *The Therapy of Desire.*

> [...] We need a man that knows the several graces/ Of history, and how to apt their places [...] We need a man can speak of the intents,/ The counsels, actions, orders and events/ Of state, and censure them; we need his pen/ Can write the things, the causes, and the men.[25]

I now return to the discussion of 'self-shaping.' It is not a foregone conclusion that a middle ground—between a hostility to the passions on the one hand, and a celebration of their corrosive power on the other—can be found, or that it can be found to be habitable. But I think there is something to be said for identifying such a middle ground.

The 'art' of the passions is—as we have just seen—a kind of hermeneutic practice that helps to account for both motives and behaviour. Self-shaping or self-managing is one facet of this 'art.'[26] Not only do we understand others' motives and desires in terms of the things that motivate them, we also understand ourselves in the same way. More importantly, we can 'direct' our selves. We have the capacity (known as agency, of course) to exercise on ourselves certain 'techniques of the self'—as M. Foucault puts it—whereby we transform ourselves, perhaps even therapeutically.[27] In order to avoid getting bogged down in different and difficult accounts of ways of affecting (and effecting) selfhood, I want to say that by self-shaping I mean little more than our agency moderating, modifying or even mollifying our passions. So, self-shaping is a kind of control of the emotions, but also a bulwark against the 'cognitive' anarchy of endless wanting (*pleonexia*) and the buffeting of us by the vicissitudes of the appetites and passions. It is also a defensive posture, to be adopted in the face of rhetorical manipulation by others. As such a defensive posture, it is not just a 'politic' understanding of the relevance of past events—a humanist commonplace—but it is also a kind of informed critical awareness with respect to the power of others

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[25] Jonson, quoted in Mellor *Tacitus: The Classical Heritage* 102-3.

[26] Haslam "Husbandry of the Appetites" 29, uses the phrase 'self-management.' Another writer, discussing Spinoza, uses the longer phrase: "the disciplined emendation of the passions." Scruton *Spinoza* 85. And Sorabji speaks of "introspective supervision." *Emotion and Peace of Mind* 13.

[27] There is a discussion of Foucault's notions of 'care of the self' and 'cultivation of the self' in Hadot *Philosophy as a Way of Life* 206-12. This horticultural metaphor occurs repeatedly in literature on the passions and the self. See also Tuck *Philosophy and Government* 54: "With Lipsius [...] wisdom comes not through the repression of emotion by reason, but through the cultivation of helpful passions, like plants in a garden."

to "lift [our] blood with persuasion" to modify slightly an expression of Hotspur's.[28] Thus, as should be apparent, it is a matter of urging the *rhetoric* of the passions, not least because of the dangers of manipulative agents but also because of capricious princes.[29] The modification, though not extirpation, of the emotions is a synecdoche, a model for 'liberty' that is, for the attainment and exercise of autonomy in the face of irrationality.[30] Certainly it is not a stretch to maintain that the successful shaping and managing of the passions—part of good self-government—is part and parcel of the life of a democratic citizen. As K. Sharpe writes in his discussion of early modern thought, "Contemporary writers readily politicized their mental conditions."[31] But a central concern in the early modern period was with the 'mental states' of the head of state: to wit, the king or ruler was regularly described—especially by republicans—as needing laws to restrain his passions (themselves sometimes a metaphor for capriciousness). As Sharpe notes, the political mid-sixteenth century Scottish humanist (and tutor to Montaigne and King James)

> [George] Buchanan had described the laws as a check on the passions of the king, reminding us that in the head itself reason and appetite contended for government. [Others] even foresaw that "decapitation is a reasonable remedy for a diseased body politic". [...] The king was human and *ergo* subject to the passions of humanity, for all that as the head he represented the source of reason. Monarchs then needed to order their affections and appetites.[32]

As we see here, to understand the passions, and *via* the passions, could even be construed as a political virtue. However, for some early modern writers, the passions were not something worth understanding. Rather the passions were to be disparaged (and extirpated) while true virtue—in a world rife with "decay, deceit and flattery"[33]—was to be found in the past. For the early modern writer Anthony Stafford (author of a 1611 biography of Diogenes), the best life was, as he

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[28] *1 Henry 4* 5.2.78.
[29] To be 'affected' was at one time a more disparaging expression than it is now.
[30] It is interesting to note in this regard that 'Liber' (the etymology of liberty and liberate, etc.) is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Dionysus, the god responsible for tragedy.
[31] Sharpe "A Commonwealth of Meanings" 63.
[32] Sharpe "A Commonwealth of Meanings" 62.
[33] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 130.

advocated, one of contemplation. "The qualities of fortitude, steadfastness and resolution—the extreme suppression of emotions—were the chief characteristics of virtue," writes M. Peltonen.[34] A similarly Stoic or *near*-Stoic—as distinct from neostoic—position is urged by Thomas Lodge in his translation of Seneca: "to be truely virtuous is to be happy, to subdue passion is to be truely a man."[35]

Yet another early modern 'defence' of virtue can be cited. This one is also framed in terms of the need to restrain the passions or emotions:

> [The] effect of virtue: "is especially to hold in check the turbulent movements of the soul and to restrain them within the bounds of moderation, and since tragedy, more than that, curbs these emotions, it must surely be granted that tragedy's usefulness to the state is extraordinary."[36]

This fascinating quotation articulates a view of tragedy as containing the subversiveness of the passions.[37] The problem with this is that it does not countenance the possibility that tragedy, through the delineation of the passions, could be political. Tragedy is 'politic' (that is, political in the early modern sense)—not only in showing the disasters to which a 'passionate' and especially lust-driven ruler could subject his polity—but also, and especially, by revealing and uncovering the secret motives and hidden causes of political action, motives and causes for which the passions were often a shorthand description. The Platonist sees tragedy as corrupting by evoking inherently corrupting emotions (guilt and pity) that unhinge the soul; Nicaise Van Ellebode thinks only of tragic *catharsis* as releasing emotion that could be used to resist the government, crown or as he says, 'state.' Both alternatives ignore Aristotelian perspective that

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[34] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 131.
[35] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 130. As has been mentioned, what can be called 'neostoicism' is far less hostile to the passions than Stoicism proper.
[36] Nicaise Van Ellebode [1572], quoted in Orgel "The Play of Conscience" 142.
[37] The expressions used here are of course those of S. Greenblatt. In an interesting discussion of these ideas Dollimore says, "Historicist critics like Stephen Greenblatt [...] have read [Shakespeare's] plays in relation to a process identifiable in both the theatre and its wider culture whereby potentially subversive social elements are *contained* in the process of being *rehearsed.* In contrast, *Radical Tragedy* finds in this theatre a substantial challenge; not a vision of political freedom so much as a subversive knowledge of political domination." Dollimore *Radical Tragedy* xxi.

catharsis comes about as 'undeserved misfortune' that dialectically brings to mind the idea that misfortune was *not* inevitable.

In Aristotle, misfortune is introduced against a background, as it were, where 'deserved' and 'undeserved' are already (practically and pragmatically) understood. The much-disputed notion of *catharsis* has been taken to mean anything from medical purgation to homeopathic alleviation and change to 'clarification,' as well as combinations of some of these. ('Purification' of the emotions was a particular favourite in the English Renaissance; this could have something to do with the fact that Aristotle's *Poetics* was not translated into English until 1705. Even the educated, well-read Milton gets *catharsis* wrong, arguing that emotions are purged rather than clarified.[38]) 'Clarification' seems to hold out the most promise, however, and its adherents are among the most qualified and eloquent.[39] Moreover, 'clarification' suits my purposes admirably, for I hold that Shakespearean 'politic history' and drama *clarify* politics, using the tool-kit of the passions. So it is not the case that tragedy *contains* the passions, but that it clarifies them, and so the passions contribute to political thought. The goal in this section has been to find a place for the passions in tragedy—not as the factors that induce irrationality and error—but as factors that help to explain why agents act the way they do. I turn now to the discussion of some of these themes and ideas in *Troilus and Cressida.*

Passion and Political Wisdom in *Troilus and Cressida*

> The realist's road is a dangerous one to travel. It can very easily end in fierce disillusion, bitter vituperation or the languors of total despair.[40]

There are some curious phrases in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* that have a bearing on the need to understand 'passion and interest,' and indeed to

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[38] He strongly endorses the 'purgation' view in his infamous preface to *Samson Agonistes*, his 'Christian tragedy.' Milton's Christian bias might also play a role.
[39] See, in particular, the authoritative Halliwell *Aristotle's Poetics*, but also Nussbaum *The Fragility of Goodness*, J. Lear "Catharsis," and Gould *The Ancient Quarrel between Poetry and Philosophy.*
[40] Sanders *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* 335.

understand what 'understanding' human agents means. I want to briefly consider the theme of political wisdom and understanding in this dark, disillusioning play. A main element is the relationship between this political wisdom and the passions. Even in the midst of one of the most cynical contexts Shakespeare has conjured for a play—the killing fields surrounding Troy, where the appallingly unheroic 'heroes' Achilles, Ajax, Ulysses, Agamemnon are all coldly demystified—there is an insistence upon political wisdom. A recent critic has suggested that we see *Troilus and Cressida* as an effort on Shakespeare's part to "destabilize the epic idiom associated with Homer and Chapman's Englished *Iliads*" wherein Shakespeare gives an Ovidian "debunking representation" of the great heroes Ajax and Ulysses.[41] J. Bate writes:

> Ulysses' manipulation of Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida* offers a clinical demonstration of how rhetorical skill leads not to principled heroic action but to pragmatic machiavellian efficacy, just as the play as a whole destabilizes the entire humanist project of learning from the exemplars of the past.[42]

The emphasis here on Machiavelli and rhetoric is correct but it is the framing of it in terms of a dismissal of 'humanist learning' that is suspect. Arguably Shakespeare is one of those Elizabethan figures in intellectual life who experienced the transition from humanist thought to skeptical, Tacitean post-humanism; and, as I argue in Chapter seven, Shakespeare has a close relationship—personally and in his works—with the Tacitus-inspired tradition of 'politic history.' For this tradition, learning from the past, as well as the present, is not something to be dismissed. The same is certainly true of that most radical of humanists, Machiavelli, who wrote his *Discourses* on Livy *because* it paid to learn from the 'exemplars of the past.' Of course Bate is right that Shakespeare debunks aspects of the false heroism of the Trojan war. But Shakespeare does so, it can be argued, to question the notion of self-interest, and—as I will show below—to demonstrate how, why and where cynicism and self-deception are obstacles to political 'learning' and wisdom. It is interesting to compare Thucydides on the matter of the Trojan war. Thucydides is

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[41] Bate *Shakespeare and Ovid* 109.
[42] Bate *Shakespeare and Ovid* 109-10.

eager to correct Homer's emphasis, which he sees as naïve about the 'glories' of warfare. He does not attack Homer on certain specific points, but shows that the emphases on the glory of war in the *Iliad* are problematic, irrespective of the question of Homer's veracity.[43] War is for Thucydides both pointless *and* necessary, tragic *and* absurd. Of course Homer emphasizes some of these aspects of war too; both the epic writer and the historian share a general interest in the tragedies that befall human agents. Thucydides however believes he can avoid overvaluing the alleged 'glory' of war, in part by studying what amounts to a civil war, and—better still—he believes he can present a rigorous reckoning of war's causes and motives. But the point is that the specific causes of most conflicts are worth our inquiries. Debunking is part of that, not a substitute.

A key theme of *Troilus and Cressida* is how a grasp of the passions can be a crutch to the political wisdom already mentioned. However, this is not always possible, for in the context of a Thucydidean *stasis* (discord, faction, war, and the viciousness and self-interest that accompany some wars), self-deception and self-interest can be overwhelming obstacles to the exercise of wisdom. In *Troilus and Cressida* it is as though the principal characters know how to attain a modicum of practical wisdom, but they cannot do it. A similar sentiment is expressed by A. P. Rossiter who says of the characters that,

> They *all* fancy or pretend they are being or doing one thing, whereas they are shown up as something quite different: something which egoism, or lack of moral insight, prevents their recognizing. [... It] is the final verdict on the whole war [...].[44]

The requisite insight seems to be there; it is just that the characters are too self-deceived to understand it. And passion plays a role in this self-deception: as Thersites says, cursing Patroclus, "The common/ curse of mankind, folly and ignorance, be thine in great/ revenue! Heaven bless thee from a tutor, and discipline/ come not near thee! Let thy blood be thy direction till/ thy death."[45] The core of Thersites' insult or warning can be paraphrased as follows: 'let your passions

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[43] I owe this point to G. Crane. See Crane *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity* 129.
[44] Rossiter *Angel with Horns* 134.
[45] *Troilus and Cressida* 2.3.25-9.

(blood) rule you and you will die.' As he famously says, of course, the results of passion are 'war and lechery.' But Thersites' insights are only half-formed, for the passions are not insurmountable. He is not alone. The passions are reflected on, pondered and considered by nearly every character in the play. But knowing the passions need to be understood, and acting to achieve understanding are two different things. One obstacle to understanding is cynicism; another is the problem of self-interest, which holds most characters in thrall. Pandarus for example asks questions about the nature of love, after Paris has cynically reduced it to the consumption of doves, a source of meat thought to heat the blood and induce ardour: "Is this the generation of love? Hot blood, hot/ thoughts and hot deeds? Why, they are vipers. Is love a/ generation of vipers?"[46] The reduction of so valorized a passion as love to something like a venomous viper is part of what gives this play its bleak atmosphere. It is reminiscent of Iago's reduction of love to 'a species of lust' in *Othello*.

This reference to 'vipers' lets us segue into a discussion of Machiavelli, before we return to the treatment of the passions by some of the characters. The political theorist J. Shklar similarly reaches for the word 'viper' in a discussion of the Florentine philosopher's influence:

> What if one accepted Machiavelli's picture of the political world as a wholly treacherous place? What if it were nothing but a dense web of betrayals? What if courts were vipers' nests and Machiavelli was just an honest, unhypocritical reporter?[47]

For reasons already outlined (especially in Chapter five, but elsewhere too), I believe Machiavelli to be a cynical or immoderate realist. Paradoxically, by urging an extreme realism Machiavelli ends up 'unrealistic' about human agents. Machiavelli's insistence on the inevitability of depravity and power-seeking means that his political thought is less the attempts of a republican to warn his peers about princely intransigence and perfidy, and more the work of a man who works to enshrine *reason of state* thinking everywhere. Is it really clear that the classical

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[46] *Troilus and Cressida* 3.1.126-8.
[47] Shklar *Ordinary Vices* 167.

tradition of virtue—what J. Casey calls "pagan virtue"[48]—is entirely bankrupt? Is Machiavelli right to enshrine an instrumental rationality in place of the classical (Aristotelian) notion of reason as practical mental function capable of moderating or tempering the passions? Of course, Machiavelli's defenders will always claim that he is only pointing out what agents do, not what they ought to do. But by this argument, Thersites too—with his initially entertaining but finally grating cynicism—would be 'merely' pointing out flaws, faults and foibles. And this seems wrong, or incomplete.

Rather, what is at the center of this play—and which explains the inclusion of a figure as pessimistically cynical as Thersites—is the implication that at a certain point 'debunking' becomes so cynical an enterprise that it begins to feed upon itself, sweeping away the very notion of self-government. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the classical ideal of the self-governing community—ruled at least in part by *logos* (by 'reasoned speech') and by the premise of *paideia* (the notion that agents are capable of being educated)—becomes nothing but a group of back-biting, self-interested agents, whose Machiavellian fetishization of interest ensures, in turn, that they cannot become sufficiently freed from the ravages of passions and appetites to engage in deliberation. Furthermore, in this play, the classical and "neo-roman"[49] ideal of the self-governing individual, who tames his or her passions at least most of the time, becomes nothing but a creature in the thrall of passion. The Greeks of the fourth and fifth centuries (B.C.E.), who were so transfixed by the Homeric epics, regarded public, collective deliberation as one of the central themes of the *Iliad*. (Of course it is the collective deliberation of aristocratic warrior chieftains, the heads of an army.) In Shakespeare's version, there is little or no deliberation, either collective or 'internal' to an agent. Indeed one of the failings of the play *qua* aesthetic spectacle is the absence of a character with an appealing and rich 'interior' life whose speeches contain

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[48] Casey *Pagan Virtue*.

[49] This phrase is used by Q. Skinner to refer to quasi-republican modes and practices of political reflection and action, which above all emphasize 'free states and individual liberty.' See Skinner *Liberty before Liberalism*. Neo-roman thought was a 'style' of political reasoning that Hobbes saw as a serious—if never rigorously articulated—rival to his own version (indeed all versions) of monarchism.

deliberation, or reports on his or her deliberation. This absence can be attributed to Shakespeare simply penning a poor play. However, it can be that he was interested in showing the limits of cynicism, and how the context of war can—as Thucydides held—destroy the very virtues that normally sustain a polity, and which are essential for a community's flourishing.

From a related perspective, the 'problem' of politics in *Troilus and Cressida* is the complex—and paradoxical—problem that passions sometimes make us blind to our interests, and also sometimes make us blind to our other passions. Does this mean that cynicism is justified, or is there a hint in the play that escapes the characters but is nonetheless educative? There is, I would argue, no warrant for a widespread pessimism or a Machiavellian cynicism, even though self-deception sometimes happens. What the play dramatizes is that the politics of the passions is by no means an infallible 'method' of understanding agents. Unless there is a prior desire to understand, self-deception and self-interest can bring about the kind of cynical discord we see in both the Greek and Trojan camps. Let us turn to some of the details of the play, focusing on those places where the characters seem to grasp, however incompletely, the need for understanding.

In the third Act, Troilus has finally arranged to meet Cressida. In his monologue he confesses that he is giddy, filled with expectations, and consumed with fear. He speaks only of his own passions, mentioning fear three times, joy twice, and love once. When Pandarus enters, Troilus says,

> Even such a passion doth embrace my bosom./ My heart beats thicker than a feverous pulse,/ And all my powers do their bestowing lose,/ Like vassalage at unawares encount'ring/ The eye of majesty.[50]

By 'bestowing' here he means function or use, meaning therefore that he is unable to exercise control—agency—over his actions and reactions, now that he is in the thrall of love, desire and anticipation. What is interesting is that Troilus immediately links being in thrall to passion to the ideological spectacle of majesty, which inspires a different emotion in the (plebian) viewer: awe. According to the Arden

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[50] *Troilus and Cressida* 3.2.33-5.

editor, Troilus is referring to the "awe-inspiring presence" of the king.[51] In a discussion of Golding's Elizabethan translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, J. Bate remarks that Golding's insertion of the "phrase 'to keepe the folke in awe'" [...] suggests a distinctively 16th cent., quasi-machiavellian, view."[52] This is not to suggest that Shakespeare had Ovid in mind when he composed the play, though this is possible, but that the 'politic' and demystifying use of the notion of awe was a commonplace. With respect to 'awe,' since this play is pitched at both Shakespeare's audience and his contemporaries, we cannot help but think of Elizabeth or James I (and not Priam) and the awe and worshipful fealty early modern proto-absolutist rulers sought to instill in their subjects and courtiers. However, the use of this word in this play is somewhat ironic, because in the generally caustic and cynical context of the war, no one on either side shows any sign of feeling or showing awe. Everything, but everything, in this play works to "undermine rather than [confirm] authority"; there is no awe, only passions, self-deception and the "demystifying and diminishing" of authority.[53] Demystification is harped on relentlessly by almost everyone, tempered only by feeble attempts such as Cressida's at practicing a practical wisdom untainted by corrosive cynicism. Of course she is not exactly the only person to discuss wisdom in the play; Ulysses too brings it up on several occasions. One of these occasions is when he describes the petulant Achilles—whose passion for a captured Trojan girl famously prevents him from fighting—to Agamemnon, relying on the explanatory mechanism of the passions:

> Possessed he is with greatness/ And speaks not to himself but with a pride/ That quarrels at self-breath. Imagined worth/ Holds in his blood such swoll'n and hot discourse/ That 'twixt his mental and his active parts/ Kingdomed Achilles in commotion rages/ And batters down himself.[54]

At any rate, when Cressida arrives shortly thereafter, she and Troilus flirt, kiss and speak to each other. Their discourse is an admixture of desire, sexual innuendo, and the (continued) demystification of the very love they are also professing to feel.

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[51] Bevington *Troilus and Cressida* 230, footnote.
[52] Bate *Shakespeare's Ovid* 255.
[53] Kastan "Proud Majesty Made a Subject" 462.
[54] *Troilus and Cressida* 2.3.167-73.

They are interrupted when Cressida is startled. She blames fear and launches into a discussion of this passion: "Blind fear, that seeing reason leads, finds safer/ footing than blind reason, stumbling without fear. To/ fear the worst oft cures the worst."[55] Certainly she is right to say that wariness and suspicion can be helpful at times. But the overwhelming sense that the play gives is that wariness and suspicion do not 'cure' the worst, rather they confirm it. Suspicion can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more Machiavellian one is, the more Machiavellian one can expect one's peers, interlocutors and enemies to be. Clearly, being willfully naïve is not an option, either. A sensible middle-ground option is to pursue a course of practical wisdom.[56] This is Cressida's choice, and wisely she starts by inquiring into the nature of the passions. She raises the question of fear first, and soon moves on to love. Troilus attempts to assuage her fears by telling her that there are no "monsters" in "Cupid's/ pageant"—"This is/ the monstruosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite/ and the execution confined."[57] Cressida is still concerned, and so when she finally confesses (in front of Pandarus who has returned to the room) to Troilus that she loves him, she is quick to raise the political theme again. In response to Troilus' question about her earlier reluctance to show her love, she makes the following interesting comment:

> Hard to seem won; but I was won, my lord,/ With the first glance that ever – pardon me;/ If I confess much, you will play the tyrant./ I love you now, but till now not so much/ But I might master it.[58]

Cressida makes an interesting connection between a passion (love and desire) and politics, in this case tyranny. She is also afraid of losing control ('mastery') of herself, which of course is part and parcel of tyranny too. Of course ultimately Cressida is buckled by circumstance. Despite her sentiment that she has 'forgot' her father, and her protestations that she no longer 'knows' the "touch of consanguinity,"[59] she goes over to the Greeks. After informing her of her fate,

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[55] *Troilus and Cressida* 3.2.68-70.
[56] The Arden editor, D. Bevington, speaks of "wise precaution" which is akin to my emphasis on Cressida's interest in practical wisdom. See Bevington *Troilus and Cressida* 232, footnote.
[57] *Troilus and Cressida* 3.2.77-9.
[58] *Troilus and Cressida* 3.2.113-7.
[59] *Troilus and Cressida* 4.2.98. This is a distinctly non-Cordelia-like sentiment.

Pandarus speaks to her, telling her to "Be moderate, be moderate." She asks: "How can I moderate it?/ If I could temporize with my affection,/ or brew it to a weak and colder palate,/ The like allayment could I give my grief."[60] The play as a whole is full of this kind of talk about the passions. Nearly every character at some point confesses that he or she is unable to tame or master passion. When Cressida finally confronts Troilus again, late in the play, she confesses that it is her 'sex' (gender) that is to blame for her inconstancy, but this is unconvincing since other characters (male characters) have the same trouble with, for example, 'patience.' Patience is the 'guard' that restrains the passions: as D. Bevington says, Troilus' phrase a 'guard of patience' refers to the fact that "Troilus can barely control with his reason the hot blood that, as Ulysses observes [...], threatens to break out in irrational behaviour."[61]

At any rate, Cressida rephrases her blame of her gender and mentions her eyes and her vision. Her point is now that the problem is that the eyes lead the mind astray, as it were. The mind is less powerful than the eyes that 'direct' it. "The error of our eye directs our mind./ What error leads must err. O, then conclude:/ Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude."[62] Of course the eye is hardly the problem; rather, the passions are the real obstacle, if they are not understood. Troilus' reply shows that—perhaps because of the pain he has suffered in the intervening period—he has understood something about deception and self-deception. It is not the eyes that mislead the mind, but the 'heart,' the passions. Troilus says,

> Sith yet there is a credence in my heart,/ An esperance so obstinately strong,/ That doth invert th'attest of eyes and ears, As if those organs had deceptious functions,/ Created only to calumniate.[63]

What can be done to lessen or mitigate the effects of passion and self-deception? Does anyone have an answer? 'Nothing,' is the answer we get repeatedly from Thersites. Thersites discerns the lowliest motive wherever it is; and he is quick to

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[60] *Troilus and Cressida* 4.4.1 and 4.4.5-8.
[61] Bevington *Troilus and Cressida* 317.
[62] *Troilus and Cressida* 5.2.116-8.
[63] *Troilus and Cressida* 5.2.126-30.

condemn the foolishness of everyone he sees, railing at anyone who cannot use his or her reason. Ulysses at least has something to offer.

I want to end with the claim that Ulysses is one of the few to share Cressida's insight that it is important to possess practical wisdom, that is to know how and why agents act the way they do. Cressida, like so many of the other characters, is unable to translate her understanding into *practical* knowledge, and by the end she has lost her earlier insights. Ulysses is not much different, and the tenor of this play gets much of its bleakness from the fact that the wisest and most prudent (and cunning[64]) man in the classical world gets so much wrong. For example, he insists that Cressida is a prostitute and he misreads the lecherous Diomedes. Still, despite being wrong about the details, so to speak, Ulysses is also correct when he says,

> The providence that's in a watchful state/ Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold,/ Finds bottom in th'uncomprehensive deeps,/ Keeps place with thought, and almost, like the gods,/ Do thoughts unveil in their dumbest cradles./ There's a mystery – with whom relation/ Durst never meddle – in the soul of state.[65]

What is interesting about this speech is that Ulysses articulates some of the premises of 'politic history': watchfulness, knowing mysteries or secrets of state, keeping up with political changes ('Keeps place with thought'). The reference to 'providence' is not necessarily religious at all, if the Arden editor is correct. Bevington writes in a footnote that 'providence' here refers to 'foresight' and 'prudent management.' The Longer Note presses the point, stressing the possible topicality of the idea of viewing or observing "the private lives and political persuasions of important personages."[66] Certainly it is also intriguing to hear Ulysses speak of something like the 'soul of state,' which might be a reference to *reason of state*, but which is more likely a reference to affairs of state or mysteries of state. Here we have again found the theme of practical wisdom. There is—for republicans as for anyone interested in

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[64] In *Philoctetes* Sophocles gives us an extremely unappealing, cruel Ulysses.
[65] *Troilus and Cressida* 3.3.198-204.
[66] Bevington *Troilus and Cressida* 366, note to 3.3.198. Bevington also links Ulysses' comment 'watchful state,' and interest in the great Greek politicians, to the topical interest in knowing the minds of the ruling elite: here and elsewhere he mentions Cecil, Essex and Walsingham, and other leaders, figures and ministers of Elizabeth's last decade.

practical matters of politics—real importance in knowing the minds of politicians, and the minds of others. Bevington in his introduction makes the valuable point that the play dramatizes the change in thought from Aquinas to Hobbes: agents' behaviour is mercilessly reductively cut down to size and portrayed as shaped largely if not exclusively by self-interest. Another, similar reading would see the change from Aristotle to Machiavelli. On this reading what is dramatized in this play is the shift from the notion of practical wisdom and understanding—the education for virtue and deliberation—to a far more reduced notion of prudential and calculating conception of 'wisdom.' That is, there is a move from a moderate realism about agents' motives to a cynical realism that ascribes all virtue and all 'motions' to appetite. To conclude, we can say that while Ulysses has it right when he warns, "The amity that wisdom knits not, folly may/ easily untie,"[67] he does not always abide by his own observations.

