Showing versus telling: Shakespeare's ekphraseis, visual absences, and the cinema

Drama offers the storyteller a simple choice about how to communicate each element of the story to the audience: show it, or have a character describe it. The use of both modes within one work is what distinguishes drama from mime, at one extreme, and from narrative recital at the other, but often we may sense that at a particular moment the use of one mode or other is conditioned by practical rather than aesthetic considerations. As a narrative unit the `car chase' is confined to works in the medium uniquely suited to conveying its tension, the cinema, and we should expect drama's strengths to lie elsewhere. Although physical playing space was limited, the theatre professionals of Shakespeare's time did not shy away from attempting to represent events which are to be imagined occurring over large areas of space such as a battlefield, and they found a number of techniques to counter the physical limitations of their stage. The chorus at the beginning of Shakespeare's Henry V appears to apologize for the theatre's inability to do justice to the events to be portrayed, but the rest of the play shows impressive ingenuity at representing battles and sieges by jumping from location to location and by focussing on the Harfleur city-gate before which Henry makes his demands in III.iii[1]. Occasionally, however, one feels the strain of theatrical limitations when events are described which one might prefer to see for oneself. Hamlet's remarkable sea-adventure is a case in point, and film directors frequently choose to show the audience the events which are merely described in a letter read aloud by Horatio at IV.vi.12-30 and subsequently related at greater length by Hamlet at V.ii.1-56[2].

Technology now exists to show a cinema audience anything that can be imagined. An entire feature film can be made inside computers and the images transferred directly to film without the intermediate form of ink and paper, so there are no practical limits upon the director's freedom to show what previous storytellers could only have their characters describe. This freedom must be exercized cautiously because in drama there is an

epistemological difference between events that are shown and those that are described: in general we have to trust that the former are true (insofar as anything in a play is true) while the latter are necessarily mediated and suspect. Certain textual ambiguities have to be decided one way or the other in dramatic production. Concerning the appearance of Caliban in The Tempest a theatre director has to make a decision which lies somewhere along the spectrum between Stephano and Trinculo's view (they call him "monster" forty-five times in all) and Miranda's implicit counting of Caliban among humankind ("This / Is the third man that e'er I saw" I.ii.447-8), although she will not admit as much to Ferdinand ("nor have I seen / More that I may call men than you, good friend, / And my dear father" III.i.50-2)[3]. Other matters such as how green is the island do not have to be resolved since a unlocalized playing space need confirm neither Gonzalo's "How lush and lusty the grass looks! / How green!" nor Antonio's immediately succeeding contradiction "The ground indeed is tawny" (II.i.57-9). Where something is