[67] *Troilus and Cressida* 2.3.99-100.

Chapter seven:
'Politic History' and the Passions

> Following in the steps of Guicciardini, Machiavelli, and the French *politique* Bodin, Hayward, using Tacitus as a stylistic model of both form and manner, aimed at realistic character-studies of the historical figures he presented. In these, actions were analysed, not as in the older historiography in terms of conformity to the moral purpose unfolded in history by providentialist design, but instead in terms of the "politic" art by means of which the historical actor, his will powered by passion and interest, attained his objectives....[1]

Shakespeare and 'Politic History'

There are many factors that combine to yield the particular web of beliefs and ideas and practices, including dramaturgical practices, which comprise 'politic history.' Some of these factors include *politique* royalism,[2] Huguenot and Catholic (Hotmanian) resistance theory and debates over the legitimate scope of a ruler's prerogatives; late medieval and early modern (Italian city-state) republicanism; classical sources, ideas and concerns; post-chivalric desires among the nobility to counsel their ruler or prince; intellectual foment surrounding the Sidney circle;[3] the influence of classical historians; Machiavellian and Guiccardinian inquiries into the health of states and means for acquiring, and keeping, political power; and above all Tacitean thought.[4]

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[1] James *Society, Politics and Culture* 420-1. M. James mentions Hayward, but clearly a number of other thinkers, including dramatists, were 'politic' too, in the same manner.

[2] See the chapter on resistance theory in Burns and Goldie *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, where this phrase recurs.

[3] For the Dutch connection—relevant to Sidneyian Protestant radicalism—see Van Gelderen "The Machiavellian moment and the Dutch Revolt."

[4] This brief paragraph on the intellectual origins of 'politic history' is admittedly inadequate to the remarkably large and unwieldy body of work now available. More details relevant to Shakespeare's intellectual context will emerge in the context of various discussions. For an overview of the wider intellectual context, see Tuck *Philosophy and Government*, Q. Skinner's two volumes on early modern political thought—*The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*—and the essays in Burns and Goldie *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*. Worden *Sound of Virtue* covers Sidney and his circle; and F. J. Levy's essays and book on Tudor historiography cover some of the Elizabethans and Jacobean playwrights and historians. Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* too is relevant on Stuart historiography. The study of republicanism is a burgeoning field, proceeding at a breakneck pace, and the sources are too

What was Tacitean political history, or 'politic history'? The late Elizabethan and early Stuart period was fortunate to possess many political models that could be used to analyse the contemporary scene, filled as it was with intrigue, speculations, jockeying for position in the orbits surrounding the monarch and the court. One such political model, though hardly unified as a coherent and cohesive methodological programme, was that of the 'politic historians,' to use a term popularized by F. J. Levy in his *Tudor Historical Thought*.[5] The basic presupposition shared by many of the 'politic' or 'political historians' was that events in the past could be used to explain similar events in the present. This much, however, was standard humanist fare, as can be seen from a study of *Mirror for Magistrates* and from *speculum principie* literature.

> Yet this I note concernynge rebelles and rebellyouns, althought the deuyll raise them, yet God always useth them to his glory, as a parte of his Justice. For whan Kyngs...suffer theyr under offices to misuse theyr subiects, and will not heare nor ememdy theyr wrongs whan they complayne, than sufferth God the Rebell to rage, and to execute that parte of his Iustice that the parcyall prince would not.[6]

What distinguishes 'politic history' is the answer its practitioners give to the question *why* past and present 'mirror' each other. This question requires a longish answer, which will comprise most of this chapter, before I move on to discuss the changing role of Fortune in the shift from early modern humanism to the realism of Tacitean 'politic history.'

The 'politic historians' saw past events and epochs in terms of situated agents labouring to make sense of their contexts and acting in terms of that sense. This hardly seems to be a radical insight, but what makes it radical is the preference

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numerous to canvas, but the essentials as far as English history is concerned are covered in Raab's *English Face of Machiavelli*, Fink's *Classical Republicans*, Peltonen's *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* and Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*; Rahe's three volumes on ancient and modern republics are important; and Hankins' *Civic Humanism* is an edited volume containing the latest scholarship. Essays by Kahn, particularly "Revising," and Worden, particularly "English Republicanism," "Milton's Republicanism" and "Classical Republicanism," treat the English background, as does Norbrook's *Writing the English Republic*, though it deals with the post-Shakespearean period, and is especially directed at understanding the period immediately preceding the Revolution.

[5] Levy *Tudor Historical Thought*, chapter seven, *passim*; see also Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England*; and S. L. Goldberg "Sir John Hayward, 'Politic' Historian."

[6] This is from *A Mirror for Magistrates*, quoted in James *Society, Politics and Culture* 264.

given to a notion of action devoid of an underlying providential causality. (Providentialism was so resilient that Locke himself could appeal to it in a 1659 letter to Thomas Westrow: "O for a pilot that would steare the tossed ship of this state to the haven of happiness ... [yet] God is the hand that governs all things, and manages our chaos."[7]) Even those 'politic historians' who considered themselves devout resisted the idea that the plane on which social agency and action took place was best or inherently described as the unfolding of a teleological plan, however foreordained cosmic destiny was. That is to say, in terms of the world they inhabited, that world was *their* world; again, no matter what fate would befall their souls, they sought to bring their political world under a non-providential description. Marlowe's *Faust* is apposite in this regard. His protagonist seeks control over aspects of his immediate social world; he seeks a relative autonomy over his losses and gains as described by what will happen to his eternal soul *after* he has attained his temporal objectives. As J. Dollimore and others have emphasized, many of the writers of the early modern period were deeply suspicious of the idea of providentialism and 'chains of being.' Shakespeare's own recital of a kind of 'chain of being' argument in *Troilus and Cressida*—spoken by Ulysses but occasionally still cited as a testimonial of the playwright's politics—needs to be read in terms less of what is said and more in terms of who is saying it. (This means paying careful attention to Ulysses in Kenneth Burkean terms: what is he saying, to whom, and to what end?) This suspicion of providentialism is the first distinguishing characteristic of 'politic history.' Having established that agents operated on a plane of existence distinct at least in degree from that of providentialist teleology, the 'politic historians' turned to the question of what specific concrete results followed from this distinctness. This meant combining the unmasking of providentialism with challenges to traditional agency *and* the contexts in which agents were seen to act.

The second distinguishing characteristic of 'politic history' was a focus on forms of causation and agency befitting this plane of social, and non-theological existence. The result was a considerable emphasis on the notion that both past and

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[7] Locke, quoted in Scott *England's Troubles* 49.

present events were the result of the behaviours of political agents and their motivations. It was agents' actions, and not the workings of God or nemesis, that explained events. And these motivations, in turn, were seen as proximate causes of behaviour that were distinct from, or to some degree autonomous from, providential or God-based, ultimate causes. For example, while God was consistently thought to be in some sense *behind* all of the events occurring in this world, the 'politic historians' maintained that it was possible, and indeed necessary, to interpret worldly events in worldly terms. The sense of proximate causation is brought out particularly well by Giovanni Botero[8] in his *A Treatise, concerning the Causes of the Magnificencie and Greatnes of Cities* where he attempts to account for the reasons why some cities flourish and others stagnate. Botero writes:

> Some others say, it bycause God the governor of all things, doth dispose, no man doth doubt of that. But, forasmuch as the infinit wisedome of God, in the administration and the government of nature, worketh secondary causes: My question is, with what meanes that eternall providence maketh little, to multiply; and much, to stand at a stay, and go no further.[9]

In other words, one of the premises of 'politic history'—and this was an important part of the self-understanding of the political historians and writers who emphasized proximate, or worldly and agential, 'secondary' causation[10]—is the implication that political life is not governed by a retributive providentialism working along the lines suggested by sixteenth-century chronicle writers and medieval proto-historians. D. Womersley calls what I have termed 'politic history,' "'politique' secularity."[11] The

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[8] Woolf describes Botero's work in the following way: "Works such as Botero's, combined with the increasing popularity of the two most 'politic' of ancient historians, Tacitus and Polybius, help spread a 'Machiavellian' attitude to politics and thus, incidentally, his attitude to history as the guidebook of political life." Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* 142.

[9] Botero *A Treatise* 91.

[10] As Levy points out, Tudor historians did not necessarily see themselves as atheists in pursuing secondary causes: "Men were as strongly convinced in 1625 as in 1480 that they lived in a basically orderly universe. [...] Everyone knew that God ruled the world in accordance with a plan known in its entirety only to Him, if partially discoverable by men, though they were gradually coming to the conclusion that God's plan was rational and that He would not alter it capriciously. That meant that an emphasis on second causes could be defended as not detracting too much from His glory. [...] But as Reason came to be more important, history writing began to emphasize lessons more useful in this world. Instead of seeking a more detailed knowledge of the ways of God, historians began to search for laws explaining the ways of men. The interest shifted from first causes to second." Levy *Tudor Historical Thought* 287.

[11] Womersley "Sir John Hayward's tacitism" 46.

tendency among the 'political historians' was to view political behaviour in extra-moral terms. As Womersley says, they regarded the political behaviour of agents in "a primarily political, as opposed to moral, perspective."[12] The 'politic historians' were devoted to advancing not merely their careers, though they did that more often than not (even and perhaps especially those who had belonged to the Essex circle: those not imprisoned or executed for their part in the uprising were later almost universally advanced or rewarded—testimony to either their skill or continued influence, or to either James' political savvy or his carelessness). They also pioneered the practical interpretive 'politic science' of attending to political events in distinctly Machiavellian and non-Christian and non-humanist ways. As Womersley says, speaking of the Tacitean historian and Essex patron and Circle member Sir John Hayward,

> Hayward's history shocked because it was couched in the modern "politic" idiom (thus, eschewing both the moral exemplarism and the emphatic providentialism of earlier English sixteenth-century historiography). It made use of such dangerous writers as Machiavelli and Bodin.[13]

In *Macbeth*, for example, Shakespeare works along 'politic historical' lines when he links the question of resistance to tyranny to a shrewd, if by no means entirely obvious, exposure of the means by and through which political power is gained and held. Shakespeare carries this out by an analysis of the mechanisms of power that provides the viewer or reader with an insight into *arcana imperii*. Shakespeare shows himself to be well versed in the Tacitean and Machiavellian political and analytical model that came to prominence in England in the 1590s and which represents an important shift in the language, discourse and consciousness of early modern politics.[14]

How much of Shakespeare's participation in this political discourse was intentional or deliberate? It is not easy to say, and I have therefore chosen not to say

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[12] Womersley "Sir Henry Savile's translation of Tacitus" 322.
[13] Womersley "Sir John Hayward's tacitism" 47.
[14] As we have seen in Chapter five, this is not to suggest that Shakespeare would endorse all of Machiavellian political philosophy, let alone the ethics (or non-ethics) that follow from this philosophy.

too much on the matter. However, it certainly seems as if his grasp of Machiavellian percepts exceeded the standard commonplace familiarity with the political philosopher's works, which were untranslated—officially, that is—in Shakespeare's lifetime, if one excludes *The Florentine History* and the *Art of War*. With respect to Machiavelli, Shakespeare moved beyond the facile and popular caricature of the stage Machiavel, though whether he did so on the basis of a familiarity with the French Calvinist Innocent Gentilli's anti-Machiavellian tract *Anti-Machiavel* (1576), so often the secondhand yet occasionally undistorted source of knowledge of the Florentine, or on the basis of a reading of one of the manuscripts of *The Prince* that circulated privately. It is at least plausible that Shakespeare was intimately familiar with some of the key documents contributing to the rise of the 'politic history' genre.

I now turn to a somewhat detailed, if nonetheless incomplete, account of the intellectual backdrop for Shakespeare's involvement in this discourse. It turns out that Shakespeare, who has been widely regarded throughout his 'reception history' as someone unschooled and unsophisticated but nonetheless *intuitively* political, may actually have been familiar with and versed in some sophisticated normative political thought. I hold that there are grounds for assuming such familiarity. This familiarity does not, needless to say, have to be firsthand or even comprehensive; Shakespeare's contact with this body of thought—itself only loosely held together as a body of thought—was possibly second-hand or informal. The main grounds for assuming this familiarity lies in what we can glean about his intellectual context. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it also turns out that Shakespeare's intellectual world was relatively small (the *who's who* of the period did number in the low four figures) and many writers shared the same printers, not to mention the same patrons and theatres. Let us now turn to a brief presentation of what we know—or can plausibly conjecture to be true—about Shakespeare's contact with this body of thought.

There are several reasons for assuming Shakespeare's immersion in the political discourses of Tacitean 'politic history.' First, Shakespeare knew Jonson and acted in the latter's Tacitean *Sejanus His Fall*. The play was put on in 1603 in the Globe Theatre by the King's Men, Shakespeare's company, and entered on the

Stationers Register the following year.[15] Shakespeare, it has been conjectured, may have played Tiberius;[16] at any rate he knew the play, which was taken—at times word for word—from Tacitus' *Annals*, and which explicitly treats the themes of the dangers of ambition, of civil wars, and of dictatorship and the decline of liberty, and republican liberty at that, under tyranny.[17] Here J. Barish's comments on the *Sejanus*' themes should be noted. Barish writes

> One critic, noting that *Sejanus* contains no tragic hero, sees it as "concerned with the tragic flaw *within the social order*, not within the individual," with "the manner in which evil penetrates the political structure."[18]

Moreover, Barish continues,

> *Sejanus*, then, dramatizes the decline of Roman liberty, and warns Englishmen against allowing it to happen to them. It presents a series of exemplary figures from whose fate spectators may learn moral courage, and perhaps acquire some rules of thumb for survival. In it history is transmuted into both poetry and political discourse.[19]

Barish also writes that on the "premise that human nature does not vary much from age to age, [Jonson] aimed to exhibit the behaviour of *homo politicus* in all ages."[20]

We are very close here to the model of political interpretation of Renaissance texts put forward recently by J. Dollimore, and especially by the insightful J. W. Lever, where tragedies are seen as written to interrogate the idea of 'state' as "an autonomous, self-perpetuating entity" and also to challenge Aristotle's overemphasis on characters and their 'fatal' flaws:

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[15] Barish *Sejanus* 205.
[16] See among others Bolton *Sejanus* xi.
[17] It is not implausible to suggest that *Macbeth* and *Troilus and Cressida* were composed in the immediate wake of *Sejanus*. *Macbeth* in particular seems to echo Jonson's play in terms of the emphasis on tyranny. The word 'tyranny' is found three times in *Macbeth* while 'tyrant' is found nine times and 'tyrant's' six. (The total number of 'tyrants' or its cognates in *Macbeth* is eighteen, exactly twice as many as are found in *Richard III*; *Julius Caesar* has seven. This is certainly not scientific—the persistence of a theme, let alone its gravity, cannot be determined by a word-count—but it is interesting.) *Hamlet*, with its emphases on spying, dissembling, usurpation and intrigue is probably Shakespeare's most Tacitean play.
[18] Barish *Sejanus* 19.
[19] Barish *Sejanus* 19.
[20] Barish *Sejanus* 18.

> [t]he heroes may have their faults of deficiency or excess; but the fundamental flaw is not in them but in the world they inhabit: in the political state, the social order it upholds, and likewise, by projection, in the cosmic state of shifting arbitrary phenomena called "Fortune."[21]

At least one twentieth-century editor[22] of the play insists that Jonson consulted, among others, Machiavelli's *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy*, Lucan's republican *Pharsalia* (the first book of which was 'Englished' by Marlowe and published in 1600), and Justus Lipsius' edition of the collected works of Tacitus, an edition published in 1574 which ushered in the sixteenth-century's 'craze' for Tacitus. Shakespeare, then, may have contracted a dose of Tacitism through his connection to Jonson's *Sejanus*.

Secondly, Shakespeare may have encountered Tacitean ideas, interests and methods through his intellectual connections and through his friends. He was probably not at the epicenter of the swirl of political discourses and events, but he would have shared the general late Elizabethan intellectual fascination with the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV, with classical and continental writers, with political thought and the 'spectacles of rule,' and with history (especially Roman Imperial history). John Hayward's *The First Part of the Life & raign of Henrie the IIII* (London 1599), which despite its title is in large part devoted to the reign of Richard II and his deposition,[23] would have been familiar, one suspects, to

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[21] Lever *The Tragedy of State* xiii and 10.

[22] Bolton *Sejanus* xiii.

[23] L. Barroll points out that "the surviving documents indicate that it was the depiction of the *murder* more than of the deposition that always concerned authorities." Barroll "A New History for Shakespeare" 450. This is an important observation, but while it is accurate to insist that Coke in his prosecuting speech objected to "the killing of a King upon a stage," a deposition would hardly have earned his praise either. Both Elizabeth and James were exceedingly unhappy to see kings on stage if they thought they were being referred to or involved in some way. Elizabeth walked out of Bacon's 1595 Accession Day Tilt production of an elaborate chivalric allegorical show involving Essex (speaking lines that proclaimed his devotion) which intended to reconcile Essex and Elizabeth, and to reconcile Essex's martial image with service to the Queen.

In December of 1604, the King's Players "tried to please their royal patron by presenting at the Globe a lost play, author unknown" that portrayed the Gowrie conspiracy (Kernan *Shakespeare, The King's Playwright* 60). Kernan quotes John Chamberlain, who tells us what transpired: "'The tragedie of Gowrie with all the action and actors hath ben twise represented by the Kings players, with exceding concoure of all sortes of people, but whether the matter or manner be not well handled, or that yt be thought unfit that princes should be plaide on the stage in theyre life time, I heare that some great counsaillors are much displeased with yt: and so is thought shalbe forbidden' (December 18, 1604). *Gowrie* was closed down, as Chamberlain

Shakespeare, given that both writers (along with others, such as Samuel Daniel, who in his 1595 *The Civil Wars* moralized against Bolingbroke) treated the same reigns. Shakespeare's *Richard II* preceded Hayward's work by some two years, the Q1 of the play being first entered in the Station's Register in August of 1597. The lack of anything up to 1599 other than a thematic similarity, and a reliance by both on Holinshed and *The Mirror for Magistrates*, has not stopped some critics from attempting to demonstrate Hayward's influence on Shakespeare and *vice versa*.[24]

Moreover, Hayward and Daniel shared with Shakespeare a connection to the Essex Circle: the former two wrote a dedication (Hayward) and verses (Daniel) to Essex, respectively. Significantly, both were subsequently questioned by the authorities over their relationship to Essex: Hayward for his suppressed but "fulsome dedication"[25] to Essex, which was considered suspiciously seditious by Lord Chief Justice Popham and Attorney General Sir Edward Coke who questioned him but which the Earl may not have seen (at his trial, Essex denied knowledge of it); Daniel for his play *Philotas* which, perhaps intentionally, "pointed to parallels between the downfall of its hero and that of the earl of Essex."[26] Daniel, incidentally but interestingly, was said to follow Lucan's example in writing on the theme of the debilitating costs of civil war.[27] Norbrook similarly comments that Lucan's epic *Pharsalia*, with its theme of 'how discord breedes decay', was an important model for Daniel's "highly negative portrait of Bolingbroke's usurpation of power."[28] Already relied on by John Lydgate (whose warning against sedition *The Serpent of Division* (1559) was reprinted in an edition with *Gorboduc* in 1590), the ardently pro-republican Lucan later became a mainstay in the creation of a republican literary culture in the early years of Charles' reign. The poet Thomas May undertook to translate Lucan's politicized epic in 1627; this translation was to

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thought it would be, and no copy has survived." Kernan adds that James had made it "emphatically clear in print [...that] it was out of bounds to represent directly onstage a living monarch or his undisguised interests." Kernan *Shakespeare, The King's Playwright* 63.

[24] See Erskine-Hill *Poetry and the Realm of Politics*.

[25] Tuck *Philosophy and Government* 106.

[26] Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* 90.

[27] Ure Introduction *King Richard II* xlii.

[28] Norbrook "Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture" 51.

supersede Carew Gorges' 1614 translation (dedicated to the Countess of Bedford,[29] a dedication succeeded by a poem by the incarcerated Raleigh), a translation that may have been felt to be both outdated in its meter and unable to withstand the hammer-blows of Edmund Bolton's condemnatory attacks on Lucan *and* republicanism. May later recanted enough to receive commissions from the crown, but he was eulogized by none less than Algernon Sidney as one of the great lovers of liberty and teachers of republicanism.

Hayward's Tacitism in *The Life and raigne of Henrie IIII* was not the result of Hayward's careful reading of the Roman historian in the original. Rather, he turned to the influential and probably popular 1591 translation[30] of the *Histories* and the *Agricola* by Sir Henry Savile, who was an intimate of Essex. Indeed Essex was Savile's "principal patron" who secured for him the Wardenship of Merton and the Provostry of Eton.[31]

Thirdly, Shakespeare was supported by the Third Earl of Southampton, himself a major figure in the Essex Circle—as Tuck puts it, he was "Essex's main political lieutenant"—which was the "heart of English Tacitism."[32] It has been pointed out that "the Essex circle was that of Shakespeare's patron, and of Shakespeare himself in the 1590s. [...and] the group around Essex included an unusually high number of people with relatively radical political and philosophical

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[29] Related to the Sidneys, Lucy Countess of Bedford was married to the Earl of Bedford, who was exiled from court for playing a role in Essex's rebellion. She overcame this and became one of Queen Anne's favourites and an important figure at the court. Florio dedicated his translation of Montaigne's *Essays* to her and her mother, and she read drafts of the translation, offering suggestions. She patronized the likes of Jonson, Daniel, Chapman and Donne; her closest friend was married to Sir William Cornwallis of neostoic *Essayes* (1600-1) fame. (Cornwallis was knighted—along with far too many others, as far as Elizabeth was concerned—by Essex during the latter's unlucky Irish campaign; his writings, heavily indebted to Montaigne and Seneca, dealt with the themes of honour, constancy and reputation, and have been cited as replete with Shakespearean allusions and echoes "that are probably the result [...] of Cornwallis' playgoing." Miles *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* 78.)

[30] This first English translation of Tacitus went through five editions in the next forty-nine years: 1598, 1604, 1612, 1622, and 1640. Womersley "Sir Henry Savile's translation of Tacitus" 313. Womersley also points out that while only crude bibliometrics allows us to consider Savile's translation popular, we do know that of sixteenth-century classical translations, only Nicholas Grimwald's translation of Cicero's *M. Tullius Ciceroe's thre boks of dueties* (eleven editions in fifty-seven years) was reprinted more often; and of translations of classical *historians*, only Thomas Lodge's translation of *Josephus*, was reprinted more frequently.

[31] Tuck *Philosophy and Government* 105.

[32] Tuck *Philosophy and Government* 106.

views."[33] It is not clear that either Southampton or Shakespeare were implicated in the 'theoretical' wing of Essex's Circle, nor is it clear that Essex took much care to follow the intricacies—he was, as Bacon knew, rash, intemperate and not given to heeding advice. But I am only out to outline Shakespeare's immediate context, and therefore to provide a plausible construction of the views, beliefs and interests of those around him.

These views, beliefs and interests would have included, if indeed not centered on directly, "the kind of 'popular Tacitism' which James I especially disliked."[34] One should note that James' dislike of Tacitism culminated in his encouraging Edmund Bolton to write an account, which James may have revised himself, of Nero's reign (*Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraved* London 1624) that countered both Tacitus and Henry Savile on Nero, and most importantly, put forward as the book's lesson the claim that "No Prince is so bad as not to make monarckie seeme the best forme of government."[35] While this would have pleased James' proto-absolutist ear, it is exactly this sort of claim that Shakespeare is asking us to question in many of his plays devoted to 'imperial themes.' Here I shall only remark that it shows that both 'politic historians' and pro-monarchists proffered accounts—sometime wholly contradictory accounts—of Roman imperial history for didactic purposes, a very widespread practice.

Finally, Montaigne. Montaigne, an author we know Shakespeare read, probably in Florio's 1603 translation,[36] was directly connected to Daniel. The "lines of affinity"[37] were these: Daniel was Montaigne's English translator's, John Florio's, brother-in-law, and Daniel contributed a commendatory verse, praising both author and translator, to Florio's translation. As Woolf says, Daniel held that

> It is the great virtue of Florio's translation that it frees Montaigne's pen from vassalage to one monarchy and allows him to dwell among "the better world of men,/ Whose spirits all are of one

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[33] Heinemann "Rebel Lords, Popular Playwrights, and Political Culture" 135.
[34] Heinemann "Rebel Lords, Popular Playwrights, and Political Culture" 155.
[35] Quoted in Burgess *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* 61.
[36] This is discussed briefly in Dzelzainis "Shakespeare and Political Thought" 109-10, and in Miles *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* 82-3. Miles argues that Shakespeare had access to the *Essays* in manuscript form.
[37] Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* 91.

communitie."[38]

That both Shakespeare and Daniel read Montaigne's *Essays* does not, of course, establish a clear connection between them. P. Ure suggests a closer, if speculative, link in his introduction to his Arden edition of *Richard II*, to which he appends thirty-two stanzas of the second book of Daniel's *The Civil Wars*. Ure says that on the basis of individually weak examples that yield a persuasive aggregate of echoes, we can surmise—Ure says make 'a reasonable guess'—that either Shakespeare borrowed from Daniel or else Daniel was indebted to a performance of the play he saw before the first installment of his poem was entered in the Stationers Register in October of 1594.

Moreover, *Philotas* was likely inspired by Montaigne's reference to Phylotas (Alexander's general who was tried for conspiracy by his jealous rivals in Alexander's court) in "Of Conscience." Montaigne's essay is filled with references to the effects of a guilty conscience, and though I do not necessarily see it as a source for either *Hamlet* or *Macbeth,*[39] it lends support to the claim that questions of conscience were of paramount interest in the mid-to-late sixteenth-century when questions having to do with religious strife, and also the problem of unscrupulous leaders and ambitious nobles, focused attention on how the central neostoic category of constancy could be strengthened by the faculty of conscience. Montaigne was deeply ambivalent about constancy, a key topic frequently treated by Lipsius in his well-known works. To complicate matters a little further, Montaigne was a friend of Lipsius', and the two held each other in the highest esteem. Both Montaigne and Lipsius were important participants, moreover, in the rise of Renaissance neostoicism, of which Tacitus was only one important strand, though a particularly important one. As Worden insists:

> Yet if there was one Roman historian whose genius presided over the "politic" history of Sidney's time, it was not Livy but Tacitus. The figure

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[38] Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* 91.

[39] Montaigne's essay curiously relates an incident concerning the slaughter of a group of sparrow chicks that seems to resemble Macbeth's slaughter of Macduff's family. I will leave it to the reader to form his or her own opinion about whether this is sufficient to count as evidence of influence.

> who did most to bring Tacitus alive for the late Renaissance was his Belgian editor Justus Lipsius.[40]

Macbeth shares with Montaigne's work an interest in what would follow from the rejection of the classical Stoic (and Christian) "faith in reason, constancy and human perfectibility", particularly when "[m]oral doctrines which attempt to exempt [...man] from human weakness or emotion are [...shown to be] unnatural and dangerous, and based upon self-deception."[41] *Macbeth* portrays not Montaigne's thesis of the irreality of the classical Stoic, but the effects of the passion of ambition in a 'rebel lord,' to use M. Heinemann's phrase.[42]

None of the evidence adduced above proves that Shakespeare was a self-acknowledged, let alone an accredited, 'politic historian,' in the way that Savile, Hayward and Daniel were. Shakespeare was at most an implicit practitioner of 'politic history.' Indeed Womersley can be read as maintaining that the "nature and content" of Savile's "political thought" was "implicit, but distinctive."[43] And political thought—itself an imprecise category—inevitably contains much that is, even at the best of times, implicit. However, the speculative conclusion should be that this evidence does show that it is plausible that the concerns I insist Shakespeare had were less the product of some ineffable *zeitgeist* and more the result of the intellectual, personal, social and patronage circles in which he traveled.

Many of Shakespeare's plays provide object lessons for understanding the motives of power-hungry nobles, and the means by which they fashion themselves and their immediate contexts. This fashioning includes the 'fashioning' of other agents, of other agents' perceptions, beliefs, motives, and above all passions, and of shaping events so as to make the social world bend to their wills. In this sense Shakespeare answers the question of the political viability *and* liability of those ambiguous and frequently linked sources—Tacitus and Machiavelli—for the 'political historians' of the 1590s and beyond. These two political thinkers, though

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[40] Worden *The Sound of Virtue* 256.
[41] Miles *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* 92.
[42] Heinemann "Rebel Lords, Popular Playwrights, and Political Culture."
[43] Womersley "Sir Henry Savile's translation of Tacitus and the political interpretation of Elizabethan texts" 315.

particularly Machiavelli, were at the time reviled for atheism or immorality (or amorality), though of course political ambiguity had its advantages, as when Tacitus could be cited when it was hazardous to cite Machiavelli. It has been a perennial problem to sort out just where and how Tacitus and Machiavelli stand on issues of absolutism, liberty and political ethics, not to speak of how they can justifiably be used. Some see them as buttressing tyrants by arming them with an understanding of the behaviours of 'men as they are, not as they ought to be,' to use Machiavelli's expression—originally used by Aristotle to describe Euripidean tragedy—which so pleased Bacon (and which was cited by the likes of Hobbes, Spinoza, Jonson and Sidney). Others, and this arguably includes the 'political historians' in whose extremely informal circle I wish to place Shakespeare, have held that in displaying the *is* of political behaviour instead of the *ought* of moral practice, Tacitus and Machiavelli provide incisive and essential insights into the workings of rulers and tyrants, who, as Machiavelli says somewhere 'try to confuse men's brains.' But they might not agree that the establishment of a republic requires a cynical realism and a thoroughgoing hostility to ethics and other-regarding behaviour, as Machiavelli seems to urge.

Politic history and the Passions

> This is political history: the deliberations, decisions, and deeds of rulers.[44]

Indeed interest in the passions by the 'politic historians' was provoked by an interest in understanding the underlying causes of human behaviour. And this latter interest was itself spurred and also furthered as a result of what was learned. It is fair to say that the passions were a topic of interest not only because of their high intellectual pedigree, but for another, less appreciated reason. The discourse of the passions was arguably essential and instrumental to the rise of what we now recognize as proto-political science, which on any general account can be seen as inquiry into the factors affecting complex social, individual,

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[44] Erskine-Hill *Poetry and the Realm of Politics* 5.

institutional and ideological interaction. As a result of inquiries that focused on the passions, emotions and affections as the driving motors or well-springs of human social action, centuries of providential vocabularies, and religion-based theorizing were critically examined and—eventually—thrown aside. If any psychological category deserves to be seen as a harbinger of post-providential secularity and naturalism—necessary though not sufficient for systemic political inquiry—it is the passions.

These inquiries to which I have just alluded are constructed out of a myriad of texts and languages, including, first and foremost, the plays of William Shakespeare and a number of his contemporaries, including Ben Jonson, Samuel Daniel, John Marston and George Chapman. Hence it shall be necessary to study, in the words of Kevin Sharpe introducing his own wide-angled view of the 'commonwealth of meanings' in early modern thought, "aesthetic documents, cultural practices, analogues, correspondences and the discourse that they in turn generated and which we have not been used to studying as political texts."[45] The plays I shall treat include some major canonical works, as well as some less appreciated ones. These plays of course are individual, and in no way should they be cast in a drama as templates of the position I take on the passions. In order to avoid this template view I shall be arguing for their specificity, not only as dramatic texts, but more particularly as interventions in the discourse of politics. But what is common to them is the post-providential, and largely post-traditional-humanist way they foreground the passions in their efforts to grasp the political situation of their age. Jonson in his *Sejanus* practically sums up what I mean by 'politic history' when he has Tiberius describing Sejanus:

> I know him subtle, close, wise and well read/ In man and his large nature.
> He hath studied/ Affections, passions; knows their springs, their ends;/
> Which way, and whether they will work.[46]

I have remarked on the interest in the passions in the early modern period. This needs to be expanded on and amplified, for the discourse of the passions

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[45] Sharpe "A commonwealth of Meanings" 8.
[46] *Sejanus* 3.2.694-97.

inherited by the writers and thinkers mentioned was one that they all found unsatisfactory, though not always for the same reason. What they inherited was a blanket fear of the passions as causing unbalance and disruption in the soul, and this fear was often contagious. As Samuel Daniel asks:

> Muse, what may we imagine was the Cause/ That Furie workes thus universally?/ What horror, what affection, is it, drawes/ Sides, of such powre, to this Nobilitie?/ Was it their Conscience to redresse the Lawes;/ Or malice, to a wrong-plac't Sov'raigntie/ That caus'd them (more then wealth or life) desire/ Destruction, ruine, bloude-shed, sword and fire?[47]

Affective disruption in the soul matters a good deal if one is living in a state ruled by a prince—I follow orthodoxy in using this non-gendered term for any ruler—with quasi-absolutist powers for censorship and the suppression of ideas, criticism and debate. For example, Fulke Greville consigned his late Elizabethan Senecan, Robert Garnier-inspired closet tragedy *Antonie and Cleopatra* to the flames when censorship grew too uncomfortable after the Essex affair, a shrewd move necessitated, as he says, by its possibly being "construed or strained to a personating of vices in the present Governors and government."[48] That is, his work was susceptible to being read as an oblique commentary on, perhaps even an allegory of, Essex's rebellion, a reading that caused considerable difficulties for Daniel (*Philotas*), Jonson (*Sejanus*) and John Hayward (*Life of Henrie IIII*). As it was, Greville was attuned to the dangers to the polity represented by the disrupted and passion-ruled souls of princes. He thought that it was "in princes' natures for passion to usurp reason."[49] This, and comments like it, reflected a generalized need to find out more about the passions of the mind.

Comments such as those just quoted tapped into a longstanding humanist concern with the dangers of the passions, a fear of the appetitive portion of the mind which itself goes as far back as Plato. But as we shall see, the difference between the likes of Daniel (as well as Jonson and Hayward and a number of playwrights) and traditional humanism is considerable. The writers treated in the present study

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[47] *Civil Wars* VII, 54; quoted in Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* 103.
[48] Michel *The Tragedy of Philotas* 42.
[49] Quoted in Worden *The Sound of Virtue* 214.

were to varying degrees convinced that understanding the passions would give them an interpretive advantage in the (fallen) world. Hence they did not call for the out-and-out eradication of the passions, the understanding and mastery of which they saw as essential to understanding and mastering their political contexts. So, unlike the traditional humanists who demonized the passions, they tended to *use* the passions to account for the behaviour of agents. In this respect they were much like the rhetoricians, classical and humanist, who sought to understand the emotions. The likes of Aristotle, Quintilian and other classical writers on rhetoric had showed that understanding the emotions was both possible, desirable, and advantageous. This is not to say that the writers in question were consistent in favouring the passions or in seeing that they should be understood, and yoked to an understanding of agency and political behaviour, although some were consistent in this way. Indeed they occasionally found the rebelliousness of the passions distracting, dangerous and as tyrannical as the Reason so often pitted against the passions. Both Sidney and Daniel wrote works in which reason and passion 'warred' in debate and conversation, each arguing its own merits. Sidney here concludes on an ecumenical note: "Then let us both to heavenly rules give place,/ Which Passions skill, and Reason do deface,"[50] while Daniel says "Passion and reason self division cause."[51] It is notable that Daniel does not seek to eradicate the passions, as in classic Stoic fashion, but rather laments the divisiveness, or division, of the self, which no doubt had some political import in terms of mirroring divisions and divisiveness in the polity. And there is Gabriel Harvey's oft-cited letter to Edmund Spenser, which is far more optimistic than most traditional humanist accounts about the possible usefulness of the affections:

> Affections are infectious; and appetite must sometime have his swinge. Were Appetite a loyall subject to Reason, and Will an affectionate servant to wisdom; as Labour is a dutifull vassal to Commodity, and Travail a flying post to honour; O heavens, what exploites of worth, or rather what miracles of excellency, might be atcheeved in an age of Pollicy, & a world of industry.[52]

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[50] Sidney *Arcadia* 339.
[51] Daniel, quoted in Haydn *The Counter-Renaissance* 393.
[52] Harvey, quoted in Haydn *The Counter-Renaissance* 394.

Others, too, working in a slightly different tradition—rhetoric—emphasized the same thing. As Q. Skinner says in the context of describing the path that leads from "secular rhetoricians" and their interest in Aristotle's work on the passions in his *Rhetoric* to Hobbes' political anthropology, late Elizabethan rhetoricians (like John Hoskins, author of *Directions for Speech and Style*, published circa 1599) saw Aristotle's work "less as a work on rhetoric than as a psychological treatise on how to understand the 'motions' of the will."

> Nowadays, Hoskins maintains, we stand in need of such an understanding, because 'as Machiavelli saith, perfect virtue or perfect vice is not seen in our time, which altogether is humorous and spurting.' Given this feature of the age, we need to gain some insight into the character of the humours involved.[53]

This accords with what we shall see many writers attempting to accomplish, in other fields such as literature and history, specifically Tacitus-inspired 'politic history.'

The Rethinking of Fortune

> Lipsius argued that stability could be retrieved only with the triumph of reason—at once a universal concept and an attribute of the mind which the individual could train to conquer the passions, thence to accommodate himself to the inconstancy of the world.[54]

The writers we shall encounter here, then, belong to the early modern intellectual circles in which one can detect the features I have emphasized thus far: namely, the period was one in which political thinkers and writers emphasized agents' 'internal' aspects—interiority and agency—and especially *effects* on the mind of citizens of the political context, and of other agents. Minds mattered. Agents' internal 'motions,' as Hobbes puts it throughout his career, mattered. And their passions mattered. We find confirmation of this reading of the period as one of interest in the political psychology of political participants in some comments treated by P. Burke in an essay on Tacitism, Stoicism and scepticism, and reason of

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[53] Skinner *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* 37.
[54] McCrea *Constant Minds* 12.

state. Burke speaks of an explicit "increased interest in psychology [...] around 1600."[55] In a section devoted to the rise and spread of Tacitism, Burke cites a preface to a Spanish translation of Tacitus that is germane in this context. The translator, Alamos de Barrientos, writes in his preface of the usefulness of Tacitus' maxims for reducing "politics [...] to psychology; or, as he puts it, that there are rules for the rise and fall of states, and that these rules can be learned from [...] 'knowledge of the passions of men, whether friends or enemies, princes, ministers or subjects.'"[56]

This is exactly the point worth emphasizing, namely that the passions were seen as part of the object of social ontology that needed explaining in as detailed a fashion as possible. How did kingdoms rise and fall? Not inevitably through the moral failure and divine providential intervention, emphasized by such works as *The Mirror for Magistrates* and highlighted in *The Fall of Princes* and sometimes in Holinshed, let alone as the advocates of the Tudor myth of retribution would have it. Rather, psychological or 'naturalistic' causal—for example, stupidity and cupidity—factors were to 'blame': aging kings making bad decisions and reckless demands; princes trusting ambitious warriors; untrustworthy counselors giving shaky advice, a theme common to St. Thomas More and Sir Thomas Elyot in England, and Machiavelli, Castiglione, Erasmus and countless other notable writers on the continent; wise counselors' advice not heeded because of jealousy; intemperate agents, in the thrall of 'bad' humours; and last but far from least, proud aristocrats, princes, and the like, cleaving to outdated and shopworn doctrines like archaic chivalrous honour codes which legitimated martial belligerence. All of these factors, and innumerable others, were adduced to explain and account for the behaviour of agents—at court or in 'Arden'—making choices and decisions, preparing for peace, war or trade, falling in and out of love, as well as for practically every attempt at usurping power or hanging on to it. It comes as no surprise to the reader of Shakespeare's political tragedies to find the following remark by J. G. A.

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[55] Burke "Tacitism" 156.
[56] Quoted in Burke "Tacitism" 156.

Pocock in his work on the classical republican tradition, *The Machiavellian Moment*:

> It was consequently in the study of statecraft that Jacobean intellects were most likely to lay hold upon these elements of the republican tradition which ascribed distinctive characteristics—interests, humors, *particulari*—to kings, nobilities and peoples, and considered how these might conflict or be reconciled.[57]

The discourse of the passions, far from being the purview of the traditional humanists and moralists, was akin to a social 'physics'[58] of the motions of agents, and moreover one which to any observer both held together *and* threatened the bounds and bonds of civility (a preoccupation from antiquity, as we know from Thucydides and the extant Greek tragedies as well as Greek philosophy; but also a Renaissance preoccupation) and the polity. At a time when the intentional states of other agents were paramount to the functioning of the polity—perhaps even more than today when our behavior is constrained less by ideology and practices than by simple inertia—disquisitions on what constrained agents to do x rather than y, and when and where agents like princes would be liable to act on the basis of fear, honour, jealousy, rage, or love, would be a valuable commodity. Daniel, himself a student of history, is particularly acute in *historicizing* the notion of mind's perturbations relative to his own epoch, a move which is different from the traditional humanist stress on the eternity and universality of a moral paradigm, such as original sin: "These strange confused tumults of the minde,/ Are growne to be the sicknes of these times,/ The great disease inflicted on mankinde."[59]

To get a sense of the import of what I claim is a rethinking of Fortune, or rather of specifying the natural—non-providential—attributes of the passions of the mind in the form of a political psychology of behaviour, it is first necessary to remind ourselves of the role Fortune played in early modern thought. In a sense, to discuss Fortune at all, it must be noted, was already a sharp deviation from traditional humanism, to which I am contrasting the radical (and in many cases

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[57] Pocock *The Machiavellian Moment* 338-9.
[58] Without of course becoming Hobbes' reductive mechanics.
[59] Daniel *Musophilus* 447-9.

radically atheist) humanism of the likes of Machiavelli. True, devout, religious thinkers discussed God, not a goddess of luck and contingency with a suspect (pagan) pedigree. Moreover they did not discuss the taming of something—chance, luck—whose manifestions were the domain of God. It is important to see how radical the concept of Fortune must first have appeared to the far-from-secular minds of such humanists. The positing of an intermediary concept in the cosmos between man and God, not to say the pagan and goddess-like overtones Fortune had for Machiavelli and which he relished, was revolutionary indeed, as all of Machiavelli's many commentators have tirelessly pointed out. Moreover the emphasis on Fortune was practical and pragmatic; it was an attempt to increase control in the realm of political action. As James asks, "What was the motive behind this [turn to 'politic history']?" It was, he goes on to say,

> an attempt, in an age when political turmoil and party strife were never far away, to form an outlook which calmed fears, brought the passions under control, and promoted obedience, consistent political behaviour, and order. It was an attempt to exorcise the grim presence of Fate, with its incomprehensible decrees, which had always overshadowed the man of honour; and to provide an insurance against the rule of Fortuna, goddess of luck and chance.... In spite of the capricious, incalculable turns of Fortune, her rule, so it was thought, could at least be limited by human virtue, reason and prudence [...].[60]

This is echoed and supported by Sharpe's recent discussion of the notebooks and annotations of Sir William Drake, in all about fifty-four volumes (most were commonplace books), written between 1627 and the late 1650s. Drake read widely and admired both contemporary writers and politicians, and the classical authors and thinkers of antiquity; he seemed particularly absorbed by the likes of Bacon, Machiavelli, Tacitus, Guicciardini and Montaigne. Interestingly, he also pondered the question of the passions and their relationship to Fortune. What Drake seemed to glean from his careful and methodical perusal of 'practical wisdom' was that "What men most needed to learn was what Drake most endeavoured to teach himself: control of the passions," says Sharpe. Drake wrote: "Most of the disorders

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[60] James *Society, Politics and Culture* 360.

of our lives proceed from the darkness of our understanding or from the command or sway that our passions have over our reason."[61] As Sharpe says,

> Traditional Aristotelian and Christian teaching pressed the same message: the need for reason, the soul, to regulate the lower appetites; but Drake's stress on the need for self-regulation [...] owed little to the dictates of conventional philosophy or piety. Reason and control of the passions for him were necessary for effecting one's ends: "where reason precedes our actions, fortune ordinarily follows them but where the passions, then fortune ordinarily commands them."[62]

It can be seen that the writers in question (such as Drake), to varying degrees, and certainly not always with conscious intent, inaugurate a reading of the passions as a fine-grained specification of Fortune, the warp and woof of humanist contingency, chance and ill-or-good fortune. That is to say, the likes of the writers with which I am concerned are interested in extending the analysis of Fortune begun by Machiavelli and Guicciardini to include greater nuance, especially by understanding the *pathē*. These writers then deserve to be seen as attempting to master the domain of the passions in order to move yet a step further away from non-naturalistic explanations of events, as indeed Fortune itself was such a step away from immediate intervention by God. Although God controlled Fortune, Fortune had some relative autonomy, a situation often considered so perplexing that Fortune had to be 'reconstituted' as nemesis, that is, as part of God's retributive design. In the English Renaissance, interest in Fortune was rife, though nothing inspired more interest and loathing than Machiavelli's conception of Fortune as a force in the cosmos that functioned (as though) independent of God's will. Many early Tudor writers did not know what to make of Fortune, which they saw as a threatening form of atheism, yet their embeddedness in the discourses and vocabularies of the time necessitated their use of Fortune as an explanatory concept, however rudimentary the 'explanations.' Hence, as I have mentioned, they augmented Fortune with an auxiliary concept of nemesis, or God's circuitous method of taking revenge—for example on subsequent generations—for 'sins.' Reflecting on this and related concerns, if so strong a verb can be used for the often

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[61] Drake, quoted in Sharpe *Reading Revolutions* 212.
[62] Drake, quoted in Sharpe *Reading Revolutions* 213.

halting analyses of the time, the writers treated here presented to themselves and their audiences and peers (usually in tragedies) the question of the scope and power of Fortune, and above all the susceptibility to *control* by Fortune. How could Fortune be thwarted? How did it manifest itself? Was it sheer randomness, or could it be *willed* into obedience, or 'beaten' into submission as Machiavelli urged? What was the psychology of the agents who either fell victim to it or thrived in its company, and did virtue (as distinct from a mere clear mind) make a difference? How might the key Senecan and Ciceronian Stoic concept of the constancy (Lipsius' and Montaigne's modified *constancie*) of the self, the preeminent legacy of the Stoics, help to assuage the inscrutable powers of Fortune? Could Fortune be made malleable and 'bend-able' to the goals and desires of human agents in the way that the passions—themselves seemingly akin to Fortune and contingency in their damaging unpredictability—could be either mastered or fought off by neostoic techniques of self, other and auto-psychological mastery, and by self-managing? ("Only the isolated neo-stoic has the capacity to resist (even if not to change) the fluctuations of fortune."[63]) Could the passions themselves be manipulated, as Iago causes and then manipulates Othello's jealousy, or as Hamlet orchestrates the *presencing* of Claudius's guilt, thereby yielding a mastery, if not over Fortune then at least over others? Could the mind self-counsel itself with *counsel*, privately and to advantage, in the manner displayed across the courts of the world, where princes' counsellors were privy to the important mysteries of the *arcana imperii* and reasons of state? These are some of the concerns of the writers working at the time. The early modern period was in fact filled with semi-, pseudo- and fully psychological inquiries, which ranged from comical interludes and commentaries, to learned treatises, to noteworthy cultural phenomenologies like Burton's *Anatomy*. It seems worth pointing out that the early modern period in English history and politics with which we are concerned here, roughly 1580-1620, was a high point of interest in the presence of psychological factors in the political realm, and consequently the heyday of interest in the political psychology of the passions. The period was much like an earlier period also filled with speculations about the idea of a science or

[63] Hunter *English Drama 1586-1642* 283.

psychology of power, namely the period of Italian politics in the wake of the end of the Florentine republic with the return of the Medici in 1512, when the likes of Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Leonardo da Vinci attempted to challenge traditional humanism's uncritical attitude towards the possibility of a science or anatomy of *actual*, or realistic, psychology and behaviour.[64] As M. Viroli says in his survey of politics and reasons of state and the transformation of the language of politics from 1250 to 1600, Machiavelli worked not in a vacuum but in a time when there was an acute interest in questions about the "institutional reforms and laws which [...could] moderate the appetites of the nobility and the populace and thus restore liberty."[65] For Machiavelli and many of his peers and intellectual descendants, the

> city is a universe of passions, for it is inhabited by concrete human beings who love, hate, fear, hope, have ambitions and desires, want to be recognized, esteemed and rewarded. Some of them seek domination; many others seek security for themselves and their relatives. The art of politics deals with the unstable universe of human passions, and the living *ethos* of a community. For the purpose of restraining and educating human passions those who possess the *civilis disciplina* must be able to use both the laws and rhetoric.[66]

The period from circa 1580 to 1625 in English thought and letters—or to put it in thematic terms, roughly from Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch (1579) and Sidney's *Arcadia* to Bacon's Tacitus- and Machiavelli-inspired *Historie of the raigne of King Henry the Seventh* (1622) and Hobbes' first published work (1620), which included a discourse on Tacitus, abandoned when Hobbes turned to translating Thucydides in the mid-1620s—was not so different from Machiavelli's age. This is particularly true in terms of the need to curry favour at court (whether the 'court' was run by a Medici, a Pope, or a prince), and hence in terms of steeling oneself to the arbitrary whims of disaffected and dangerous peers, courtiers, factions and rulers. The earlier period figured largely in the minds of the inhabitants of the latter period. Indeed, the former period influenced heavily the latter, English period, not least through Machiavelli and the caricature of him in Elizabethan and Jacobean

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[64] For more information on Machiavelli's contribution to this 'science of power,' the reader should consult Masters *Machiavelli, Leonardo, and the Science of Power*.
[65] Viroli "The Revolution in the Concept of Politics" 173.
[66] Viroli "The Revolution in the Concept of Politics" 173.

England, but also because Machiavelli the arch-republican represented the radicalization of humanism in the service of both liberty and the related matter of sifting through past and present epochs and political dispensations in order to aid the diagnosis of one's own time.[67] And as we have seen, this diagnosis was often focused on the interlocking of Fortune and the passions, and how the taming of the passions could yield at least a modicum of control over the vicissitudes of change, chance, contingency—in a word, Fortune. As A. McCrea makes clear, the marriage of the politics of Tacitus with the neostoicism of Lipsius was significant to this radicalization:

> Tacitus, the hard-headed and disenchanted historian of early imperial Rome [...] was the surprise ingredient in what can thus be called *neo*stoicism; by linking together Seneca and Tacitus, Lipsius promoted a distinctive approach to society, privileging the role of ancient wisdom as the means to understand the demands of the contemporary world.[68]

Of course this radicalization took distinct forms. A powerful and influential current in post-classical thought, vital to the political context of early modern thought, was republicanism (or civic humanism). It is this loosely affiliated 'movement,' or agglomeration of ideas, to which we will now turn.

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[67] Praz "Machiavelli and the Elizabethans"; Raab *The English Face of Machiavelli*; Fink *The Classical Republicans*; Pocock *The Machiavellian Moment*; Skinner *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, I and II; Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England*; Tuck *Philosophy and Government*; and Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*.
[68] McCrea *Constant Minds* 4.

Chapter eight:
Politics, Republicanism and Tacitean Neostoicism

> It is not [Thucydides'] view that man is wholly master of his fate and captain of his soul, nor was the human *psyche*, in his eyes, unconquerable—any more than there were gods to thank for it.[1]

Political Contexts

The question of Shakespeare and his politics is a vexed one. It likely admits of no single, clear-cut answer.[2] This dissertation therefore tackles a more manageable topic: it takes a swipe at the Gordian knot of the politics of Shakespeare's plays on the premise that if we cannot know what Shakespeare thought about specific political questions and topics, we can still, it seems intuitive to acknowledge, make headway on the matter of the political vocabularies and discourses that emerge, fade, collide and lurk, in a manner of speaking, in the background and foreground of his drama. That is, as H. Grady says in a related discussion, it is a matter of keeping our conclusions tentative and "open-ended," and asking questions "which can give us themes, insights, 'constellations' in Benjamin's suggestive phrase."[3]

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[1] Woodhead *Thucydides on the Nature of Power* 168.
[2] At least no one clear *short* and *satisfactory* answer that focuses on Shakespeare and his context (rather than focusing through Shakespeare 'onto' twentieth century concerns.) For a start, however, see Collins *From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State*, and especially Worden "Shakespeare's Politics" and Wells *Shakespeare, Politics and the State*. Lever *Tragedy of State* is very important. Other works on this subject include Bloom and Jaffa *Shakespeare's Politics*, which does not do justice to the intellectually stimulating Straussian context out of which it emerges (see Strauss *City and Man*); Alvis and West *Shakespeare as a Political Thinker*; and the nearly ubiquitous Foucault-inflected works that dominate the study of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Worden *The Sound of Virtue* is an important investigation of Sidney in the context of Elizabethan politics; while it does not treat Shakespeare, it is full of clues as to how a study of Shakespeare's politics might be assembled. In general, all of the books and essays of Q. Skinner and D. Norbrook are attempts to treat the early modern political context in a way that both avoids anachronism and opens up new avenues for research (particularly the republican tradition for Norbrook and neo-roman modes of political reflection for Skinner). P. Rahe's three volume *Republics Ancient and Modern* is essential for the study of the history of political thought from antiquity through the Renaissance and into the post-eighteenth century world.
[3] Grady "A Differentiated Theory of Subjects" 42.

This dissertation is a contribution to hitherto 'under-treated' aspects of early modern political thought, namely, the passions, and the relationship of the affective motivations of human agents to the thought and practice of politics and literature in the early modern period. The present study encompasses a large and only partially charted terrain, for the passions have received little systematic consideration at the hands of either literary scholars or intellectual historians, especially in the context of the confluence of political thought and political literature. I contend that the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean writers and thinkers characterized here as 'politic historians' produced, out of an admixture of competing and complementary traditions, a discourse of the passions which offered a compelling quasi-methodology for analyzing and diagnosing the flaws, faults and fault-lines of the contemporary political landscape.

Bordering at times on the political philosophy it would later influence, or at least resemble in the form of Hobbes' writings, this proto-political science, the discourse of the passions, conjured a means for making sense of a political world rife, as the 'politic historians' saw it, with the evils of a lessening of civic values; unaccountable princes; nepotistic officials and corrupted virtue at court and elsewhere; war abroad in the form of actual 'hot' and 'cold' wars with Spain, France and other powers, and war—or at least intense factional strife—at home between Protestants and Catholics, but a concomitant reluctance (to many leading courtiers and counselors) to forthrightly endorse a much needed martial code of honour and war; and, above all, a generalized fear that social and individual liberty and felicity were being thwarted by the increasing power of the court and of the monarch, a process of proto-absolutism which in turn was seen as limiting the opportunity to empower agents as *citizens*.[4]

These factors loomed large in the consciousness of the generations between the assumption of the throne by Elizabeth and the deterioration of relations between

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[4] Literary scholars have focused almost exclusively on the alleged *absolutism* of the period to frame the 'politics of literature' in early modern England. See Goldberg *James I and the Politics of Literature*. I follow most historians, especially the revisionists, in only reluctantly seeing the 'Jacobethan' period as absolutist; most late-twentieth century literary studies have been less hesitant. Burgess *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* treats the debate over royal absolutism in detail; the treatment in Monod *The Power of Kings* is far briefer.

Charles and the parliament, which ultimately culminated in civil war. At no time did all of these factors weigh on the minds of people more heavily than in the years between 1590 and 1610, in spite of a plethora of discourses and ideological works buttressing the *status quo* of "eternal unity, harmony and hierarchy."[5] In these two decades, Elizabeth's rule became one of barely hanging on, and in many ways, so did James'.[6] The nineties have been described as a period of the crown's inability to act, dire poverty and food shortages, rebellions by a growing army of 'masterless men' as well as the highest placed court nobles, and the all-too-apparent waning of the Elizabethan ideal of 'Eliza' as an object of worship.[7] And whatever optimism surrounding James' accession to the throne was quickly obliterated, at least by the time of the 1610 quarrel with Parliament, so that the disasters of Elizabeth's late, faltering rule were quickly forgotten by many and deemed a golden age.

The factors adduced above, and the conditions just outlined which mirrored and spawned them, were the backdrop against which the discourse of the passions emerged. But a wider setting is of crucial importance too. The interest in the passions was not, of course, entirely novel and unique. It developed out of traditional humanist concerns which foregrounded an Aristotelian image of the political participant as well as Stoic images of the need to retreat in the face of vice and the recalcitrance, to virtue, of Fortune. The 'habits of thought'[8] in the English Renaissance were both classical and humanist through and through. As a historian has expressed it, "Humanist political thought in England rested on a base of educated interest in classical politics that broadened significantly from around 1570."[9] Classical thought meant Stoicism, namely Cicero and, in particular, Seneca: both were extremely widely read and cited, and Cicero was assigned in grammar school. But it also meant Tacitus, especially in the late sixteenth century. A key motif in Stoic and neostoic philosophy was the need to control Fortune by proxy, or vicariously, by controlling one's passions; that is, controlling one's response to

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[5] Peltonen *Classical Human and Republicanism* 1.
[6] See the discussion in Guy *Tudor England*, and the relevant chapters in Guy *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, especially Levy "The Theatre and the Court in the 1590s."
[7] Guy *The Reign of Elizabeth I and Peck The Mental World of the Jacobean Court.*
[8] Shuger *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance.*
[9] Worden "English Republicanism" 444.

external circumstances about which one could do little. As we shall see, this was fertile soil for the 'politic history' and the discourse of the passions, for it allowed writers and thinkers to focus their attention on the specific means through which *active* citizens or agents attained or sought to attain their goals. But the picture is not quite complete, for several other conditions had to be met before the brand of political 'diagnostics' the present study treats emerged. To traditional, or civic, humanism and Stoicism were added three or four further discourses.

One was a radical branch of humanism: Machiavellian political philosophy. Another was the allied movement, the 'fad' or 'craze'[10] for Tacitus. Commingled with these concerns was the resurgence in the sixteenth century of interest in classical republicanism, or an interest in neo-roman concerns such as that of liberty. Finally, there was the general, unspecific classical influence of Greek writers: principally the tragedians, read in translation or in Latin or Greek, and the Greek philosophers, especially, of course, Plato and Aristotle, but also the tragic historian and political thinker Thucydides. Thucydides certainly does not loom as large in the early modern political world as Tacitus who excited everyone from political dilettantes to sober students of politics, or Machiavelli who gave his readers—and perhaps more importantly, those who quoted him for effect—a *frisson* because of his controversial attempt to show the irrelevance of Christian morality—arguably all morality—to the 'new modes and orders' of successful political action. Nonetheless Thucydides had a readership,[11] often the same one that made Tacitus so popular. As Grafton points out, Tacitus and Thucydides were compared.[12]

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[10] Burke "Tacitism", "Tacitism, skepticism, and reason of state."

[11] We have already touched on the possibility that Shakespeare and his contemporaries read a mid-sixteenth century translation of Thucydides. Shakespeare may also have been exposed to Thucydides through a school-book compilation, or through Plutarch and Montaigne; and we know that Roger Ascham mentions Thucydides. Elyot mentions only Roman historians: Tacitus, Sallust, Livy and Caesar.

[12] Tuck points out that when Tacitus' writings were alleged to provide support for tyranny, Polybius and Thucydides were recommended as alternatives: "Thucydides was the other alternative to Tacitus whom Venetian writers recommended to their European correspondents, again as a text which could be fitted into a post-Ciceronian humanism. The scholar Dominico Molino, for example, urged Jan Meurs [...] in 1622 to prepare an edition of Thucydides as a reply to the students of Tacitus: "'if others should have adorned the teachers of tyranny in such a grand manner, why, I beg, should a free man be grudging to the preceptor of our sweet treasured liberty.'" Tuck *Philosophy and Government* 100-101. The imputation to Tacitus of pro-tyrannical beliefs or convictions is spurious: Tacitus arguably exposes the means through which tyranny

Thanks to Lipsius' scholarship and influence, Tacitus became the key figure for early modern, politically minded humanists. After Lipsius moved to Louvain,

> the tradition of politically engaged, contextually sensitive teaching of history that he [Lipsius] founded was carried on by men like Daniel Heinsuis, who deeply appreciated Tacitus' ability, comparable to that of Thucydides, to grasp and express the real secrets of state action. Throughout Europe, humanist historians could claim to be the reigning experts in a subject of immediate and obvious political relevance. They had better access than anyone else to the *arcana imperii* of the ancient world, the secret rules by which [...] empire[s] had really functioned.[13]

Republicanism stressed the need for the commonwealth to be governed by virtuous citizens, preferably elected. Republicanism was of course not distinct from Machiavellian and Tacitean political philosophy, which were two of republicanism's main founts. So it is perhaps best that when we 'see' republicanism, we should 'hear' Machiavelli and Tacitus too. As we shall see, the early modern republicanism influenced by these two figures stressed not only, as some detractors of these two 'atheists' maintained, *reason of state*, but also provided a political vocabulary ideal for a court-dominated polity. This was especially true of Tacitism, which was widespread in late sixteenth-century England and France,[14] and out of which arose our final addition to the puzzle: a certain kind of post-providential political history writing which its practitioners saw as applicable to what has in another context been termed a "conception of a political community as an association of active participants."[15] Having outlined some of the contours of the intellectual setting, let us now turn to the discourse of the passions in relation to a key aspect of the early modern politics: Republicanism.

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functions, see Boesche *Theories of Tyranny*. Most early modern writers took Tacitus to be less ambiguous than Machiavelli on tyrants: what bothered some about Tacitus was the fact that tyrants and counselors and princes could read and learn from him too. Hobbes' abandonment of his work on Tacitus is clearly linked to his growing concern about Tacitus' anti-imperial (and so potentially anti-monarchical) anti-absolutism.

[13] Grafton "The New Science and Traditions of Humanism" 218.

[14] See Salmon "Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England."

[15] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 4; see also Woolf *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* for post-providential history writing.

> As a moral historian, Tacitus would see little difference between the mind and the soul, yet his focus on individual action and motivation made his work a handbook for political psychology in later centuries.[16]

Not surprisingly the period in question, circa 1580-1625, was also a time which can be described as heavily inflected with civic humanist, quasi-republican and republican ideas. Though it clearly does not display the markings of a period as republican as the 1640s, our period was imbued with a significantly quasi-republican hue. The reason for this hue was undoubtedly related to interest in classical antiquity, alluded to at the end of the previous section. There were dozens of Roman plays written and staged between the late 1590s and 1611, the year when the failure in performance of Jonson's *Catiline* (hissed off the stage) seemed to slow the 'onslaught' of Roman-inspired plays. Things slowed for a decade or so, and then the genre revived considerably, and *Sejanus*[17] became the model for political tragedy it most decidedly had not been when it was first staged in 1603/4. This turn to the ancient past is attributable in part to the restrictions placed on writing English histories or chronicles in June of 1599 (after Hayward's history of Henry IV's rise to power) by order of the Privy Council, thus making it dangerous for playwrights to compose and stage history plays. The Council decreed that no English histories could be printed without their permission; the possible 'topical application' to current political events was deemed too risky.[18]

The Privy Council's concerns can be seen in retrospect as somewhat misplaced. Hobbes' opinion was more acute, and he would not have been blind to the irony of the Privy Council's crackdown on histories, resulting in the 'death' of one dramatic genre only to inadvertently spur on another, more critical dramatic

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[16] Mellor *Tacitus* 69.

[17] While *Sejanus* is in many ways the most learned, influential and exemplary 'politic history' play, I do not offer a detailed reading of it. (It is discussed in Worden "Ben Jonson among the Historians" and Smuts "Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians.") This is in part because this thesis is devoted to Shakespeare and in part because Jonson's play is, simply, a poor play—filled with cardboard-ish characters uttering Tacitean lines illustrating 'politic history' points about court venality, dissembling, corruption and servility.

[18] See Dutton *Mastering the Revels*.

genre (ancient, particularly Roman, history) with a republican pedigree and a Republic as its frequent subject matter at a time when James himself emphasized the crown's emperor-like qualities. One of Hobbes' most infamous comments from around 1640, though he echoed the view in his late work *Behemoth*, is that "the English monarchy owed its difficulties to the study by its subjects of 'the books of policy, and histories, of the ancient Greeks and Romans.'"[19] Not coincidentally, the period Hobbes had in mind was the period 1580-1620, a period Blair Worden agrees laid the foundation for later troubles, even though one should not fall into the trap of seeing Pre-Civil War England as a hotbed of republicanism. The writers treated in the present study were not unequivocal in their admiration for republicanism. Still, they were more likely than most to be sympathetic to its main contours, and to what they thought were its salient features, namely its advantages over the corrupt and corrupting empire of Imperial Rome. As Worden says,

> Yet within Hobbes' overstatement lay a substantial point. Republican ideas might be missing from the political treatises of the generations before the Civil War, but they were often explored in imaginative literature: in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and the verse of his friend Fulke Greville [...]; and in plays by Shakespeare, Jonson, and their contemporaries which indicate not merely the public interest in the evils of courts and tyranny but the alertness to Roman political thought and history which playwrights could expect from their audiences.[20]

When Hobbes wrote his analysis of how the English monarchy had encouraged sedition by its failure to stamp out the study of books of policy (or as I call it 'politic history') he conveniently forgets, so to speak, that his first published work, *Horae Subsecivae*, contains a discourse on Tacitus and presents evidence for the influences of Bacon, Machiavelli and Tacitus on the youthful Hobbes.[21]

Republicanism, Tacitism and neostoicism are 'about' how to live under certain cultural and political dispensations. They are about the exercise of liberty, negative and positive liberty, and about the self that exercises that liberty (or

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[19] Hobbes, quoted in Worden "English Republicanism" 444.
[20] Worden "English Republicanism" 445.
[21] See *Three Discourses. A Critical Modern Edition of Newly Identified Work of the Young Thomas Hobbes*. This work was published anonymously in 1620 but now is firmly attributed to Hobbes although his tutee, William Cavendish, may have had a hand in the work as well.

more precisely, the self that in the exercising of liberty is transformed from abstract self to active agent). While one of these—republicanism—is more about the arts of government, and the other—neostoicism—is more about the fashioning of agents, and the 'arts of self-government,' the two are nonetheless in collusion and not in collision, not least because they deal with the capacity for self-rule and for underpinnings of civic virtue. This is the case even, it must be added, when under the influence of Machiavelli the notion of civic virtue is transformed from an emphasis on the 'good man' of the ancient philosophers—someone living according to the Golden Mean, for example, or ruled by reason—and towards the 'political man' of Machiavellian political theory where the emphasis is on the pursuit and exercise of power independent of moral considerations. It is important, too, to show how the development of a greater understanding of the complex relationship between republican modes and neostoic discourses—and what Q. Skinner calls 'neo-roman' thought[22]—with their emphases on self-government and agency, can lead to a revivification of the practice of Renaissance literary history. This, I hope, will in turn lead to a renewed appreciation of the importance of a notion like agency to the literary study of the politics, history and philosophy of early modernity. Of course this would mean a challenge to the reigning reliance within early modern or Renaissance studies on figures (like Foucault), whose work arguably occludes agency. That said, there are moments when the later Foucault urges a position similar to the one urged here. Discussing the 'techniques of the self' and the 'art of existence' Foucault says: "What I mean by the phrase(s) are those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, and but also seek to transform themselves."[23] However, on the whole, the effect Foucault has had is not one that is congenial to efforts at rethinking and refurbishing the notion of agency.

This is not the place to argue this in great detail, but I will say the following. While Foucault—and the Machiavellian/Nietzschean emphasis on

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[22] See Skinner *Liberty before Liberalism*.
[23] Foucault, quoted in Ivison *The Self at Liberty* 48. See also Nehamas *The Art of Living*.

contingency and power upon which his work rests—is useful for contesting Whiggish and conservative accounts of the normative construction of selves, his is also an approach that blithely encourages a pessimistic dismissal of the human agent, even as it requires some kind of subject/agent that is being 'normed and formed.' In short, to be cynical about extravagant claims about autonomy is fine and well, but to be dismissive about all claims about autonomy, and cynical about the ascription of moderate freedom-enabling capacities to agents—let alone more robust capacities (emotions, beliefs, and desires) of agents, often disparaged as the naïve and ahistorical reification of the humanist subject—is to seriously underestimate the power and usefulness of the role such capacities play for governing and self-governing. By so thoroughly disassembling and deconstructing the notion of the political actor or agent—now reduced to a 'subject-position'—Foucault is left insisting on a minimal conception of rights while simultaneously having disabled the agent who is to be the bearer of those minimal rights. To pun on 'care of the self,' we can ask the cynic: 'who cares for such a self?'

Not unrelated to this, republicanism as a valid non-Marxist, anti-monarchical/absolutist account of the set of practices known as the art of governing oneself, and 'the art of being governed,'[24] and neostoicism as an account of the practices of governing a pre- and post-reflective domain of human experience (the passions) are remarkably important as modes of political thought that emphasize the implications of liberty and agency. Theorized together, early modern republicanism and neostoicism encourage a new insistence on the institutions, ideas and ethos of liberty which also—as Ivison puts it in another context—help to "inculcate a vibrant political agency of *virtù* centered on, and dependent upon, the liberty and limited self-rule of active and engaged citizens, with often conflicting [pluralist] interests."[25] Moreover, this politics of liberty and self-rule emphasizes a liberty that is "a resilient liberty, secured by a particular political and legal structure and obligatory citizenship duties which

[24] Foucault's own phrase, quoted in Ivison *The Self at Liberty* 46.
[25] Ivison *The Self at Liberty* 53.

guarantee not just noninterference but nondomination—never being subject to another person's arbitrary will."[26] We are here revisiting issues about the compulsion of another's will, and the notion of the rhetoric of the passions which we first raised in the Introduction, and discussed again in the context of examining some of Shakespeare's plays. It is precisely this politics of liberty which is treated and interrogated by the 'politic historian' and dramatists of the early modern English stage, especially the insistence that one should never be subject to another's arbitrary will. Incidentally, and with respect to the 'conflicting interests" Ivison mentions, Shakespeare and others who deal with the vicissitudes of the passions—and liberation from their harshness—are not against conflicting interests and discord, or against the passions in the way Stoics generally are, or against the notion of plurality and multiplicities. Rather, they want to understand the bases of discord, contestation, disruption, the passions and the like, the better to secure the liberty from precisely such arbitrariness. The 'politic historian' and dramatists are, to coin a phrase, interested in the 'therapy of liberty,' with the provision of security. Security means adopting a moderate, non-cynical realist attitude. Its means, that is to say, an awareness of the manipulations we can be subject to. Therefore I will focus in this chapter on the change in the political vocabulary from classical humanism to a kind of republicanism—linked to a realism about motives—which, however vaguely it was in both theory and practice, was at least operationally unified by its onslaught on what its practitioners characterized as the naiveté of classical humanism with its acceptance of courtly virtues and its embracing of moral optimism and sometimes providentialism.[27]

I should take a moment to insist that I am also claiming that the neostoicism we find employed by the 'politic' dramatists and historians is a Tacitean neostoicism because of its interest in dissecting the actions and motives of political agents. To triangulate my inquiry thus—by introducing Tacitus into the mix—might seem to contradict my insistence that republican discourses and

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[26] Ivison *The Self at Liberty* 8.

[27] Of course just because optimism was challenged is not to claim that 'politic history' is pessimistic.

neostoicism are, and indeed were, reconcilable. For Tacitus is seen (by some) as a dubious republican, and his connection to Stoicism is tenuous at best.[28] For one thing, as Peltonen writes, Tacitus was "most often interpreted as a Machiavellian exponent of reason of state,"[29] in other words concerned with the machinations of power and not with cultivating the virtues required for good citizenship. And for another he dispassionately catalogues the vicissitudes of liberty and freedom under the despotic Roman emperors and their corrupted courts as distinct from penning—as the Stoics did—treatises on the passions. Tacitus believed that one's energies might best be put to use in cataloging wrongs and preparing the ground for ever-improving diagnoses, as well as bequeathing 'testimony' to history. In a sense, Tacitus writes 'tragedies of state' in Lever's sense of the term.[30] Tacitus' protagonist is long-suffering Rome, and liberty. As Tacitus says: "I consider it the chief function of history to ensure that virtue be remembered, and to terrify evil words and deeds with a fear of posterity's damnation."[31]

But it would be quite wrong to read Tacitus as unrelated to neostoicism. Tacitus conveys to the reader a sense of restrained indignation, and the sense one has of the implied author is one of a writer bearing witness to evils that need—for the sake of both subsequent generations and republics—to be remembered and understood, which is not incidentally the expression used by Hamlet's Ghost: "Remember me."[32] The predominant early modern interpretation of Tacitus as having connections with skepticism and with a kind of neostoicism, and for being a theorist of "an ethic of fortitude and endurance,"[33] meshes well with his republican brand of 'probing' Stoicism, here termed neostoicism. As M. Peltonen

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[28] Tacitus was not impressed by Stoics; regarding Seneca he mentions the Stoic philosopher's "bids for popularity." Tacitus *The Annals of Imperial Rome* 326. There is a good discussion of the unsavoury aspects of Seneca's life—including the wealth he amassed while urging a humble life (his gardens exceeded the emperor's in splendour) in Dollimore *Death, Desire and Loss*. Seneca killed himself but if this was intended as an act of 'resistance' to Nero it did not work. Tacitus is (as usual) simultaneously pithy and scathing: "Seneca's death followed. It delighted the emperor." Tacitus *The Annals of Imperial Rome* 363.

[29] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 124.

[30] Lever *The Tragedy of State.*

[31] Tacitus, quoted in R. Mellor *Tacitus* 2.

[32] *Hamlet* 1.5.91. This line of the Ghost's is itself repeated by Hamlet later—1.5.111-13—and the notion used by the dying Hamlet himself to Horatio when he says "Report me and my cause aright" and "tell my story." *Hamlet* 5.2.344; 5.2.354.

[33] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 124.

writes, the spread throughout sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe of a kind "of 'politic history' with its concern with causes and motives has often been ascribed to the impact of Tacitus' historical writings."[34] Moreover, Tacitus did come to be linked with Seneca, and the reception history of Tacitus' works shows that his work could lend support to republican causes, even as Tacitus' own dire circumstances and his unhappy life spent bearing witness to the disappearance of the glories and liberties associated with the Roman Republic made the historian appear far too cynical—something not remedied by the constant association of Tacitus with Machiavelli, something cultivated by pro-Machiavellians who used the esteemed Tacitus as a mask for disseminating ideas by the feared, hated and banned Florentine.

It is not common to see the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods as suffused with republican ideas. Nor is it customary to read the literary works of early modern England as engaging with currents of republican thought, let alone with the vigorous and spirited republican political philosophy found—in particular—in ancient Rome or in Renaissance city-states such as Florence and Venice. Indeed, where republican discourses are recognized and acknowledged with respect to early modern English thought, these discourses are described as "a language, not a programme."[35] The implication of this description is that republicanism contributed little, other than a few catch phrases here and there, to the political context of the early seventeenth century. It can be argued that distinctively republican ideas played an important role in the political 'foreground' of early modern English literature. Republicanism entered the politics of the time through classical history and classical rhetoric, as well as other sources, as part of the intellectual debt to Greek and Roman history.

In arguing for the prevalence of republican idea—or perhaps more importantly, for the prevalence of ideas of liberty and non-domination that stressed the need to understand the passions—I follow the likes of D. Norbrook,

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[34] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 125. See also Levy "Hayward, Daniel, and the Beginnings of Politic History in England"; Burke "Tacitism"; and Goldberg "Sir John Hayward, 'Politic' Historian."
[35] Pocock *Political Works of Harrington* 15.

M. Viroli and M. Peltonen, to name just the most recent and most influential accounts offered. In additional, J. G. A. Pocock, and B. Worden have argued for the recognition of an energetic republican discourse in connection with early modern English conceptions of agency, government, self and society. However, the latter two writers have also arguably underestimated the prevalence of republicanism, even as they have urged its recognition vis-a-vis the likes of James Harrington, Algernon Sidney, Andrew Marvell and John Milton. According to Norbrook, this underestimation has occurred because these two writers have sided with revisionists in underestimating republicanism prior to the 1640s. As Norbrook maintains, "Shakespeare and Jonson vividly realized past republican cultures for a popular audience."[36]

There are several reasons for the (relative) omission of republican thought from standard accounts of the politics of literature of early modern England. One is that 'republicanism' *qua* 'civic humanism' is seen as linked to or at least related to the Republican Party of the United States. Another is that the dominant traditions—especially liberal and Marxist—pertaining to the treatment of the English Revolution have traced the conflicts of the seventeenth century "back to long-standing constitutional or social conflicts"[37] and not to the 'idea-based' or 'ideological' conflicts which are emphasized by those favouring the idea of widespread republican modes of thinking.

A final and most common reason for a generalized reluctance to acknowledge republican discourses, insists that republicanism only emerged after the mid-century shattering of the usual political frames of reference. The argument—common to writers on both ends of the political spectrum—is that because of the dominant discourses "stressing eternal unity, harmony and hierarchy"[38] republican thought could not gain a foothold, as it were, in the political unconscious of the time. This reason is not a good one. As Norbrook writes, historians and theorists of

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[36] Norbrook *Writing the English Republic* 12. Unfortunately, Norbrook only spells out in a cursory fashion where, why and how this revivification took place. It is therefore up to others to elaborate and defend this claim.
[37] Norbrook *Writing the English Republic* 5.
[38] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 1.

> political thought have remarked on the absence of explicit republican theory in England before the 1650s; they have paid less attention to the many situations in which republican political practice was actively imagined.[39]

And republican political practice was 'applied' nowhere more consistently than in the discourse of the passions. While traditional humanists—and their tradition—denigrated the passions in the most unnuanced and virulent way and insisted on their being tamed, some post-humanists took a different tack. They did not always regard the passions as invariably pernicious. For the Stoic, and for the Stoic-influenced humanist, the passions created such a tumult in the soul that their bearer was rendered prone to disastrous moral and other weaknesses. And given the analogous relationship thought to obtain between the body or mind, and the external body-politic, the passion's internal tyranny could lead to external manifestations like strife, or actual tyranny. This latter situation, of tyranny induced by the passions, was a particularly perplexing one to the traditional humanists, above all in the case of the tyrannical prince. Tyranny was anathema to all, for obvious reasons. What matters is the different ways in which it was approached or theorized. Traditional humanists, as distinct from those I have termed 'politic' or critical or republican humanists, refused to diagnose tyranny solely in terms of the (intentional) properties and qualities of princes. As with the later apologists for absolutism, the traditional humanist held that God would cause tyrants to be punished. There was little use in attempting to either influence or understand the means through which tyrants became tyrants, let alone attempt to construct a proto-political science of the conditions conducive to tyranny in the manner of a Tacitus.

But the matter of princes' states of mind was precisely the purview of the tragedians and 'politic historians' of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period. There were *some* distinguished predecessor texts that treated rulers' minds and intentions. Two important precursors to the writers treated here were Sidney's *Arcadia* with its emphasis of the flaws of monarchical government; and Thomas

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[39] Norbrook *Writing the English Republic* 12.

Sackville and Thomas Norton's Senecan tragedy *Gorboduc* (1565), which treats problems of policy, including actual and pressing Elizabethan concerns, such as marriage and heirs, "princely power"[40] and the division of the kingdom. Works like this, however, were few and far between, especially before the 1590s. Sixteenth-century governments, including that of the Tudors, encouraged chronicle histories and benign *speculum principis* narratives and actively discouraged, through various kinds of censorship, the study of Machiavellian and Tacitean political maxims that would help citizens and subjects promote and foment serious historically-based analysis and criticism. Henrician and Elizabethan moralists

> often summarize the tyrant as an epitome of deadly sins and compare his pride, ambition, and malice to those of Satan himself [... and like] overweening Satan, the usurping tyrant is inevitably punished, for the Elizabethan treatment of his career follows a strict pattern of elaborate poetic justice. Inwardly, he is tortured by his vicious passions and his censorious conscience; outwardly, he walks in incessant fear and suspicion; his life is short, his death sudden and violent; and hereafter he must expect only the tortures of the damned.[41]

But invariably, the story was one of the eventual revenge by God. Such apologies for the Tudor myth and God-sanctioned rule as works in the *de casibus* tradition, and the *Mirror for Magistrates* and John Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* tell over and over the story of a retributive justice, something easily yoked to providentialist intervention, however inscrutable this intervention was (which it was of necessity, given the premise of God's mystery). This story was repeated in homilies, particularly the sermons ordered by Elizabeth to be preached in every church, and written up by her bishops in 1571 as the *Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion.* These sermons urged only patience against even the most intolerable usurper, as kings, howsoever they obtained power, were under no circumstances to be resisted. Needless to say, the implication was that not only was resistance prohibited, so too was 'resistance' theory, or theorizing along the lines of the resistance theory promulgated on the continent, especially by Huguenots.

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[40] *Gorboduc* 1.2.325.
[41] Armstrong "The influence of Seneca and Machiavelli on the Elizabethan tyrant" 19.

To get a sense of the role played by the passions in traditional humanist thought about political rule and legitimacy, it is necessary to provide a brief and simplified survey of the salient English Renaissance attitudes towards resistance and tyranny, attitudes which differed from the more radical theses on display in continental tracts and treatises.[42] Traditional Elizabethan humanist accounts of the political landscape tended to stress the manner in which the passions disrupted and complicated the mind of the prince, thereby throwing the prince 'off-balance' and rendering the polity vulnerable to usurpers and tyrants. This was in many respects a simplistic and apolitical 'psychologizing' of the political order, for it lent itself to the easy reinscription of a simple dialectic confirming providentialism. This dialectic proceeds in the following way. A lawful hereditary prince was either incapacitated by passion (frequently, lust) in such a way that he became a tyrant, or else a usurper was led by passion (frequently, ambition) to depose a legitimate prince. The state is then ruled by a tyrant. A crucial difference is that the legitimate prince, however tyrannical, must be suffered; God alone, at his convenience, could bring about the deposition of such a ruler, and this could often occur in later generations through such providential means as deposition, death, disease, plague or the failure to produce heirs. The usurper however could be deposed and replaced through rebellion.[43] On a humanist view of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and *Macbeth*, we find that such usurpers as Claudius, Henry of Richmond, Richard III and Macbeth are all stigmatized as usurping tyrants who come to grief because of their violation of the legitimate order of things, a violation whose dialectic culminated in the 'order of things' rebalancing itself by eliminating the passion-driven tyrant.

Traditional humanists were generally unable to countenance the passions as anything other than disturbing psychological occurrences that necessitated, and justified, the later intervention by providence to restore the political order. With providence sanctioned as the only legitimate means for redressing the ills of tyranny, there is no need for agents to ponder the means at their disposal for

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[42] Salmon "Catholic resistance theory, Ultramontanism, and the royalist response"; Kingdon "Calvinism and resistance theory."
[43] Armstrong "The influence of Seneca and Machiavelli on the Elizabethan tyrant."

overcoming tyranny by 'taking up arms against a sea of troubles' as Hamlet has it. Similarly, there is little weight placed on the need of subjects *qua* citizens to ponder the institutions and contexts which could give rise to the passions, particularly ambition.

As can be seen in the cases of plays like *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and others—including ones set during the fall of the Roman Republic and immediately thereafter (during Imperial times, the ages of Seneca, Tacitus and Lucan), like *Sejanus*, *Coriolanus*, and *Julius Caesar*—the non-traditional, radical 'politic' humanists, on the other hand, foregrounded the conditions of princely authority and tyranny through a political psychology of the passions of princes. It is precisely the traditional humanist approach challenged by the writers we shall encounter. In their own ways these writers challenged the dominance of aspects of traditional humanism, particularly where it pertained to the traditional humanists' inadequate philosophy of affections, passions and appetites.

The Passions and Politics

> The passions are not [...] embellishments to be tacked on to the back of a treatise once the real work is done, or added to a map when the surveying and measuring are completed. They are integral to the landscape, vital to a philosophical grasp of our own nature and our power to comprehend and negotiate the natural and social environments in which we live.[44]

It is worth pointing out that if we are to fully grasp the meanings, vocabularies, intentions, and self-descriptions of these writers (especially Shakespeare, Jonson, Bacon and the lesser-known Taciteans, like Hayward), we need to understand the centrality to political discourse, and to the nascent political science of the time, of the discourse of the passions, as well as this discourse's authority and duration. That is to say, the underlying methodological principle animating this dissertation is that of what has been termed *contextualist* history. This is a historical approach which is attuned, in the words of K. Sharpe, to the emancipation of "intellectual history from the limitations of the 'great texts' to study the vocabularies of the past revealed in

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[44] James *Passion and Action* 16.

all discourse."[45] I take this to mean *not* the claim that 'great texts' cannot be studied, but that these works must be studied the way other works must be studied, and not as if they are emanations of a decontextualized genius. The approach defended by Sharpe is contextual in that it reorients "the methodology and practice of intellectual history to a study of languages in which [...] the beliefs and attitudes of an age are encoded."[46] Thus it should be clear that I am not urging a wholesale recovery of the methods, let alone conclusions, of the cognitive style of mid-twentieth-century European intellectual history.

I began by noting the lack of systematic consideration of the passions. The passions have of course occasionally received treatment, but not in terms that do justice to the complexity of their relationship to vast areas of normative, descriptive and even mundane, commonplace-based political thought, let alone the scope of their import. This unwillingness to write *geistesgeschichte* was not always the order of the day. Earlier in this century, writers such as A. O. Lovejoy, A. J. Levi and H. Haydn[47] wrote sweeping narratives in the vein of what has disparagingly been called 'grand theory.' The heyday of interest in the passions was coterminous with interest in David Hume, Adam Smith and other icons of the Scottish Enlightenment. This was a time when intellectual history was ascendant. This was when statements like Hume's dictum that reason is the slave of the passions, an insight inspired by Spinoza's and Hobbes' work on the emotions, as well as by Rousseau's and earlier French writers' work on *amour-propre*, was the subject of learned works which combined meticulous observation with an interest in the vicissitudes and movements of select features of agents' inner lives. In many ways, these works of intellectual history, such as they are, both comment upon and extend a long tradition of concern with what Lovejoy—today an unfashionable figure—once termed "observations on the dominant motives of man" or, "the question what affective states operate as the distinctive *springs of action* in man and how they operate."[48] To this tradition, what can be called the discourse of the passions, also belongs

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[45] Sharpe "A commonwealth of meanings: languages, analogues, ideas and politics" 4.
[46] Sharpe "A commonwealth of meanings: languages, analogues, ideas and politics" 4.
[47] Lovejoy *Reflections on Human Nature*; Levi *French Moralists*; Haydn *The Counter-Renaissance*.
[48] Lovejoy *Reflections on Human Nature* 195; 70.

some remarkable and interesting works of early modern English Renaissance literature, including a number of the plays of Shakespeare, as well as works by Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Marston, George Chapman, Samuel Daniel and others. These figures are not usually associated with the discourse of the passions, which is seen as the domain of the likes of Hobbes, Robert Burton perhaps, and Thomas Wright, but the passions figure centrally in the conceptual economies of their works.

No one thinker reconciled all of the above strands of thought, but that is precisely why the topic is of such importance and interest. Of course it should not be expected that any one particular thinker from the list of those treated here instantiated all that was interesting and important about the discourse of the passions, let alone generated a philosophical system that wove all the strands we shall encounter into a seamless pattern. To expect a systematic treatment of the passions in early modern thought is probably akin to expecting the same thing of the notions of *virtue*, or *self-interest* or *prudence*; in a word, this expectation would be unrealistic. Many devoted time to the writing of treatises on the passions, and there is a sense in which Hobbes (in many ways the first systematic philosopher since Aquinas), Descartes and Spinoza were able through imagination and diligence to codify much of a hitherto under-examined notion that everyone used, although no-one could say with certainty what it named. It is no coincidence that these three thinkers all devoted a good deal of space in their works to the concept of the passions, however unsatisfactory we must now acknowledge that work to be, not least because it is mechanistically oriented. Of course, it is important to note that the passions were not used exclusively—and certainly not in the same way—by these philosophers.

The passions were an integral part of many everyday vocabularies and language games of the time—as a perusal of tracts, homilies, sermons and plays reveals. Any picture of the passions in early modern thought and literature will, however, be incomplete unless it emphasizes their usefulness. The passions were used as part of a comprehensive political folk psychology of action, motive and behaviour. A 'folk psychology' typically refers to the shorthand mode of

categorizing the actions of intentional agents, that is to say, agents like Aristotle's man-as-political-animal (*zoon politikon*) who perform actions on the basis of beliefs, desires, passions and motives. Agents act for reasons, however ideological, motivated and unrealistic these underpinning reasons are. What is worth examining as part of an attempt to rethink the vital category of agency is precisely how the comprehensive early modern reliance on the explanatory model of the passions relates to agency. I am aware that I can but scratch the surface of this interesting and important topic, but I will contribute the following. Fictional treatments of every conceivable kind of social agent—from princes to counselors to knights, ladies and fools, and from assassins to peasant mobs, malcontents, queens and usurpers—attributed passions to agents, and highlighted the causal power and influence of veritable inner continents of affective and motivating states of mind. Even the complex behaviours of states or nations were understood in terms of states of mind: for example, they felt fear, or had ambitions, or became prideful, vengeful or angry. Of particular interest, none too surprisingly, was the state of mind of *heads of states*, an expression which itself illuminates its semantic etymology in the practice of seeing rulers as heads leading the commonweal, or the body of the polity. There was also a close connection between the passions and the practice of understanding the agents comprising the polity, and interpreting legitimate governments and rulers, as well as tyrants. Suffice it for the time being for me to comment on the use of a political psychology of the passions in early modern thought—specifically, in early modern England—for diagnosing ills and ailments in rulers and states. It is no coincidence that many early modern commentators on the passions were also influential political analysts. Here I have in mind such figures as Pierre De La Primaudaye, Hobbes, Bacon, Jean Bodin, Justus Lipsius and Montaigne.

However, given that the problematic of the passions was central to such a distinguished company of thinkers, in addition to those writers, historians and playwrights I have designated as belonging to the loose category of 'politic historians,' why is this topic undertheorized, as I noted at the beginning of this introduction? In other words, it behooves us to ask about the relative neglect of the

passions *qua* the political folk psychology that I am alleging dominated the minds, however inchoately, of so many of the early moderns. What can account for this neglect, puzzling given the ubiquity of the discourse of the passions? Anyone wanting to answer this question—and thus to start on the path of returning the passions to a position resembling legitimacy as a chapter in intellectual history—will have to work through the thickets of the practices and language games of early modern thought. But first let me propose an initial answer, which focuses on the institutional disrepute into which intellectual and interdisciplinary history has fallen, or rather, has been pushed. There is a sense in which the passions have been ignored because of their proximity to intentional psychology—the hermeneutic 'science' of attributing reasons and beliefs to agents. This approach has been largely discredited in recent years in the Humanities, where inquiry has emphasized the importance of movements of larger tectonic-like entities, such as class and others. Within literary studies, interest in proximate causes of action has also been eschewed, in favour of larger, less 'local' explanatory schemes like discourse, archive, supra-cultural poetics, putatively 'global' determinants like class, race and gender, and something resembling discursive *Geist*, and in sharp if not downright hostile contradistinction to the *methodological individualism* which emphasizes the abilities and capacities of individual, intentional agents. P. Pettit, for one, sees this opposition between system and structure on the one hand and agency on the other as part of a long-term Western sociological orientation that has pitted holism and individualism against each other. He writes that

> The influence of these developments would have been reinforced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by an organicist way of viewing social life, under which a society gets to be described as an organism and the history of a society gets to be seen as a life-process: a process in which we naturally look for cycles or stages or even meaning. With this metaphor in command of the collectivist vision, it became fashionable to deny individual autarchy. It became possible even to think of individuals in nightmare fashion, as the pawns or playthings or puppets of social structure and historical process.[49]

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[49] Pettit *The Common Mind* 127.

At least one unfortunate result of this dichotomy is that the dominant paradigm in literary studies has foisted on researchers an unwitting hostility to 'micro-analyses' that focus on agency. One irony is that this hostility is misplaced, because the dichotomy is a false one. Both explanations based on proximate and ultimate causes have a role to play; indeed they are complementary. Agents are subjects and *vice versa*, that is to say, as in the field of linguistics, there is a legitimate sense in which language users are seen accurately under a number of descriptions, not all of which need be diametrically opposed. All human behaviour needs to be seen in the context of a social ontology, given the truism that human agents are socially mediated—though not necessarily socially constructed or determined[50]—are socially situated, and are "essentially social agents, as agents whose ability to think, or at least to think commonable thoughts, is a social property."[51]

Having shown that the socio-political credentials of agential explanation are impeccable, I feel I can conclude that the category of the passions was vital to the early moderns as an explanatory tool of action and politics, and action in politics. The overview given in this chapter has provided a sense of the history of the 'category' of the passions, and now that (part of) the role of the discourse of the passions in the early modern period has been demonstrated, the reader's appetite should be whetted for further accounts of just how, why and where the passions were used as a proto-political science, or as a Hobbes scholar puts it, a "philosophical anthropology,"[52] of social action.

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[50] On this topic I can think of no better—or clearer—statement of anti-social determinism than B. Williams' strictures quoted in Chapter one, text to footnote 51.
[51] Pettit *The Common Mind* 213.
[52] Holmes *Passions and Constraint* 69.

Chapter nine:
Honour and the Politics of Partiality in *Coriolanus*

> How was the language of the sword translated into politics? [... The] root of the matter lies in the mentality defined by the concept of honour. This, emerging out of a long-established military and chivalric tradition, is characterized above all by a stress on competitive assertiveness; it assumes a state of affairs in which resort to violence is natural and justifiable; the recurrence of personal and political situations in which conflict cannot be otherwise resolved than violently. Honour could both legitimize and provide moral reinforcement for a politics of violence.[1]

Coriolanus and 'Partiality'

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* is a deeply political play. I shall argue that what makes it political is perhaps not what has usually been seen as making it so. Rather than treat questions of absolutist or proto-absolutist monarchical rule—questions that are regularly part of the critical treatment of *King Lear*, for example—*Coriolanus* deals with life in a republican, but oligarchic, commonwealth. The inability of Coriolanus[2] to fit into the political order of things is the central theme, but the play is also about issues of honour, persuasion and the limits of cynical realism construed along Machiavellian lines. N. Frye writes that in "the tragedies of passion there is a conflict between personal and social loyalties,"[3] which is borne out by the case of *Coriolanus*. I want to show how the conflict between loyalties is also a clash of 'partialities.' The concept of 'partiality' is a cumbersome way of approaching the point that the principles that inform loyalties—for example, as in Coriolanus' case to his family, to his mother's vision of what he should be, and to the polity to which he belongs—are not abstract, impartial principles but powerful *felt* and *lived* affective bonds. Indeed he uses the word 'bond' himself, when he says let all "bond and privilege of nature break!"[4] The clash of principles, or affective bonds, or bonds and

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[1] James *Society, Politics and Culture* 309.
[2] For convenience I will refer to Coriolanus/Martius as Coriolanus throughout.
[3] Frye *Fools of Time* 55.
[4] *Coriolanus* 5.3.25. I discuss this quotation below, in the second section.

principles, is of course a staple of the genre of tragedy. We find such clashes in *Macbeth* where ambition and loyalty or fealty stand opposed; or in *Hamlet* where there is a clash between an archaic warrior mentality urging vengeance, and a more modern compulsion to seek certainty, and to establish culpability. The most famous instance in classical tragedy is without a doubt *Antigone*, where *partial* and passion-freighted bonds collide with a compelling, but competing principle. Shakespeare's strangely aloof aristocratic character Coriolanus, and his interaction within the play with the other characters, especially his mother, can fruitfully be seen as representing an interrogation of the nature of civic and social virtue, and the affective (emotional) bonds that unite and divide polities. I shall therefore focus on character, interaction and affective bonds.

Who exactly, or what exactly is this Coriolanus? As I read him, Coriolanus is an example of someone who takes a hard-line position on the centrality of autonomy, and on the weaknesses of virtue, civic virtue, pity and conscience. He sees himself as strong enough to avoid the affective bonds and ties that yoke him to Rome and his family. Rather, he is a self-shaping, moral island, in command of his fate and future.

> I'll never/ be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand/
> As if a man were author of himself/ And know no other kin.[5]

From this oft-quoted statement by Coriolanus we can see how he regards himself and how he would have others regard him too. Here, and throughout the play, Coriolanus insists in the most violent and visceral terms on a denial of nature that is also the denial of nurture—denying his mother's influence and the culture that has produced him by denying what Coriolanus here calls 'instinct.' I take it that he is here referring to the emotional or affective bonds that normally tie a person to his or her family, and the salient values of society. For Coriolanus, affective bonds are something with which he is unfamiliar. As a warrior, Coriolanus of necessity inhabits a 'world' of honour and violence, where normally some bonds hold sway. But Coriolanus seems to lack those bonds too, bonds which might be assumed to hold between a leader or a general and his men. He has a particular

[5] *Coriolanus* 5.3.34-7.

affinity for violence, as a result of his mother's 'training,' but there is no sense of interest—no appreciation of strategy, let alone instrumental *reason of state* thinking—reflected in his actions.

Coriolanus is a proud warrior, island-like and isolated from the details or niceties of rule and politics. While he in some respects resembles the prototype of the autonomous man of 'impartial' individualism—because he is a self-proclaimed social 'atomist'—usually associated with the rise of early modern *laissez-faire* market economics, it would not be accurate to characterize him wholly in such terms.[6] For the fact of the matter is that he is an anachronism. He is too ensnared in his honour-based passions and in his devotion to his martial vocation to be prudent and self-interested. As K. Gross observes, "Coriolanus cannot conceive of escaping to a speculative or interior place such as tempts Hamlet."[7] Coriolanus' lack of self-control means that not only is he subject to the capriciousness of his own passions, he is unable to be Machiavellian enough to deal with his adversaries in a way that would probably be successful. If he could 'smile and be a villain,' in Richard the Third's words, he would be infinitely more successful. Coriolanus' opposite Volscian number, Aufidius, is considerably more successful at dissembling, manipulation and 'self-shaping.' As A. Barton says, "Aufidius is adaptable. Like Machiavelli, he understands the importance of accommodating one's behaviour to the times."[8]

Of course, it is not at all certain that success is what the perversely constant-yet-inconstant Coriolanus wants. The same certainly goes for 'accommodating' himself. When he confronts the rioting citizens at the beginning of the play, his scalding anger quells his rebellious interlocutors but at the price of alienating them. He has not an ounce of politic sense in him, and while this is endearing to anyone disgusted by the slickness of Machiavellian manipulation, it is also remarkably naïve. Earlier in this dissertation, I have mentioned the peril of pessimism about what agents are capable of. Naiveté is as debilitating and destructive to the polity as pessimism. Coriolanus is remarkably

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[6] *Pace* R. Wilson's reading. See the relevant chapter in Wilson *Will Power*.
[7] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 143.
[8] Barton "Livy, Machiavelli, and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*" 126.

naïve because he is indifferent to others. While the strength and vitality of a republic requires warriors who are clear-eyed about their martial roles, a republic is also about compromise precisely because—unlike a feudal monarchy or an absolutist monarchy—it also requires power sharing, which in turn rests on a sense of fairness and the entitlement of others. These are qualities that Coriolanus does not possess, and when the most powerful warriors in a republican polity *lack* these qualities, even as they are also prized for their martial abilities, the conflict is a serious one. Having mentioned the republican context of the play, I have to consider an important comment by a critic who articulates a position that is opposed to my own. A. Kernan writes that

> Sacking the city is treason, the most heinous of political crimes in the new divine-right state, and psychologically it becomes for Coriolanus the transgression of the most absolute of human taboos, incest.[9]

It is, one supposes, possible that there might be something to be said for this insight into the psychology of Coriolanus' relationship with his mother, but the emphasis on reading the political setting through the lens of the 'divine-right state' is a mistaken one. It is to misunderstand the nature of politics in the play, for *Coriolanus* is set in a republic, admittedly a fledgling republic. There are two cardinal virtues in republican thought and practice. One is 'love of self-government.' This refers to the practice of citizens of a republic governing themselves. And it refers to citizens *qua* agents governing their dispositions and passions, a capacity Volumnia has excised in Coriolanus, who notoriously cannot control his wrath and his rage. The other great republican virtue is 'love of country,' and what is that other than a partial—as distinct from an 'impartial'—attitude towards other citizens? What defines a republic (*'res publica'* or publically shared *thing*) is this partiality towards one's fellow citizens, and a partiality that is most certainly extended to the republic's cities, or capital city. That is why it is abhorrent for Coriolanus to be so changeable in his allegiances and why it is disgraceful of him to consider sacking Rome.

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[9] Kernan *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright* 147.

It is partiality that is so sorely lacking in Coriolanus' character. So we learn immediately, at the beginning of the play, when Coriolanus confronts the rioters. His first words are vituperative and, while he claims to have insights into their passions and motives—"your affections are/ A sick man's appetite"[10]—he clearly does not. Coriolanus knows neither passions nor interests. Coriolanus should be contrasted with the Bastard in *King John*, who says:

> For he is but a bastard to the time/ That doth not smack of observation;/ And so am I, whether I smoke or no./ And not alone in habit and device,/ Exterior form, outward accoutrement,/ But from the inward motion to deliver/ Sweet, sweet, sweet poison for the age's tooth:/ Which, though I will not practice to deceive,/ Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn.[11]

The tragedy of Coriolanus is that he is shaped, both by others and by his passions. For all his martial prowess and for all his power, he is vulnerable to the contingent whims of his mother, and his own intemperate nature. He has been shaped, moreover, so as to lack empathy. Because he has so little control over his reactions, he does not understand that his well-being should matter, and that his well-being is linked to his polity. If we read Coriolanus' character in light of the Bastard's quotation from *King John* (above), we see that he is someone who will indeed not 'practice to deceive' but he will not 'learn' either. He shares with the Bastard a hatred of 'observation' (obsequiousness) but he does not share the Bastard's ability to understand the distinction between inner and outer, inwardness and exteriority. Coriolanus' 'inward motions'—his passions—are apparent to all, and this means that rather than having a healthy sense of his own agency (and reflexivity), Coriolanus' is open to the manipulation of others, whose manipulations of him spur him on to even more intemperate and rash words and deeds. Indeed his very personality owes much to his mother's early manipulation of him.

Coriolanus' anachronistic personality, that is, anachronistic even by Rome's standards, is obviously used by Shakespeare to say several things about society and sociality. R. Wilson makes the claim that Coriolanus is established

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[10] *Coriolanus* 1.1.176-7.
[11] *King John* 1.1.207-15.

early in the play as akin to the robber-baron of pre-modernity's "unregulated market,"[12] because of the thematic proximity to peasant hunger and grain riots in the Midlands. However, it would not be fair to see Coriolanus as the incarnation of a profit-hungry calculating proto-capitalist. Coriolanus can in fact be cold-hearted and cruel, but he is far from calculating. Profit seems to be the last thing on his mind; he belongs entirely on the side of the passions, rather than the interests, in terms of the Hirschman 'thesis.'[13] What distinguishes him is his lack of concern for the things that ail the body-politic, and this is not due to callousness but to indifference. That is, he seems to care only for virtues that are, in Nietzsche's terms, life-enhancing, and not necessarily instrumental. Indeed the following quotation will serve to bring out his Machiavellian and his Nietzschean qualities. He is contemptuous of the plebian populace:

> He that trusts to you,/ Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;/ Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no,/ Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,/ Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is,/ To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,/ And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness,/ Deserves your hate; and your affections are/ As a sick man's appetite, who desires most that/ Which would increase his evil.[14]

This rich speech of Coriolanus' is worth unpacking. The reference to 'lions' and 'foxes' should remind us of Machiavelli's two successful political types, who combine of course to yield the most appealing of all figures: the politician who is both powerful and shrewd. Coriolanus is powerful—and this contributes to his immense popularity among the Spartan-like and war-mongering Volscians—but he is not shrewd or cunning. The angry diagnosis of the citizens as 'sick' is both interesting and horribly impolitic. There is a hint of keen insight into the predisposition of some people to suffer envy and to be resentful of power and success, but surely the point of the riot is that people are hungry. Moreover, it is hardly thoughtful—let alone the time or the place—to insist on the citizenry's sickness or envy or hypocrisy. The emphasis on sickness—which should remind us of Nietzsche who also 'diagnoses' on the basis of his own somewhat perverse

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[12] Wilson *Will Power* 86.
[13] Examined in Chapter two, section two.
[14] *Coriolanus* 1.1.169-78.

standards of 'health'—is remarkably inflammatory, too. Earlier I said that Coriolanus does not understand the affections, the passions, so perhaps it is inconsistent of me to quote a passage wherein he speaks of affections. But Coriolanus, on the other hand, sees himself as having either no 'affections' at all, or else he sees his affections as 'healthy': martial and autonomous in contrast to the 'sick' affections of his interlocutors.

To repeat an earlier point, Coriolanus' thoughts and actions reveal him to be anachronistic even in a Rome that was closer to the world of *virtù* than to Shakespeare's England. However, if Coriolanus seems at all non-instrumental, it is not because he is particularly other-regarding. His perhaps admirable but certainly also misguided failure to tolerate some aspects of 'Machiavellianism' is not a position arrived at by virtue of thoughtfulness. Rather, it stems from the reflex-like disgust a soldier used to action feels for the backroom deal-making and dissembling that characterizes the Machiavellian political landscape. He should be admired for his dislike of what we can call the cunning niceties of Machiavellian thought. But it is also profoundly unrealistic to expect to be free of having to be persuasive, to appeal to one's interlocutors, even as one attempts to 'move' them to hold other views. That is, Coriolanus is misguided, for it is unreasonable of him to ignore the fact that opponents and adversaries also have 'fought' with words, and not always with a broadsword. Moreover, Coriolanus' railing against manipulation and against the citizenry is not based in kindness or capacity for caring or empathetic 'partiality.' Rather, it has its origin in his being an atomist; he wants to be left alone, above and outside the 'normal' passions of a 'normal' polity, affected only by the martial passions that move him to fight. As S. Cavell says, J. Adelman

> Understands Coriolanus's attempt to make himself inhumanly independent as a defense against his horror of dependence, and his rage as converting his wish to be dependent against those who render him so.[15]

He is partial only to the social practices that attach to warfare and battle. Borrowing a phrase from A. McIntyre (used by him in a different but related

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[15] Cavell *Disowning Knowledge* 153.

context), we can describe Coriolanus as a throwback to "Heroic society."[16] In a truly heroic society, defended if not ruled by a caste of honour and valour-driven warriors, Coriolanus would be left free to take to the battlefield occasionally in order to confirm his martial prowess. But he does not inhabit such a world; his world is one of tribunes and senators, of diplomacy and compromise. In short, Coriolanus' world, to his chagrin perhaps, is a world of *politics*.

It is his 'archaic' character that distinguishes the martial, impatient and raging Coriolanus from the repressed Weberian modernist, who is motivated by interest. The archaic Coriolanus is the one who has so thoroughly left behind the mundane and plebian notion of modesty that he can imply that the populace is hardly worthy of seeing his scars, so rather than cover them because of their relative lack of importance, he "thinks them too glorious"[17]:

> To brag unto them "Thus I did, and thus!"/ Show them th'unaching scars which I should hide,/ As if I had received them for the hire/ Of their breath only! (2.2.144-148).

As I shall demonstrate, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* is centrally about the fate of this warrior. The play is about how he is finally compelled by Volumnia to abandon his archaic atomism, his sense of what constitutes the honourable life, and how in capitulating he is destroyed. Reading the play in this way also has consequences for how we see Volumnia. We cannot but gain an increased sense of her presence in the plot, when we see how devastating her dismantling of Coriolanus is, and therefore how powerful her manipulative grasp of the passions is (even as she claims to be offering only reasons). In making this claim, I will also outline a theory of empathetic involvement to be used to explain Volumnia and Coriolanus' relationship. Only then can I fully support my general thesis about how the character of Volumnia in the play can be seen to challenge Coriolanus' archaic, honour-based impartiality.

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[16] See MacIntyre *After Virtue*, chapter ten.
[17] Nuttall *A New Mimesis* 119.

Volumnia and Coriolanus

> Coriolanus' honour is destructive, and leads him to betray his loyalty to Rome.[18]

For Coriolanus the noble virtues are associated explicitly with an 'impartialist' notion of self. Coriolanus locates nobility in the sphere of self-regard, denying that there are valid affective bonds, or rather—as the quotation at the beginning of this section supports—uses honour to trump partiality or loyalty. The plot is carried forward by a steady and relentless assault on his atomistic isolation. First the rioters, then the tribunes and Senators launch themselves at the imperturbable Coriolanus. But it is Volumnia who breaks him down, and—symbolically—reveals his individualism to be untenable. It is Volumnia who, in a final act of manipulation, violently disabuses him of his illusion. (Of course, since Coriolanus does not hold his views explicitly, in the way opinions are held, it is admittedly not exactly precise to speak of Coriolanus' 'illusion.') In a way, the otherwise manipulative Volumnia is a kind of spokesperson for the ethics of partiality. I read her as the play's counterpoint to Coriolanus the solipsist—the crux of the play is her persuading him to spare the city. This is a belated answer to Coriolanus' powerful soliloquy during which he shouts, "But out, affection!/ All bond and privilege of nature break!/ Let it be virtuous to be obstinate."[19] Here Coriolanus is shouting to himself, urging a self-shaping of his passions: he wants to will the expulsion of his capacity for partiality, in the form of 'affection.' And he wants to follow this 'expulsion' with a hardening of his heart, a forced introduction of obstinacy.

It is revealing that Coriolanus does not refer to the common Stoic notion of constancy. He wants more than 'mere' constancy; he wants the harsher virtue

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[18] Casey *Pagan Virtue* 98.
[19] *Coriolanus* 5.3.24-6. The word 'obstinate' is one that Plutarch also uses, in his description of Coriolanus.

obstinate, which connotes a strangely 'active,' tensed and muscular stubbornness that constancy does not.

While Coriolanus attempts here to view and present himself as wholly autonomous, as unencumbered by the bonds of affection, he is eventually forced by circumstances beyond even his powerful control and by Volumnia's prompting to admit that he is not autonomous. For convenience's sake, let us speak of two separate notions of autonomy. First, there is a weaker sense—personal or moral autonomy—which refers to the ability of an agent to more or less resist the persuasive manipulations of others, and to resist most kinds of garden-variety compulsion. Secondly, there is what I have been calling 'atomistic' autonomy, by which I mean the capacity to completely resist the claims of others. Coriolanus seeks the latter.

Alternatively ignored and reviled as both the tool and the product of the patriarchal imagination,[20] and seen as a 'wolf-maker,'[21] Volumnia can nonetheless be read as a fascinating agent who represents an irruption into the play of a radical communitarian force. This force directly challenges Coriolanus' capacity to self-shape or self-manage himself as occupying a solitary world of his own. Of course, Volumnia is not the only force in the play to so challenge Coriolanus' pretensions. One must also see Aufidius and indeed the hungry rebellious plebian mob in these terms. Traditional scholarship on the play has attempted to provide readings that support one or another of the protagonists as Coriolanus' double, or thematic foil. Usually the role of foil is given to Aufidius, Volumnia or the mob.[22] I believe that it can be argued that the play consists of a spiraling progression in which all of the traditional foils play a role, with Volumnia as the most central and ultimately the most successful. If Aufidius represents the aristocratic challenge to Coriolanus' autonomy, then the rioting plebians represent the challenge to his faith in himself as a self-creating agent. However, it is Volumnia who more than anyone else is given the task of driving

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[20] Sprengnether "Annihilating Intimacy in *Coriolanus*"; Hunt "'Violent'st' Complementarity."
[21] Cavell *Disowning Knowledge.*
[22] E. Jones' reading does not seem very plausible: "The first thing to note about Coriolanus is the prominence given to the two tribunes Sicinius and Brutus. They, rather than Aufidius, are the true antagonists of the hero." Jones *The Origins of Shakespeare* 59.

the point home. And if this is so, one would then be justified in seeing the Volumnia character as one of the most fascinating and powerfully depicted female characters in Shakespeare, and, moreover one who has not received her due.

Volumnia gets Coriolanus to adopt the belief that if he continues with the plan of destroying the city, his family and friends and fellow citizens will die too. His pride in his autonomy and pride in his prowess must be diminished, or the results will be dire for Rome. Although he has opened the play by coldly and callously dismissing the starving populace with the words (already quoted): "Your affections are/ As a sick man's appetite"[23]—in effect saying they have no claim on him whatsoever—he is compelled to recognize some bonds and obligations. Or rather, he is forced to act as if those bonds are meaningful. The evidence of the play is ambiguous as to *what* precisely persuades Coriolanus: his family, the desire to avoid destroying his homeland, or Volumnia's appeal (or, of course, a combination of all of these).

It is Volumnia who does most in terms of causing a change in Coriolanus. Yet as a character she has suffered tremendous criticism throughout the history of the reception (and production) of the play.[24] Two critics one might have expected to transcend reading the play as a case-study of the pre-Oedipal formation of aggression, namely C. Kahn and J. Adelman, agree that Volumnia is to blame for the violent sociopathology Coriolanus exhibits. Alternatively seeing him as "half man" and as "unfinished man," Kahn reads Coriolanus as constructed by Volumnia so as to reproduce her own murderous masculinity.[25] Volumnia has her defenders, who insist that even if we were to grant this particularly biased anti-Volumnia position, the following counter-reply is available: why, after "teaching her son that [...] proper masculinity is the affirmation of killing over nurturing,"[26] does Volumnia then later attempt to convince him of the reality of affective

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[23] *Coriolanus* 1.1.176-7.
[24] For a selection of positions, see: Hunt "'Violent'st' Complementarity"; Lowe "'Say I play the man I am'"; Luckyj "Volumnia's Silence"; Poole *Coriolanus*; Vickers *Shakespeare: Coriolanus*; Sprengnether "Annihilating Intimacy in *Coriolanus*."
[25] Kahn "The Milking Babe and the Bloody Man in *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth*" 152; 157.
[26] Lowe "'Say I play the man I am': Gender and Politics in *Coriolanus*" 89.

bonds? As L. Lowe points out, one can account for Volumnia's marginalization by both the traditional canon and most feminist psychoanalytic critics once one sees that

> Volumnia's speech is not significantly *more* violent than the speeches of other characters in the play, but as Coriolanus's mother, her words are overestimated. It is largely her position in the play, as 'the' mother, coupled with her distinctly nonmaternal speech, which allows her to be interpreted as the 'bad' mother and as such, the cause of Coriolanus's demise.[27]

This is by no means to say that the repellent Volumnia is blameless. This would be a difficult thing to maintain, for Volumnia is someone for whom nobility and virtue are at one with pride. Volumnia is aware of the power she can mobilize and the violence she can orchestrate when she can 'make a sword' of Coriolanus. She is nonchalant, even pleased in a cold matter-of-fact way by the havoc he wreaks: "Death, that dark spirit, in's nervy arm doth lie,/ Which, being advanc'd, declines, and then men die."[28] Appropriately, given the reference to Coriolanus as a 'machine,' there is something mechanical in her description in these lines of how he kills: 'his arm does this, and that, and then'—she blandly concludes—'men die.'

And like Coriolanus himself, she is occasionally unable to transcend the confusion seeing her son identified with the 'body' of the Roman state and seeing him as her living and breathing son, over whom she has some control. The clearest example of her confusion on this score occurs when she mechanically and instrumentally establishes an identity between Coriolanus' bloody, bleeding body and a social, public (indeed republican) honour attaching to the state. Here she sees him as he sees himself, as someone who has found both honour and a vocation in brutality and war, which he is good at:

> [Volumnia:] His bloody brow/ With his mailed hand then wiping, forth he goes,/ Like to a harvest-man that's tasked to mow/ Or all or lose his hire.
>
> [Virgilia:] His bloody brow? O Jupiter, no blood!

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[27] Lowe "'Say I play the man I am': Gender and Politics in *Coriolanus*" 90.
[28] *Coriolanus* 2.1.159-60.

> [Volumnia:] Away, you fool! It more becomes a man/ Than gilt his trophy. The breasts of Hecuba,/ When she did suckle Hector, looked not lovelier/ Than Hector's forehead, when it spit forth blood/ At Grecian sword, contemning.[29]

The body is for both of them a rhetorical emblem that incarnates aristocratic values. The play itself is full of references to Coriolanus' hard, solid and armor-plated body, and its similarity to rocks and trees. But in a fundamental way Volumnia differs from her son. She is for one thing less limited to seeing the world anachronistically, as the site of struggles to prove one's martial abilities and one's valour, even though she has shaped his disposition and personality. At once equally brutal, though in thought more than deed, Volumnia is also more flexible than the stubborn, raging Coriolanus. She is both a Machiavellian, aristocratic matron and someone with insights into the social and civic virtues. Why does Coriolanus lack insight into—and a feeling for—the vicissitudes of partiality? The answer lies in the masculine ideals of citizenship, honour and courageous accomplishments in the martial world that Coriolanus possesses. As M. Peltonen says,

> The predominance of courage made Coriolanus proud and insolent, which amounted to intemperate behaviour. [...] Moreover, Coriolanus did not embrace justice. Although he did not act like a cunning fox, he was nonetheless prepared to act like a lion.[30]

Coriolanus' own attenuated sense of honour and pride is also his own sense of his masculinity. When Coriolanus is required to face the plebeians, an event he regards as far beneath him, his response is to curse what he sees as weakness and weak dissembling: "Well, I must do't./ Away my disposition, and possess me/ Some harlot's spirit!"[31] It would be far too easy to criticize Coriolanus for his many flaws. A better question, one that acknowledges his complex character, is what does he think he is? Clearly, he thinks that he is "a lonely dragon,"[32] to use

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[29] *Coriolanus* 1.3.34-43.
[30] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 171.
[31] *Coriolanus* 3.2.110-2.
[32] *Coriolanus* 4.1.30.

his own phrase. This tells us how he sees himself and is one of the few times the normally unreflexive Coriolanus provides a self-description.

But the crux of the play occurs in the final scene, and this is where his 'dragon' self-description is confirmed. Interestingly, immediately before Coriolanus' family arrives to plead with him, he makes reference to a "crack'd heart,"[33] which refers to Menenius, but which somehow implicates Coriolanus himself as well, as it is obvious that Coriolanus is ailing and heart-broken.[34] It is as though the metonymic linking of hearts with Menenius (and we recall that the play's various subtexts collect around the idea of the shared body, the body politic and the emotional, affective body) foretells something of the events to follow. Coriolanus clearly attempts to steel his heart, and to render his passions 'obstinate'; he decides that he will hear no further appeals. But his family, led by Volumnia, sweeps past the guards, and he makes a last-ditch effort at refusing the hold of affective bonds over him. He prepares to harden his heart to the tugs and pulls of empathetic persuasion (and here we get a fuller context for the quotation I have already discussed above):

> But out, affection!/ All bond and privilege of nature break!/ Let it be virtuous to be obstinate./ What is that curtsy worth? or those doves' eyes,/ Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not/ Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows,/ As if Olympus to a molehill should/ In supplication nod; and my young boy/ Hath an aspect of intercession which/ Great nature cries, "Deny not". Let the Volsces/ Plough Rome and harrow Italy! I'll never/ Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand/ As if a man were author of himself/ And knew no other kin.[35]

This passage presents strong evidence for the kind of reading of the character of Coriolanus I am offering. The explicit mention of 'affection' and 'bond' and even 'privilege of nature' and 'obey instinct' strongly confirm my claims about the text, the theme, and the political import of the play. Moreover, nothing other critics have said about this central passage conflicts with my reading; not surprisingly the critical tradition is pretty much in agreement about the passage.

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[33] *Coriolanus* 5.3.9.
[34] Poole *Coriolanus* 99.
[35] *Coriolanus* 5.3.24-37. Incidentally, again Shakespeare uses the word 'obstinate,' a word found in Plutarch's chapter on Coriolanus.

However, A. Poole adds an interesting aside.[36] Poole speculates that in performance the Director must decide who (Aufidius, Volumnia, Virgilia, a combination, none, or all) overhears Coriolanus' soliloquy, for although the text just quoted is probably uttered as an aside to the audience, there is the problem of just how much privacy Coriolanus is provided. It is Poole's opinion that the very strength of the scene is owed to this half-'problem', half-'blessing', because the audience is literally invited to bear witness to Coriolanus' anguished attempt to carve out a social space for himself, free of the irritant of interlocutors. For my purposes, I am perfectly willing to concede this point about the incessant demands made on Coriolanus, as it confirms my reading of the bonds of affect and affection that swirl around Coriolanus and threaten to engulf him. Coriolanus is indeed "exposed to the glare and greed of the public eye and ear,"[37] something that arguably contributes to his desire to keep his feelings private. However, I would resist the implication that Coriolanus is thereby rendered more sympathetic because of some perceived violation of his privacy.[38] Instead I continue to regard the atomistic, honour-driven Coriolanus with a considerable suspicion and see him as an archaic anachronism. In this, at least, I can find support from J. Dollimore, who sees Coriolanus as the incarnation of essentialist individualism. Dollimore maintains that Coriolanus is perpetually resisting his mother's efforts at getting him "to compromise: 'perform a part/ Thou hast not done before' [Volumnia]. Coriolanus resists, always in the name of 'my noble heart' [Coriolanus]."[39]

This idea of atomistic autonomy can go so deep that someone like Coriolanus can seriously ask when reproached by Volumnia: "Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me/ False to my nature"[40] as though—untouched by affective bonds—he *should* be surprised by yet another attempt by his mother to shape his character. Moreover, it is as if his being 'true' to his martial character is an inviolable thing. As Dollimore says, if "Coriolanus believes his *virtùs* to be

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[36] Poole *Coriolanus* 100.
[37] Poole *Coriolanus* 101.
[38] This seems to be Vickers' position. See *Shakespeare: Coriolanus*.
[39] Dollimore *Radical Tragedy* 220.
[40] *Coriolanus* 3.2.14-5.

prior to and determining of his social involvement, essentially independent of it though capable of being in practice contaminated by it, Volumnia knows otherwise."[41]

Virtue vs. *virtù*

> If *Coriolanus* is politically contemporary, it is so, not or not primarily because of references, veiled or open, to corn riots or [...] in forecasting the approaching Revolution [....] Rather it provides, again, a country of the mind that audiences may explore in the construction of their own, potentially subversive, political awareness.[42]

Let us now turn to the final tableau, in which the two main protagonists Coriolanus and Volumnia confront each other in rags (a constant in most productions) and prepare for the inevitable compromise and sacrifice of some of their cherished 'principles.' Volumnia starts the first portion of her speech, as is well known, with an attempt at what C. Luckyj calls "emotional blackmail."[43] Moreover, it would be possible to see Volumnia's speech as the work of a skilled manipulator who has 'finally' figured out how to influence Coriolanus, initially going so far as to blackmail Coriolanus with the threat of taking her own life. And she now speaks of the previously reviled masses as "neighbours,"[44] and attempts to establish a link between herself and Rome, a link that continues the play's thematic concern with the body politic. But the body politic impacts on the politics of the body too. Volumnia appeals not to abstract principles that she knows Coriolanus holds, the "colder reasons"[45] he expects, but rather to matters of the heart, as Luckyj says "a verbal plea anchored in physical sensation"[46] that uses images of grief and suffering, and women mourning with fear and loss, all calculated to overcome his impartiality: "Down ladies: let us shame him with our

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[41] Dollimore *Radical Tragedy* 219.
[42] Mulryne "Introduction: theatre and government under the early Stuarts" 8.
[43] Luckyj "Volumnia's Silence" 337.
[44] *Coriolanus* 5.3.173.
[45] *Coriolanus* 5.3.86.
[46] Luckyj "Volumnia's Silence" 337.

knees."[47] This is the starting point of Coriolanus' acceptance that he cannot carry out his plan. He seems genuinely to have accepted her plan for peace, and moreover to have good, if partialist, grounds for doing so. And while Volumnia's motives for acting as she does may not be pure in the sense a Kantian might require or demand, it is clear that she is being constructed as the harbinger of some of the positive affective bonds that Coriolanus has attempted to avoid being implicated in.

Luckyj says that despite having evolved and attained "hints [... of] tragic recognition,"[48] Volumnia remains "the overbearing matriarch who threatens her son."[49] This reading occludes the power of the second part of the 'persuasion' scene. In the reading I have sketched, Volumnia becomes central as a counterpoint to a Coriolanus who denies 'kin' and the republican virtue 'love of country' until it is nearly too late and who seeks to deny—as he has put it—'instinct.' Volumnia emerges as a Machiavellian who achieves the difficult goal of persuading her son, the anachronistic warrior-caste conqueror, to abide by the dictates of empathy for the sake of community, for his wife, children, mother and city. I should also add that my reading has the merit, for better or for worse, of being congruous with the text that first inspired my reading of the play and its characters, Plutarch's. While the overlap with Shakespeare's Coriolanus is not total, Plutarch's Coriolanus is an 'obstinate' figure too, one who is determined

> to persist in his obstinate and inflexible rancker. But overcomen in the ende with naturall affection, [... he] yeelded to the affection of his bloode, as if he had bene violently caried with the furie of a swift running stream.[50]

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[47] *Coriolanus* 5.3.169.
[48] Luckyj "Volumnia's Silence" 338.
[49] Luckyj "Volumnia's Silence" 338.
[50] Plutarch, Poole *Coriolanus* 101.

Tragedy, *Coriolanus*, Realism

> Tragedy uses the dramatic plot as an echo of fate, by which is meant that characteristic of our becoming over which we have no control and which often seems inimical both to our well-being and our ability to understand.[51]

Coriolanus is tragic because when he submits to his mother's will near the end of the play, he does so—here, for the last time—without having learned very much. Rarely does a major Shakespearean character learn or change as little as Coriolanus. His earlier utterance that he will be moved by wrath rather than by pity ("and wrath o'erwhelm'd my pity"[52]) is haunting at the end, but even when he knows death is imminent, or when he spares Rome and realizes his time has come, neither pity nor wrath moves him. He says: "But for your son, believe it, O, believe it,/ Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,/ If not most mortal to him."[53] The customary wrath and anger that normally feeds his ferocious ability to stand alone and apart is nowhere to be seen and his pity was a weak force, the weakest of his passions, to begin with. Bereft of either wrath and anger or pity, he has nothing. After his tragic 'recognition' of the truth of this—namely, that he is bereft of his emotional buttress, honour—he 'soldiers' on, so to speak, "as if the tragic point of no return had not been passed," as A. Kernan says.[54] There is no comprehensive *pathei mathos* ('learning through suffering') at the end of Coriolanus as there arguably is at the end of *King Lear*. In *King Lear*, Lear learns that his perspective on the world was a failed, flawed one. He has seen things he did not know existed, and he has learned a measure of compassion and fellow-feeling. As he slowly loses his power—his power to dispense justice wanes as his power to discern *injustice* waxes—he starts to ask vast and important but unanswerable questions. As A. Poole says, Lear becomes "curious about the causes of things"[55]: Lear asks, "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have

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[51] Gelven *Truth and the Comedic Art* 139-40.
[52] *Coriolanus* 1.10.84.
[53] *Coriolanus* 5.3.187-9
[54] Kernan *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright* 147.
[55] Poole *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* 236.

life,/ And thou no breath at all?"[56] And earlier, he asks: "Is there any cause in nature that make/ these hard hearts?"[57] At the end of *Coriolanus*, there is both less suffering and less learning than in *King Lear*. As Gross puts it,

> Coriolanus's sweat of tears, his decision to "make peace" instead of war, should mark the emergence of some more human feeling. This is a moment when the violent, nameless statue should, as it were, become flesh and return to a shared communal life.[58]

But this is not what happens. There is of course *some* suffering, but there is only the barest of hints of knowledge. Gross continues:

> It is not that we don't recognize some breaking out of pathos, vulnerability, and pity, some return to humanity; one can hear a terrible gentleness in Coriolanus's tone. Still, Coriolanus's knowledge of his situation is stark; this statue cannot come to life without dying. There is no speech, no posture available to him which can restore the earlier motions of his raging life.[59]

Volumnia acted in a cruel, calculating way, with a 'grasping' mind, and with considerable hubris when she raised Coriolanus to be a brute-force, battering ram of a warrior. She is the kind of persuasive 'self-shaper' that needs to be guarded against. One of the ironies of the play is that schooling in 'politic history,' and especially rhetoric, might have provided Coriolanus with the means to understand her. But of course rhetoric is precisely one of the things Coriolanus abhors. As he says,

> I had rather have one scratch my head i'th'sun/ When the alarum were struck than idly sit/ To hear my nothings monstered.[60]

Rhetoric is for Coriolanus not a useful tool worth possessing, but an unmanly parlour game contributing nothing but dissembling.

It is clear that Volumnia shaped Coriolanus, not for some partially excusable reason such as self-preservation, but for the joy of unleashing *and* mastering a ferocious force. One of the 'unintended consequences' is that

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[56] *King Lear* 5.3.305-6.
[57] *King Lear* 3.6.75-6.
[58] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 156.
[59] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 156-7.
[60] *Coriolanus* 2.2.75-7.

Coriolanus' passions nearly cost Rome, and so Volumnia, everything. (Of course Coriolanus is not blameless; as Peltonen reminds us, "Coriolanus' uncompromising disposition and therefore his tragic end can be explained by his incompleteness as a statesman."[61]) She manages to rein him in, but not through the 'reasoned speech' of *logos* wherein one's interlocutor is given a reasonable account of why this rather than that should be done. In spite of her repeated references to 'reason' in her speech to Coriolanus, it is clear that she sways him because of her ability to manipulate dispositions *within* Coriolanus, dispositions that she—through the upbringing he received—has put in place. Volumnia is a proponent of Machiavellian *realpolitik.* But there are drawbacks to this position. In unleashing cynicism—and in this case, a martial, honour-driven warrior—onto the world, one may gain and hold power; however, one has to be prepared for the possibility that sooner or later the warrior will turn his sword against his master. Volumnia's situation with Coriolanus is uncannily similar to Machiavelli's situation with respect to princes: if they are taught too well, they cannot be reined in. It is a mark of the moderate and commonsensical realist mind that it never forgets this latter insight. As the historian of political thought P. Rahe puts it in his comparison of Machiavelli and Thucydides, the 'real' realist is one who comes to grips with "the fragility of civilized life" and who understands that one of the greatest threats to civilized life is precisely the immoderate realist that relishes cruelty and celebrates the insatiability of the passions. As Rahe puts it, defending what I have in this dissertation called Thucydidean moderate realism against cynical Machiavellian realism:

> In his history, Thucydides gives us every reason to reject as an illusion Machiavelli's utopian assertion that, through savage *virtù*, a "cruelty well-used," and an unleashing of the all too human lust for unlimited mastery, man [or woman] can subdue *fortuna* and promote humane ends.[62]

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[61] Peltonen *Classical Humanism and Republicanism* 171.
[62] Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" 141.

Chapter ten:
Necessity, Knowledge and the Passions in *Hamlet*

> Take heed least Passion sway/ Thy Judgement to do aught, which else free Will/ Would not admit.
>
> —Milton

> I am aware of these things you warn me of,/ But, though I have understanding, my nature compels me.
>
> —Euripides, *Chrysippus* (fragment)

Passions and Necessity

In his *Confessions* Augustine—seemingly too devout to have firsthand knowledge of such things—gives a vivid account of the way the Roman games turned spectators into wild, untameable beasts, ravenous for the sight of blood, *against* their will. Compulsion, this response which cannot be contained by the exercise of the will, is precisely what Hamlet seeks to provoke in Claudius, and perhaps to a slightly lesser extent, what Iago seeks to provoke in Othello: in the first case in the form of guilt, and in the second case in the form of a murderous or at least damaging envy. Compulsion is a staple of tragedy. When Oedipus is interrogating the shepherd who saved him as a child, and who is on the cusp of uttering a horrific truth (the shepherd says: "O god, I am on the brink of terrible speaking"), knowing or almost knowing what is coming, and Oedipus replies: "And I of terrible hearing; but I must hear."[1] As Ewans comments, "In that 'must' [that is, in necessity and compulsion] lies all the force of the tragedy."[2] Another classicist reiterates the same point. M. S. Silk, having just discussed the infamous case of Agamemnon 'taking on the yoke of necessity,'[3] writes,

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[1] Sophocles *Oedipus* 1170-71.
[2] Ewans "Patterns of Tragedy in Sophokles and Shakespeare" 445.
[3] Of course there are many versions of Aeschylus' lines, but *anankē* is almost always translated as 'necessity' or 'compulsion.' The addition of 'yoke,' favoured by some, is a nice and effective touch.

> Compulsion, either internal or external, is often weighed in a simple question. So it is with Creon, [...] "What, then, must I do?" Compare: "What shall Cordelia speak? [...] Cordelia's first fateful words that set in motion Lear's tragedy and her own. Here, as elsewhere, a *must* that betokens a tragic individual's decision is disguised with a question and also a *will*.[4]

There are some 'musts' in *Hamlet* too. One of the most prominent occurs when Hamlet is first berating himself for his failure to take action. He speaks ironically and bitterly of his 'bravery' and laments that he is substituting words for deeds: "This is most brave,/ That I [...] Must like a whore unpack my heart with words."[5] (Of course, Hamlet will soon be acting like the proverbial theatrical 'whore' in staging his attempt to unpack Claudius' heart with both words and deeds, deeds depicting murder.) But some equally interesting instances occur at the beginning of the play, when Claudius attempts—through some very canny rhetoric—to convince Hamlet that his father Hamlet the King's death is part of the natural order of things. Claudius says,

> 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,/ To give these mourning duties to your father,/ But you *must* know your father lost a father,/ That father lost, lost his [...] For what we know *must* be, and is as common/ As any the most vulgar thing to sense [...] From the first corse till he that died today,/ "This *must* be so".[6]

Claudius inserts as many 'musts' into his speech as he can, hoping to convince Hamlet that his father's death is merely an innocent part of the 'must' of necessity that governs human mortality.

Fascinating and important to Plato and Aristotle as well as the Stoics, Galen, Plutarch (to a lesser extent), and to a host of major and minor philosophers from antiquity to the eighteenth century, the passions have always been seen as deeply implicated in a myriad of fascinating and vital debates over the scope of human free will,[7] the extent of agency and autonomy, the nature of

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[4] Silk "Tragic Language: The Greek Tragedians and Shakespeare" 467.
[5] *Hamlet* 2.2.578-81.
[6] *Hamlet* 1.2.87-106. Emphasis added.
[7] Dilman *Free Will* is a good introduction to the question of free will and the history of its treatment by writers and philosophers.

irrationality and compulsion, and the degrees to which our emotions and perhaps our deepest, most powerful, most unbidden desires determine our choices, or compel us to act. Insofar as they are more or less an ineliminable part of the inner lives of human beings, the passions—principally but not exclusively anger, fear, hatred, envy, resentment, grief, jealousy, and ambition (to take but the ones regarded as unhappy, pernicious or threatening to virtue and sound decision-making)—are not just necessary, but are themselves a kind of necessity. Human beings are "a synthesis...of freedom and necessity," writes Kierkegaard, a sentiment which is echoed by W. H. Auden who says "All great Shakespearean tragedies are about [...] freedom and necessity."[8]

The passions are a peculiar kind of potent inner necessity. The term necessity is used here in a looser sense than logical necessity, and is meant to convey the Thucydidean sense of necessity (*anankē* or *anangkē*) as inner *compulsion.* For Thucydides, as for so many of the ancient writers who influenced the early modern period, necessity suggests that "a human agency" is involved, and "not fate or the will of gods."[9] Necessity or compulsion results from powerful motives, that is from passions such as fear, love, hatred and ambition, but also from the 'higher' or more complex and socially-inflected emotions, such as shame, embarrassment and envy. It is worth remarking that in several of the extant Greek tragedies, we find the word 'necessity' applied to family members, who are our "compulsory people."[10] The depth of the passions involved in family relations or in other tight-knit social groups is perhaps the reason for the large number of tragic plots that involve some kind of dire strife between kin—those to whom we have obligations or special bonds (which are in

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[8] Kierkegaard *The Sickness unto Death* 146; Auden *Lectures on Shakespeare* 196. Auden frequently refers to Kierkegaard in his recently published lectures on Shakespeare delivered in New York in 1946.

[9] Woodruff *Thucydides* xxx-xxxi and 164; contrast Agammenon's 'yoke of necessity' in Aeschylus *Oresteia* 217-25. The Raphael-McLeish translation echoes, to my mind, *Macbeth*: "So binds the king necessity./ A new wind commands his heart,/ Foul, accursed, heathen./ His course is changed; he baulks/ At nothing. Evil ideas feed/ On the mind of man;/ Delusion, sorrow-stained and foul,/ Gives birth to pain."

[10] The word is *anankioi*, Stanford *Greek Tragedy and the Emotions* 39. Necessity, it will be recalled, meant compulsion to the ancient Greeks and not logical or nomological (laws of physics) necessity.

tragedies then threatened or destroyed). It goes without saying that every Shakespearean tragedy is concerned with relationships, usually ones that obtain within a tight circle of 'high-born', often related, and usually ruling members of a society.

In the sense in which Thucydides and many Greek writers used the term necessity, events are not determined or inevitable, although they may feel inevitable to the agents involved because of the strength of the passions at work.[11] This means that necessity *qua* compulsion does not entail the kind of deep-seated 'structural' inevitability that Machiavelli uses to ground his thoroughgoing skepticism about ethical or moral behaviour.[12] Thucydides has "a powerful sense of the limitations of foresight, and of the uncontrollable impact of chance."[13] He is also, like Shakespeare, open to the idea of contingency even as he attempts to reduce the complexity of contingency by appealing to the explanatory power of the passions. And without ever lapsing into providentialism[14] both are open to the irony of unintended consequences of action: that is, when "purposes mistook/ Fall'n on the'inventors' heads" and "Bloody instructions [...] return/ To plague th'inventor."[15] However, both Shakespeare and Thucydides emphasize, in Rahe's Nussbaumian expression, 'the fragility of civilized life.'[16] As Forde puts it, "Machiavelli is more thorough or extreme, his...realism is only part of [his...] ethical realism." Thucydides, on the other hand, "tries to defend the theoretically more difficult position that...realism need not entail universal moral skepticism."[17] Thucydides is not as eager as Machiavelli to dispense with the moderating forces of pity, piety and restraint in

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[11] Passions and motives are closely linked by Hamlet when he famously compares himself unfavourably to a player: "What would he do/ Had he the motive and the cue for passion/ that I have?" *Hamlet* 2.2.554-56.

[12] My position finds support amongst comparative political theorists; see, among others, Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" and Forde "Varieties of Realism." See my discussion in Chapter five.

[13] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 150.

[14] For the most influential account of this notion and how it is challenged in the work of Shakespeare and his peers, see Dollimore *Radical Tragedy*.

[15] *Hamlet* 5.2.389-90 and *Macbeth* 1.7.9-10. Here Sophocles is relevant too. He has Creon tell Oedipus: "Do not expect to have command of everything." *Oedipus* 1522.

[16] Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" 108.

[17] Forde "Varieties of Realism" 373.

favour of a Machiavellian cruelty. For the Greek historian and political philosopher, as for Shakespeare, the understanding that necessity and the passions explain much human behaviour is something to be lamented—but also grasped and applied—and not necessarily celebrated.

Necessity and Tragedy

> The interest in the emotions that so pervades seventeenth-century philosophy is itself part of a broader preoccupation in early-modern European culture with relations between knowledge and control, whether of the self or others.[18]

Stoic writers and their numerous heirs, especially in the Renaissance, regularly emphasized the compulsive nature of the passions, presenting the passions as fearsome forces that coerce or provoke us into acting in ways that can go against our best interests. When regarded as blind, alien forces or as a kind of madness, the passions can be seen as being as hostile to our sense of or capacity for agency as something like Fortune or the contingencies of luck and chance. This Stoic view of the necessity/compulsion of the passions yields a particular philosophy of tragedy, wherein the "characteristics [of the passions] are captured in a sequence of long-standing and ubiquitous metaphors."[19] According to this view, the passions are a burdensome, violent, tumultuous, brawling, wayward and capricious set of perturbations that at best need to be bridled and understood, and at worst need to be extirpated, as Stoics insist.[20] As the genre that traditionally treats the passions, tragedy becomes in the hands of the Stoic Seneca a kind of horrible spectacle existing only to display the awfulness of the passions; its viewers are treated to a host of misfortunes befalling passion-inspired protagonists.[21] (Such a bleak view sometimes seems to characterize Euripides' plays that are about the limits of comprehension, for example *Hecuba* but

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[18] James *Passion and Action* 2.
[19] James *Passion and Action* 11.
[20] See Nussbaum's chapters on Stoicism, especially "The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions," in her *The Therapy of Desire*.
[21] For a more sympathetic reading of Seneca, see Boyle *Tragic Seneca*.

especially *Bacchae*). Unable to identify with the events affecting the characters on stage, or on the page, viewers become unable to learn properly from their viewing experiences. From this kind of theatrical experience viewers learn *only* that the passions are highly suspect irrational forces that—like "diseases of the mind"—"harrow us" and tear "us in pieces [...] as so many wild horses" and that make us *akratic*—when we "know many times what is good, but will not do it"—"like so many beasts."[22] Such an aesthetic may be behind the well-known English Renaissance expression to the effect that one has seen a tragedy when one has 'seen the bad bleed,' but it would perhaps be more appropriate to link it with melodrama, which moves us to revel in excess (as with Seneca), or "to mock not weep."[23] Euripides however with his hostility to understanding and his emphasis on the utter "arbitrariness of chance"[24] seems to evoke something similar, or at least a puzzlement on the part of his viewers, which of course he harnesses in support of his assault on reason and intelligence (*gnōmē*—which B. Williams translates both as "rational intelligence" and as "intelligent politics"[25]). This kind of reaction to passions in tragedy, however justified it may be when one is confronting a particularly appalling Senecan 'blood and thunder' tragedy, is precisely the kind of thing that Aristotle takes great pains to warn against in his *Poetics*. Here Aristotle insists that tragedy cannot 'work,' cannot result in *catharsis*, if a certain plausibility and believability does not obtain with respect to the passions and motives of the characters. Perhaps a sensible moderate position can be found in the following passage by A. Poole:

> Tragedy teaches us that the objects of our contemplation—ourselves, each other, our world—are more diverse than we had imagined, and that what we have in common is a dangerous propensity for overrating our power to

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[22] Burton *Anatomy of Melancholy* 69, 168, 169.
[23] McLeish *Aristotle* 19. We can further add that exaggerated, unbelievable and misunderstood passions lead to a destruction of "the feeling of complicity so essential to dramatic form." McLeish *Aristotle* 19.
[24] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 150.
[25] Williams *Shame and Necessity* 58, 163. *Gnōmē* is central to the Thucydidean project of providing a reasonable but not rationalist account of strife. Incidentally Jonathan Lear says that one cannot imagine a book entitled *Strife and Its Place in Nature* (an echo of his own book *Love and Its Place in Nature*) but surely Thucydides' book on the Peloponnesian war is a long meditation on strife, as are a number of Shakespeare's tragedies.

> comprehend this diversity. This lesson is a necessity, and the recognition of this necessity is part of the peculiar pleasure that tragedy affords us.[26]

This is interesting, but—as we shall see shortly—it reflects a slightly different understanding of the nature of tragedy and necessity than I am arguing for. Tragedy illuminates human action *through* the passions, and the various, vividly articulated attempts of protagonists to understand them and to struggle against them, and against those who wield them against us. As P. Euben says, "the passions [...] are the most powerful teachers of political wisdom [...]."[27] But the passions can also contribute to our political wisdom. Paradoxically perhaps, it is the very regularity or constancy of the 'inconstant' passions that gives them a peculiar character, a character that can be exploited, *ceteris paribus*. In *Hamlet*, Hamlet tames his rage,[28] heeds the Ghost's admonition to treat Gertrude well, marshals his psychic forces, so to speak, acts when he has to, and above all, attempts to discern Claudius' guilt in an empirical fashion: he subjects Claudius to a trial by theatre.

I turn now to a discussion of *Hamlet* wherein the above themes are exemplified. What is especially interesting about this play is the way Hamlet uses the passions to 'scan' Claudius for signs of guilt. While the attempt by Hamlet to use the plays-within-a-play are notoriously ambiguous, they serve us admirably in terms of revealing a great deal about the politics and the passions. Rather than see Hamlet as using "the rhetoric of the contemporary attack against theatre"[29] we should see him as showing the political if not topical purposes to which theatre—the dramatic re-presentation of acts, imagined and real—could contribute.

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[26] Poole *Tragedy* 1.
[27] Euben *The Tragedy of Political Theory* 89.
[28] Interestingly, Hamlet also has to tame his passion of fear when he first sets out to meet or confront the Ghost. When he sees it, he asks:

> What may this mean,/ That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel/ Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,/ Making night hideous and we fools of nature/ So horridly to shake our disposition/ With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?

Hamlet 1.4.51-6.
[29] Lupton "Truant dispositions: *Hamlet* and Machiavelli" 59.

Hamlet, Claudius and Conscience (i)

> There is some soul of goodness in things evil/ Would men observingly distil it out.[30]

I have wrenched this line by King Henry out of its context because it resonates nicely with Hamlet's intention to observe Claudius and to expose or 'distil out' something in Claudius.[31] Rather as someone exposes a room's contours with a lantern or flashlight, Hamlet intends to reveal and observe the 'goodness'—or more exactly the conscience—thought to reside even in the heart of 'evil' agents such as Claudius. (Henry goes on to say that he hopes "to gather honey from the weed," not an inappropriate metaphor for Hamlet's purposes either.[32]) The "characters of mans heart, blotted and confounded as they are with dissembling, lying, counterfeiting and erroneous doctrines, are legible only to him that searcheth hearts," writes Hobbes in *Leviathan*, in a passage that is also germane to *Hamlet*.[33]

Hamlet wishes to change the mental states, and with these the outward bodily appearance of Claudius. He wants Claudius' impassive, 'smiling' outward appearance to be shattered from within, as the result of a confrontation with a work of art, a staged tragedy. This is a kind of interrogative shock therapy, inflicted to gauge culpability. Unlike Macbeth's tale that signifies 'nothing,' Hamlet hopes that his staged tale will signify everything, everything about Claudius' guilt.[34] Hamlet's purpose is to stage 'inside' Claudius an "inward tragedy."[35] Hamlet has already told us that he knows of "the thousand natural

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[30] *Henry V* 4.1.4-5.
[31] I am not implying that there is 'goodness' in Claudius.
[32] *Henry V* 4.1.11.
[33] Hobbes, quoted in Skinner *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* 384.
[34] Many critics, but not a majority, hold that what Hamlet gets is...nothing, because Claudius does not reveal his guilty conscience.
[35] Bradley, quoted in Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 129. This expression is used by Bradley in a different context.

shocks/ That flesh is heir to"[36]; and he is now—in a way that illustrates "Montaigne's point" that the 'flesh' has power "over the mind"[37]—going to administer a shock to Claudius, whose involuntary response will volunteer the information that incriminates him. He hopes the staged play, using the '*must*' of necessity, will result in the truth appearing.

Interestingly, Shakespeare could have found confirmation of Hamlet's 'psychology of the passions' in Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Mind* (published in 1601 but certainly written before 1598) in which we can read the following:

> Again, usually men are more moved with deeds than words [...]. Furthermore the passion passeth not only through the eyes but also pierceth the ear, and thereby the heart; [...] that is, the affection poureth forth itself by all means possible to discover unto the present beholders and auditors how the actor is affected and what affection such a case and cause requireth in them. By mouth he telleth his mind, in countenance he speaketh with a silent voice [...].[38]

It is perhaps worth noting parenthetically that of the three contemporary works that most influenced Wright, one was Botero's book on the reason of state—written to refute Machiavelli. Another was Sir Henry Savile's essay "The end of Nero and the beginning of Galba" which prefaced his 1591 translation of Tacitus' *Histories*, and which introduced English readers to the remarkably influential Roman historian. Wright might legitimately be claimed as a 'politic historian' not only for this primer on the political (and of course theological—he was a Catholic, former Jesuit) nature of the passions, but also for the books that influenced him, and for his 'politic insights.' Wright was supported by Essex, for a period, but was finally imprisoned in the Tower, before he was restored to favour under James; but what really strikes one are two facts: first, that commendatory sonnets to *The Passions of the Mind* were written by the poet Hugh Holland (who wrote commendatory verse for *Sejanus*) and by Jonson; and secondly, that Wright shared a patron with Shakespeare and Daniel: the Third

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[36] *Hamlet* 3.1.64-65.
[37] Miles *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* 92.
[38] Thomas Wright *The Passions of the Mind in General* 213-14.

Earl of Southampton.[39] This digression into Wright's life and context is intended only to raise the possibility that Shakespeare had yet another connection to the kinds of writers I have described—especially in Chapter seven—as 'politic historians.' I turn now to a discussion of *Hamlet* and some of its details.

Hamlet, Claudius and Conscience (ii)

> [Helen was] carried off by speech just as if constrained by force. Her mind was swept away by persuasion, and persuasion has the same power as necessity.... The power of speech has the same effect on the condition of the mind as the application of drugs to the state of bodies.... Some [speeches] drug and bewitch the mind with a kind of evil persuasion.[40]

> They [orators] accordingly focus their main attention on the question of how to add *pathos* to *logos*, how to appeal to the passions or affections of our auditors in such a way as to excite them against our opponents and in favour of our own cause.[41]

Hamlet is a tragedy of grievance as well as grief. Emphasizing grievance has the merit of bringing out the anger and resentment that drive Hamlet Orestes-like on to his goal of revenge. But the play is not just about revenge; indeed it is easy to get sidetracked into a consideration of some of the other things that make *Hamlet* such a rich and powerful work. I have in mind such other things as self, interiority and selfhood, and memory, as well as the passions of guilt and grievance or anger. I will touch on a number of these themes and ideas, but one question in particular will stand out.

To paraphrase a comment of S. Cavell's—"tragedy is the working out of a response to skepticism"[42]—the tragedy of *Hamlet* is the working out of a

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[39] Moreover, Wright shared a publisher with Shakespeare, too: Valentine Sims, the "printer of five Shakespeare quartos, including the 1603 bad quarto of *Hamlet*." Newbold, "Introduction" *The Passions of the Mind in General* 53.

[40] Gorgias (the Sophist), quoted in Colaiaco *Socrates against Athens* 27. Gorgias is here defending Helen against her (many) detractors. At the beginning of Chapter one, I briefly alluded to Helen's own thoughts on her 'guilt': that she is innocent of the charge of causing the Trojan war by falling in love with Paris because Aphrodite compelled her to fall in love.

[41] Skinner *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* 120.

[42] Cavell *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* 5.

question about the epistemology of rhetoric, which must be found at the heart of any serious thoughts about rhetoric, and so about the passions: the question of *suggestibility*. By this I mean the question of how one can tell the difference between learning something about someone's state of mind, and imputing that state to him or her. The question cannot just be rephrased as one of how to distinguish interpellation and discovery.[43] It is a more serious matter. It is a matter therefore of a kind of dialogic 'self-fulfilling prophecy.' Does Hamlet, so to say, *place* the mental state of guilt there himself in order to find it? Can Hamlet find evidence of guilt in Claudius, or simply by inquiring does Hamlet instill the emotion in his uncle? Let me set the stage first.

In many ways, *Hamlet* is about the distinction between appearance and reality,[44] and such Tacitean themes as dissembling, life in a corrupt court, theatricality, and deception. Skepticism too comes up time and again. One of the first things Hamlet says is that he knows not 'seems.' He says, "Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems'./ 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,/ Nor customary suits of solemn black."[45] While there are a number of ways of interpreting this passage, I want to read it as follows. Just a moment earlier Hamlet has displayed his disgust at the seeming impropriety of Gertrude's (allegedly hasty) marriage to Claudius. He drew a distinction between what Gertrude seems to be and what she is. In his eyes, her marriage—the marriage itself, and not of course just the temporal proximity to the funeral—is ethically unseemly. Hamlet begins to question all aspects of the outward appearances of things in the rotten world of Denmark. He loses trust in the comfortable immediacy of the motivated or indexical relationship between surface and depth.

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[43] The distinction between imputation and discovery occurs in debates in the philosophy of science between instrumentalists (entities are imputed) and metaphysical realists (entities are discovered).

[44] M. Mack is one of a number of critics who reach the same conclusion: "The problems of appearance and reality also pervade the play as a whole." See Mack *Everybody's Shakespeare* 118.

[45] *Hamlet* 1.2.76-78. Parenthetically it is worth citing an interesting discussion of another black cloak, one worn by Demeter (*Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 38-44): Demeter wearing a black cloak signifies "her transformation from a passive state of grief to an active state of anger. In contrast to the image of the black cloud that surrounds a dying warrior or a mourner, here the goddess' deliberate assumption of the dark garment betokens her dire spirit of retaliation, the realization of her immanent wrath." Slatkin *The Power of Thetis* 92-3.

But this is by no means to cast Hamlet in the role of an arch-skeptic, for Hamlet is confident about (at least) three things. One is that he has a secure grip on his own sense of self—he is what he seems to be. Later on he is confident enough to portray a madman without becoming one. Or perhaps I should say: he is confident when he starts out adopting the 'antic disposition' that he will remain as he seems to himself, and not become mad (as he seems to the others to be). A second is that he alone—or more or less alone, give or take Horatio—is an honest agent in a world of deception, lies, spying, slander and false appearances. And a third is that he can, in a judo-like way, turn the appearances of his social world back on themselves, thereby going beyond the appearances and confronting reality. (Of course it is doubly ironic that a man seeming to be a madman should pierce the veils of his world by staging a play that seems to mirror past murderous events.) The crux of this confrontation is based on his conviction that he can use the play-within-the-play to catch Claudius' conscience.

Is Hamlet overconfident about his abilities? There is more than a touch of arrogance about him, though it is perhaps justified. At any rate, his statement 'I know not seems' can be pulled apart in the following manner: 'I'—first person, his ego or self; 'know'—the antithesis of skepticism and doubt; 'not'—a straightforward and powerful use of the negative to negate 'seems.' In effect by saying 'I know not seems' Hamlet is saying 'I know *more*, perhaps much more, than appearance.' He implies that he knows the negation of 'seems': 'I know what *is*.' His confidence seems to know no bounds at this moment (though that will change). If he is overconfident, let us consider Ophelia's comments about him. Perhaps he has a prideful right to his confidence; he is a polymath, a man of many skills:

> O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!/ The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,/ Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,/ The glass of fashion and the mould of form,/ Th'observ'd of all observer.[46]

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[46] *Hamlet* 3.1.152-56. There is no reason to doubt Ophelia's sentiments here but one can—if one chooses—hear the words 'brittle' and 'fragile' in the word 'glass' and the word 'mold' in the word 'mould.'

There is something interestingly prophetic here worth drawing attention to: namely, the hint of an implication that Hamlet is a man of action. Is it not accurate to see these compliments—or remarks—as intended to invoke a sense of Hamlet as active and not merely passive? He has 'eyes' to see what is going on, eyes moreover which can help him see through appearances; he has a 'tongue' to allow him to express his vision of the rottenness around him and what can and ought to be done about it; and he has a sword to carry out his intentions—with a hint of violence implied by the reference to the sword. Ophelia's mention of Hamlet's tongue is intriguingly prophetic too, for later on when he is formulating his plan to expose Claudius, Hamlet says,

> I have heard/ That guilty creatures sitting at a play/ Have, by the very cunning of the scene,/ Been struck so to the soul that presently/ They have proclaim'd their malefactions./ For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak/ With most miraculous organ.[47]

What is miraculous here is not literally 'tongue' but the craft and art of mimetic representation, producing—and writing and directing—a work of art to mirror the murder, exposing the murderer. So, Hamlet the courtier, scholar and soldier can dissemble or conceal his intentions like a crafty courtier, see through dissimulation like a scholar of Tacitus' writings, and act like a soldier. As we know, however, Ophelia continues mentioning 'fashion' and 'observation,' and so on. This is at least mildly prophetic, for Hamlet's court context is clearly one of observing and being observed, and being observed observing (One reason why an 'antic disposition' is a useful ruse is that it facilitates observation without suspicion.) The theme of observation will of course become vital later in the play, when Hamlet seeks to get below or behind appearances and discern Claudius' guilt.

In the first half of *Hamlet* everyone is consumed by the need to see, and to know. There is a pervasive sense of paranoia, and metaphors and images of sight and observation recur, with cognates of 'observation' and 'seeing' prevalent. Everyone, it seems, is moving around actively watching and spying on

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[47] *Hamlet* 2.2.584-90.

each other. What can loosely be called the first half of the play is filled with examples of the spying and guarded, surreptitious observation. The polity—that represented by the court, that is—itself is an object lesson in the dynamics of paranoia, mistrust and suspicion. In the second half of the play—though there is no clear point demarcating this change—a change occurs and we move into a more ambivalent and ambiguous world, where the characters redouble their efforts not only to see or observe each other, but especially to predict and control each other.

These concerns occur at the very beginning of the play, of course. The Tacitean themes of observation and the related questions of knowledge and certainty are introduced as a motif by Barnardo's 'who's there?' and by his nervously speaking out of turn to Francisco, the other sentinel, because Barnardo is worried that what he is seeing is the Ghost ('this thing') and not his colleague. The play's central, key reference to observation is Hamlet's injunction to Horatio:

> Even with the very comment of thy soul/ Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt/ Do not itself unkennel in one speech,/ It is a damned ghost that we have seen,/ And my imaginations are as foul/ As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;/ For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,/ And after we will both our judgments join/ In censure of his seeming.[48]

Claudius' guilt will be revealed by a prying, peering Hamlet: "I'll observe his looks;/ I'll tent him to the quick."[49] The Oxford edition's footnote helpfully reminds us that in early modern English, 'tent' meant 'probe,' and we can easily connect this to the idea of eyes as observing 'instruments.' There is more: Polonius is killed while eyeing or spying, and this is just one of many ironies (usually involving deaths) in the play. Rosenkranz and Guildenstern are the bearers, as Hamlet should have been, of their own death sentences; Claudius is poisoned by the wine *he* poisoned; Laertes is poisoned by the rapier poisoned to kill Hamlet; Ophelia goes mad at least in part because of Hamlet's pretending to

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[48] *Hamlet* 3.2.79-87.
[49] *Hamlet* 2.2.592-3.

be mad (his feigned antic disposition); and finally, there is a case to be made that Claudius tries to hide his emotions but in doing so inadvertently alerts Hamlet to his guilt by causing Hamlet to become even more suspicious. A further irony, and more evidence of the centrality of spying and observation is that Polonius dies spying just after he has started spying on his own son, through Reynaldo. Finally, too, there is Polonius and Claudius' plan to hide and observe Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia. Claudius says,

> For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither/ That he, as 'twere by accident, may here/ Affront Ophelia./ Her father and myself, lawful espials,/ We'll so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,/ We may of their encounter frankly judge,/ And gather by him, as he is behav'd,/ If't be th'affliction of his love or no/ That thus he suffers for.[50]

Claudius too wishes to observe in order to move beyond observation to exactitude in terms of Hamlet's plans, goals and intentions. Claudius believes that Hamlet's passion for Ophelia may cause him to give something away about these plans and intentions. Interestingly and prophetically, the means Claudius employs resemble the means Hamlet himself employs to observe and test Claudius. In a similar 'experiment'—the plays-within—Hamlet will in full view of the assembled court attempt to observe Claudius. This is a setting that evokes the early modern anatomy theatres, the aptly named indoor amphitheatres where the 'interiors' of bodies were displayed for medical instruction.[51] Hamlet arranges to have Claudius confront a depiction or representation of his deed, so that Hamlet can judge his response. Claudius' observation of Hamlet, and Hamlet's observation of Claudius occur in different settings, but each figure has someone there with him. Claudius has Polonius and Hamlet has Horatio. The nature of these confrontations makes it acceptable to consider these two scenarios as duel-like, complete with 'seconds' present.

One expression used by Claudius stands out: 'lawful espials.' It is ironic to hear Claudius speak of the law, but the phrase serves to call the Danish state's morality of 'lawfulness' into question. For while it might be lawful for the king

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[50] *Hamlet* 3.1.29-37.

[51] See the discussion of anatomy theatres in Sawday *The Body Emblazoned.*

and his lackeys to spy on citizens, family and court members, the practice also serves to draw attention to the relative absence of law. Granted, the play is set in a medieval polity, but what exists instead of law is an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust that would do any intrigue-filled, Imperial Roman palace proud. We have moved away from the rule of law and into a Tacitean arena of rampant secrecy, hidden plans, viciously morbid mistrust, and sealed and guarded 'interiorities.' Of course only some passions thrive in a context such as this. And only some words seem appropriate, useful and fitting. As K. Gross writes, apropos of Hamlet's slanderous comments directed at all and sundry in the play, himself included, Hamlet's

> utterances free up a hidden aggression [that] allow unassimilated doubts and fears to articulate themselves, doubts and fears that nonetheless sustain Hamlet's power to name what's wrong with the world, even if only by indirection.[52]

Hamlet's words are not idle; they buy him time to learn more about the dangers that threaten him. That is, these words, a steady stream of mocking accusatory invective, conceal his self too. Gross makes a similar point: Hamlet's

> words attempt to seal away a self, or the rumour of a self, unavailable to public knowledge, to establish an opaque space of subjectivity unavailable to the world's rumorous commentary.[53]

There is some genuine merit in Hamlet's attempt to secure his sense of subjectivity—which I would prefer to call agency in order to avoid the Cartesian connotations of 'subjectivity'—unavailable and perhaps invisible to the world. Even the mild and moderate variant of realism I have been urging acknowledges that security is an important consideration. Given the uncertainties of the world, especially one with the Tacitean atmosphere of Denmark's court, the individual must take precautions.

There is in the play at times a hint of a vast, simultaneous game of hide-and-seek with agents out to ferret out others' passions, motives and other—hopefully revelatory—states of mind. The first scene in the play has an

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[52] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 23.
[53] Gross *Shakespeare's Noise* 23.

ambiguous spectral entity almost playing a ghostly game of hide-and-seek, prompting Barnardo, Horatio and Marcellus to say, "'Tis here, 'Tis here and 'Tis gone,"[54] respectively. And Hamlet seems to be playing a childish, macabre game with Polonius' corpse. He refuses to tell the court where the body is. In effect, by refusing to reveal the body's hiding place, he is not just keeping them from observing the body, but also from observing burial customs. The play foregrounds the powerful desire—articulated vividly in the need to make sense of others' passions—to possess what is hidden. That is, the play has at its center not just observation but discovery. And in the Folio edition, when Hamlet is toying with those who want to know the location of the body, he speaks the following (extra) line: "Him, hide fox, and all after."[55] While it is perhaps a stretch to see Machiavelli's fox referred to here, the line is evocative not least because it changes the atmosphere from a game of hide-and-seek to a hunt. By now Hamlet has lost his melancholy humour and his depression, and he is animated—and spurred on by his own passion for the hunt *he* will engage in—and alive to his own quest for the *hidden*. But what will he hunt?

Staging Emotions

> The purpose of the play-within-the-play is double: to test the Ghost and to test Claudius.[56]

Hamlet is hunting Claudius' 'occulted guilt.' As he says,

> There is a play tonight before the King:/ One scene of it comes near the circumstance/ Which I have told thee of my father's death. [...] Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt/ Do not itself unkennel in one speech,/ It is a damned ghost we have seen,/ And my imaginations are as foul/ As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;/ For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,/ And after we will both our judgments join/ In censure of his seeming.[57]

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[54] *Hamlet* 1.1.145-7.
[55] *Hamlet* 4.2.29. In his notes, Jenkins suggests that these Folio edition lines are only a stage addition.
[56] Kermode *Shakespeare's Language* 115.
[57] *Hamlet* 3.2.75-87.

Hamlet speaks here of 'occulted guilt' which he, acting as playwright and director, will conjure...for himself and Horatio as privileged playgoers. But Claudius too is keen on cutting through appearances. Claudius wants to get at Hamlet's state of mind, get at Hamlet's motives, and determine if Hamlet's state of mind is affected with plans of vengeance or not. Claudius gives voice to his suspicion that Hamlet is hiding something: "There's something in his soul/ O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,/ And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose/ Will be some danger."[58] The naturalistic conceit here is striking, combining as it does the double sense of brood: Hamlet's brooding will hatch a dangerous plot. All of this focus on observation, on plans, on hiding and on acquiring the means to confirm or disconfirm one's suspicions serves to 'prophesy' Hamlet's subsequent action, even as it parallels or mirrors it. It is now worth turning to this matter: that is, Hamlet's action, and the related question of knowledge, persuasion and suggestibility.

It is possible that Hamlet already suspects Claudius when the persuasive Ghost suggests to Hamlet (who is himself already open to suggestion) that Claudius is a murderer. Of course the Ghost has furnished no evidence—something valuable when, like Hamlet, one is out to explore the contrast between truth and appearance. Hamlet's reasonable fear is that he is so open to the suggestion that Claudius is the murderer that he will take a demon's word for it. It is plausible to see Hamlet's infamous procrastination in light of two things. First of all, in light of his reluctance to become an instrument of death—that would offend his conscience, trained as it is to regard the old-fashioned way of blood and vengeance with suspicion—and secondly in light of his desire to seek proof of the Ghost's trustworthiness and therewith proof of Claudius' 'occulted guilt.' What is 'occulted guilt' other than passion? Hamlet relies on a clever conjunction between passion and theatrical staging. This should be explained. There is a queasy sense in *Hamlet* that all human interaction is filled with mistrust from the get-go. There is a horrible suspicion that all we do when we converse, and deal with others, and generally engage in social interaction is stage

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[58] *Hamlet* 3.1.166-9. 'Doubt' here means 'fear.'

elaborate rituals intended to get others to reveal themselves to us. The play is replete with images that contribute to this atmosphere of hiding and revealing, concealment and discovery. *What* exactly is it that we want revealed about other agents? The answer obviously is: intentions, plans, beliefs and desires. But the play is also about how it is not always—or often—enough to know each other's beliefs, and how it is supremely important to also know motives and emotions. Of course the emphasis throughout is on 'hiddenness' and concealment and the pervasive atmosphere of "mysteriousness,"[59] which when combined with the problematic possibility that we are too *suggestible* yields a problem. The problem is that we cannot easily read off an agent's interior from his or her exterior manifestations, a point made abundantly clear in *Macbeth* and *Othello*. While passions and their interpretation are central to the play, the related notions of warrant, knowledge and justification are also important.

Hamlet implies throughout that if you have to know someone, you have to know his or her emotions. The problem is that Claudius can hide his emotions under a veneer of feigned emotions: "O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!/ My tables. Meet it is I set it down/ That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain."[60] Hamlet hits upon the idea of staging what he surmises are Claudius' past actions. He enlists the help of the theatre troop to 're-present' the murder in the plays-within. The plan is to replay the murder in front of Claudius in the form of a viewed, public—and therefore somewhat verifiable—staged experiment. Hamlet has strong and legitimate doubts about the Ghost's veracity and Claudius' guilt. He must accomplish two things in one fell swoop. First, he must ascertain the veracity of the Ghost's accusations and remove his fears of demonic origin. The Ghost, after all, is the only 'person' or entity who supports his suspicions of Claudius. And, without legal recourse (Claudius having usurped legality along with the throne), Hamlet must confirm Claudius' guilt without being killed for treason or sedition. A plausible reading of what transpires in the play is that Hamlet confronts Claudius' memory, as it were, by splaying memory in an

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[59] Mack *Everybody's Shakespeare* 118.
[60] *Hamlet* 1.5.106-8.

anatomy theatre.[61] The conjecture here is that it is assumed (perhaps by Hamlet too) that Claudius—so cunning and competent at hiding his inner states—will be unable to prevent his face from registering the hidden 'interior' guilt. His face will be a 'motivated' index of a guilty memory. The plan is that Claudius will be "struck so to the soul" that he cannot avoid reacting with the infamous "blench" that will bespeak his culpability.[62] Hamlet is to all intents and purposes saying that he will push Claudius' self (or rather, self-control) aside, and 'catch his conscience,' which stands metonymically for Claudius' guilt. His "looks"[63] will give him away, itself a revealing expression signifying that guilt and other passions *cause* involuntary behaviour.

However, the account given here is only partially sufficient. This reading needs to be supplemented with a different account of how memory, staging and guilt function in the plays-within scene. My argument is that it is *not* by virtue of an immediate confrontation between a depicted event and a disarmed memory, shorn of its dissembling capacity, that Claudius' guilt is revealed. For Claudius famously reveals no guilt; indeed he reveals little until well after the dumb-show depicting his deed.[64] Rather, it is by steeling himself against the persuasive force of what is being played out in front of him that Claudius inadvertently allows the staged experiment to body forth his guilt, culpability and passional testimony. It is, ironically, by *not* reacting to what the courtiers correctly interpret as regicide—though they see the plays-within as *anticipating* a future regicide, not depicting a past one—that Claudius signals his guilty memory. While it is usually supposed that Claudius' guilt will be revealed by his reaction, it is precisely his control over his passions that betray him. As the gloating Hamlet knows, an innocent Claudius would have had no reason to conceal his passions. After the testimony of the second, spoken performance, which is also the performance of a

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[61] In *King Lear* Lear asks for Regan to be 'anatomized' so he can learn about the provenance of her hard-hearted behaviour. *King Lear* 3.6.73.
[62] *Hamlet* 2.2.587; 2.2.593.
[63] *Hamlet* 2.2.592.
[64] To explain Claudius' lack of reaction some critics have postulated that he is not paying attention; critical reception of this portion of the play has been fraught with disagreement and controversy. A good discussion of the relevant sources is provided in the Longer Notes in H. Jenkins Arden *Hamlet*. A recent discussion is Orgel "The Play of Conscience."

performative speech act signifying to Claudius that Hamlet knows about the murder, all that remains is for Claudius to make his peace with his God (which he does shortly thereafter) and try to kill Hamlet (which he also does). Everything is out in the open now, between Hamlet and Claudius. Claudius has nothing to gain by hiding his acknowledgement that he knows that Hamlet knows what he, Hamlet, has just successfully staged: namely, Claudius' self-incriminating memory. Hamlet intended to get Claudius to reveal his hidden inner state, the guilt residing in the 'book and volume' of his 'brain,' to use Hamlet's words from another context. And Hamlet succeeds, but not for the right reason.

It can be seen that Hamlet relies on what we can call a moderately realist, 'politic historical' understanding of the passions in order to survive the court's intrigue, and to expose Claudius' culpability in the murder of King Hamlet by the shrewd staging of the plays-within. He cultivates his own passions, so as not to be overwhelmed by hatred and fury, yet he also castigates himself, 'self-shaping' his own reactions when he feels he should be acting more swiftly. Perhaps he should have acted sooner, or more quickly. However, it can also be argued that by biding his time until the right moments present themselves (the arrival of the players; switching the letter that condemns him to death), he is admirably prudent. That is, he takes advantage of the contingencies that present themselves, and uses his time wisely by probing the intentions and plans of the other agents in a careful and scrupulous manner. However, it is possible to raise questions about the means Hamlet has adopted in order to attain his ends. This is exemplified by something that also occurs to Hamlet himself: namely, his fear of resembling Claudius. He is anguished by the realization that in avenging his father, he has to some degree come to resemble Claudius.[65] If our strictures against a cynical Machiavellian realism as a dire threat to the fragility of ethics[66] (as discussed in Chapter five) are valid, we should perhaps worry that Hamlet starts to resemble, say, Iago. Admittedly, there is no doubt that in order to succeed, Hamlet has had to adopt not only an 'antic' disposition but also a Machiavellian disposition. The

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[65] As R. Girard has noted, see Girard *A Theatre of Envy* 273.

[66] Here I have modified M. Nussbaum's emphasis on the 'fragility of goodness' and P. Rahe's emphasis on the 'fragility of civilized life.'

very thing he has sought to reveal or spur in Claudius—conscience—can be raised as query about Hamlet: what does he himself become in his quest to confirm or disconfirm Claudius' guilt? Should he have a guilty conscience himself? To this we can reply that a 'politic history' of the passions is a loose 'method' that emphasizes the preeminent role of passions as motives in the behaviour of agents; it is not an unrealistic practice or attitude that recommends that we cannot *act* in order to expose murderers.[67] At the end of the day, despite some resemblance between Hamlet's machinations and Iago's manipulations, we accept what Hamlet does to test Claudius; we accept that he must 'play' the Machiavellian. We know that Hamlet's intentions are not cynical, and that his intentions distinguish him from Iago, the character in Shakespeare he perhaps resembles most. Iago is a true Machiavellian agent in the sense of being a manipulative cynic. In this respect at least, Kant is right: we are inclined to evaluate the morality of agents on the basis of their intentions. And Hamlet's intentions are noble.

[67] There is also a case to be made for claiming that with the exception of the accidental murder of Polonius, Hamlet is exercising a justifiable right to defend himself throughout the play.

Conclusion

Inescapable Passions

> Nietzsche once complained that historians never write about the things which make history really interesting—anger, passion, ignorance, and folly.[1]

Nietzsche could have no such complaint about Shakespearean drama, for the things that make history—and drama—exciting are its very subject matter. If Macbeth, along with some of the characters in *Troilus and Cressida* and possibly Hamlet are *akratic*—weak-willed because they know the better course of action without taking that course—and the non-virtuous Othello is *enkratic*—self-controlled—then Lear is just autocratic. He requires that his daughters give verbal confirmation of their love and respect for him. He makes them behave like a group of trained seals, imposing a harsh 'must' of necessity and compulsion on them. (Of course there is no little irony in the fact that this opportunity to work their machinations on Lear is welcomed by Regan and Goneril.) At any rate, there is an expression in *Hamlet* that seems apt in this context. Hamlet is ruefully chastising himself for his lack of bravery: "This is most brave,/ That I, [...] Must like a whore unpack my heart with words."[2] Hamlet's wish here is for his passion to issue in action 'immediately,' without 'mediation' or without an intervening period of time. This is to place too heavy a burden on the passions as motivating factors. Certainly the passions move us, but part of what makes them 'involuntary' and sometimes beyond the scope of our agency and control is that they do not translate into efficacious action, at least not always on command. Lear similarly requires that the passions issue in action: his desire is that his daughters unpack their hearts. That is, they utter some obsequious protestations of love and fealty and then he reveals his 'darker purpose.' Cordelia is either playing with fire, or else she is genuinely naïve, misunderstanding Lear's motives. She

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[1] Davies *Europe* 860.
[2] *Hamlet* 2.2.578-81.

attributes his actions to interest, perhaps interests of state. But he arguably acts on the basis of honour—a passion, as Thucydides well knew, which impels agents to act in quite non-interest based ways. And if it is not honour that moves Lear, then it is certainly hubris, arrogance, and vanity. To not see this in Lear, Cordelia is 'impolitic.' Or perhaps we should say that she is a poor 'politic historian.' She seems herself to be a suitable candidate for a 'politic history' analysis. Interestingly, it is as though Cordelia misunderstands her own passionate adherence to a most peculiar doctrine. I have in mind the fact that while her sisters are positively in a rush to express their love and devotion to Lear, Cordelia is held in thrall by a fantasy—though perhaps a warranted fantasy—similar but not identical to one evinced by Hamlet when he seeks to 'read,' as it were, Claudius' heart from the manifestations of his guilt on his face. In his *Republic* Plato tells the story of a certain Gyges, who finds a ring that renders its bearer invisible and so able to act without being observed.[3] In a sense, Gyges' fantasy of invisibility amounts to a fantasy of *not* having to worry about being partial and not having to be beholden to others. That is to say, it is as much a fantasy of being unencumbered as it is a fantasy of not having to worry about being understood even as one is free to see—and do—everything. Cordelia, one might say, is gripped by precisely the reverse passion. She is transfixed by the idea, not to see all, but to have *her* all seen. Or rather, to have her 'true' self understood by her father, *without* her having to 'heave her heart into her mouth,' as she puts it. She wants, simply, to be seen as the loyal loving daughter that she is. So she sits quietly, saying nothing, both bitter and incredulous that *her* true and non-dissembled feelings are trumped by the obviously false and dissembled feelings expressed by her sisters. This is a deep and thoroughgoing fantasy, rooted as it is in the perfectly understandable desire to be recognized, but recognized *passively* without having to take action. But it is also a luxury that we cannot always indulge in. The moderate realism of the 'politic history' of the passions allows for such tragedies as Cordelia's to occur, but it also warns against them. If

[3] Incidentally, Gyges uses his powers in a most Machiavellian way: he seizes the throne by seducing the king's wife and plotting with her to kill the king. Perhaps I should say that Gyges uses his powers in a Claudius-like way.

'politic history' had a motto, it would be: *ignore the passions*, both the passions of others and one's own, *at your peril*. However, Cordelia is not alone. Shakespeare's plays, especially the tragedies and the darkest of the dark comedies, are replete with characters who misunderstand motives, including at times their own motives, and so they hanker in some fashion for other agents' 'interior' states—their plans, goals, beliefs, desires and intentions—to be more visible, more apparent and more comprehensible.[4] Cordelia's interest—at least such as I have reconstructed it here—is interestingly akin to a plaintive lament of Lear's: "Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?"[5] In the line immediately preceding this one, Lear asks for an 'anatomy' of Regan's heart. Lear poses a central question in ethics: namely, whence the origin of immoral behaviour? Posed so baldly the question is likely unanswerable, but at least the question has the virtue of simplicity and straightforwardness. Even so, it is almost certainly an unanswerable question. It is too abstract, too impractical. One of the merits of Shakespeare's 'politic historical' approach to questions of behaviour is that he refuses to provide simple and pat answers, and instead offers us lessons in the practical 'art' of understanding the passions that motivate agents.

Shakespeare and the Politics of the Passions

> If I had no vanity, I take no delight in praise: if I be void of ambition, power gives me no enjoyment: if I be not angry, the punishment of an adversary is totally indifferent to me. In all these cases there is a passion which points immediately to the object, and constitutes it our good or happiness.[6]

This interesting quotation from David Hume seems almost to have been composed by an author interested in showing not only that the passions are an

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[4] Here the very length of the list should suggest that this is not an isolated problem; we have in English at least a plethora of interesting, well-thumbed, useful and indeed ineliminable terms for our 'inner states.'

[5] *King Lear* 3.6.74-75.

[6] Hume, quoted in Goldie *The Emotions* 48.

ineliminable aspect of human behaviour, but also—and more specifically—that Shakespeare's characters can be enlisted in the brief for the passions. Who springs to mind here in Hume's quotation other than Lear with his vanity, Macbeth with his ambition, and Hamlet with his anger? Hume was by no means the first to suggest that the passions were an essential and inescapable part of human life. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, the early modern 'politic historians'—themselves affiliated only loosely—also believed *pace* the Stoics the passions to be ineliminable. Moreover, the practitioners of 'politic history' thought that the passions of the agents could be turned to our collective advantage. Spanning cultures and cultural practices, languages and religions, unified by no particular creed, and cleaving to no especial cause—other than to avoid Machiavellian cynicism and to understand tyrants—the 'politic historians' used the explanatory mechanism of the passions of the mind to dissect, probe and reveal the motives of agents. Some were historians, some were philosophers or natural scientists, and some were playwrights. I have focused exclusively on William Shakespeare's contribution to this 'genre.' Could the case not be made that I have enlisted Shakespeare's peers (Ben Jonson, Samuel Daniel, George Chapman, John Webster and John Marston) as 'politic historians' only to shunt them to one side in my haste to proclaim Shakespeare as the main contributor to the *movement*? As a reply, let me add a quick disclaimer before I turn to the question of Shakespeare's peers. Apart from the fact that there was *no* organized 'politic history' *movement* above and beyond the shared interests of a few scholars, politicized intellectuals, historians and dramatists—some tight-knit owing to professional contact, and some working on similar topics in isolation—let alone a set of doctrines for these various figures to adhere to, it is certainly clear that the most original 'politic historians' were actually the *historians* Henry Savile and John Hayward, and to an extent the multi-talented Francis Bacon. But they were historians, and their works—while paying appropriate tribute to the place of the passions in their histories—do not approach Shakespeare's dramatic fictions in terms of the deep and thorough delineation of the political phenomenology of the role of the passions in generating action. The sheer

'myriad-minded' complexity and vividly articulated interiority of agents' motives, and indeed 'lives,' are things arguably best presented in works of drama. As the historian W. Bouwsma says,

> [...] if the arts can be thought generally to "endow the world with meaning," theater may do so best of all and for a wide audience. It has a special ability to strip away distracting and irrelevant detail, to make what is hidden visible, to reveal the feelings underlying human interaction, to demonstrate the power of ideas, to hint at inwardness.[7]

I have insisted that Shakespeare be counted as part of a loose grouping of intellectuals, political figures, playwrights, historians and philosophers who in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and first decades of the seventeenth, invented the interpretive practice covered by the umbrella term 'politic history,' when they found traditional humanist accounts of action and history inadequate, and also when they were excited by the early modern 'Englishing' of yet another key work from classical antiquity.[8] All of the 'politic historians' worked in some way or another on the great secularizing project of rendering both Fortune and agency psychological and historical, removing these from the realm of theology by dismantling the providentialist 'skyhooks' that tethered agency and Fortune to theology. A large portion of this dismantling process involved explaining the actions of agents in terms of such secular categories as passion and interest, two much debated factors that were of course displayed and diagnosed on the theatrical stage. Through this 'method' Shakespeare developed a 'thicker' description of moral psychology and moral agency than the traditional humanist account. Moreover Shakespeare avoided the flaw in Stoicism: namely, the flawed goal of attaining self-sufficiency and invulnerability by making oneself immune to passions, and thereby also immune to tragedy. Tragedy figures so centrally in Shakespearean drama precisely because this genre *requires* a Thucydides-like emphasis on passions. Shakespeare and Thucydides share an emphasis on causes, such as envy, anger and fear; and in both the playwright and the classical historian we are given a sober and honest appraisal of the motives—both rational

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[7] Bouwsma *The Waning of the Renaissance* 254.
[8] Or from across the Channel.

and irrational—that spur agents to act. That is to say, there is in these two writers a kind of realism that some might think approaches Machiavelli's immoderate realism. This is, I hope to have shown, wrong. Neither Shakespeare nor Thucydides goes as far as Machiavelli. In Shakespeare's tragedies as in Thucydides' *History*, there is a sense that a cynical realism is itself a grave threat to the 'fragility of civilized life,' to use a phrase of P. Rahe's that I have used several times already.[9]

And to ward off the criticism that I have unfairly excluded Shakespeare's peers from the world of the theatre, when they too deserve to be considered 'politic historians,' let me add the following remarks about John Webster, which I believe to be valid for the other playwrights as well. Indeed Jonson, Webster, Chapman, Daniel and Marston learned a great deal from those thinkers, from England as well as from Continental Europe, and from classical antiquity or from Renaissance Italy, who contributed to the loosely bound together quasi-genre of 'politic history.' These playwrights can to an extent even be said to practice 'politic history.' And Chapman and Jonson in particular with their vast learning and grasp of the classical languages probably influenced Shakespeare a great deal in terms of reading materials and even, we can surmise, access to manuscripts and translations. The same can certainly be said for the wide-ranging intellectual figure Sir Philip Sidney, whose work certainly deserves more attention than I have been able to give it here,[10] not least because Sidney was one of the great conduits of Continental and classical thought into England, and so in many ways helped to make Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy the politically and intellectually formidable entity that it was. In general, the work of Shakespeare's contemporaries in the world of theatre deserves to be combed for its connections to such founts of 'politic history' as Machiavelli, Tacitus, Bodin and Guicciardini,[11] though I have not attempted this here. But there is another reason, perhaps questionable though I suspect not completely so, for my emphasis on

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[9] Rahe "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" 108. A similar point is made by A. J. Boyle, who speaks instead of "the fragility of social relations." See Boyle *Tragic Seneca* 206.

[10] Worden *The Sound of Virtue* is pretty much unmatched in terms of treating Sidney's political and intellectual context.

[11] The work of F. J. Levy has been exemplary in this respect.

Shakespeare. The fact remains that Shakespeare is the preeminent theatrical magus of the early modern period, especially when it comes to the question of characters' passions and motives, *and* the depth and complexity of these. A. D. Nuttall makes the point that what distinguishes Shakespeare's tragedies from Webster's is that Webster makes the mistake of providing detailed accounts of the causes lying behind agents' actions.[12] This "concatenation of motive" is too complete. It removes the sense of the incalculable by diagramming the social world, and the psyche of agents, as a network of causes. For Nuttall, this above all results in Webster's tragedies giving us only "the impression of generalised evil, a corrupted society." But one can reply—and J. W. Lever with his insistence on Jacobean tragedy as a diagnosis of social, absolutist and 'state' ills, would concur—that this is pretty much what the dramatists influenced by 'politic history' sought to do especially if they had, as most 'politic historians' did have, a modicum of sympathy for neo-roman (Q. Skinner's term) or republican thought.[13] That is to say, the goal was to present the corruptions of society, and the flaws and passional capriciousness of rulers, princes, and above all tyrants, as well as to be realistic about the dangers of rhetoric when wielded, so to speak, by Machiavellian agents. However, what distinguishes Shakespeare from the likes of Webster is Shakespeare's careful delineation of character, agency, 'motive and cue for action' and causes of behaviour, *without*—paradoxically—providing too many causes. Above all, Shakespeare's skill lies in presenting personality, that is, distinctness of each agent and his or her *ethos* in their specificity, especially as regards the many various, competing and colliding causes that impel and compel action. Of course this interest in the vicissitudes of causation is shared by the likes of Chapman, Marston and Greville, and above all, Webster. But—to focus attention on the author of *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*—it is precisely Webster's interest in causes that 'hurts' his drama. His agents are implicated in so many causes that the very provision of solid causation nullifies

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[12] Nuttall *Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale* 17.
[13] Lever *The Tragedy of State*. For neo-roman influences, see Skinner *Liberty before Liberalism*.

"the peculiar depth"[14] of the characters. Webster's characters are like so many billiard balls, and the reader or viewer of his plays only too rarely has to exercise their ability to 'simulate' (or interpolate) the inner states and motives of these characters. It is this kind of focus on caused *and* overdetermined, not 'over-caused,' interiority that distinguishes Shakespearean tragedy, and which arguably—though I have not argued it in detail—seems to be lacking in even Shakespeare's best rivals and contemporaries. *Pace* Nuttall, Shakespeare's range and depth is not due to any aversion on Shakespeare's part to dissecting or diagnosing corruption, for this is Shakespeare's concern too. However, in his version of 'politic history,' Shakespeare dissects corruption without rendering the passions either inexplicable or all-too-predictable.

Euripides ends his *Hecuba* with the lines, spoken by the chorus: "Heaven's constraint [*anankē*]/ is hard."[15] The passions are a kind of constraint or necessity. That is, they constrain us in the sense that we cannot always have a full, clear 'non-partial' perspective on things. Sometimes we are twisted and pulled in complex, even inconsistent, directions by passions we cannot fully or at least easily grasp. We have often to grapple with ourselves to glean our motives. So it is with the understanding of others, who too are often wrestling with their own passions. The passions are also necessary. Indeed the very idea of people without the passions is as inconceivable as people without motives, beliefs and desires.

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[14] Nuttall *Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale* 17. Nuttall's animosity towards Webster is also, it may be fair to say, due to the dramatist's fascination with corruption, a favoured topic for the 'politic historians' and for anyone familiar with Thucydides and especially Tacitus, but not a subject beloved by everyone.

[15] Euripides *Hecuba* 1395-6. *Anankē* could be linked to such words as anguish and angst, but this is merely speculation.

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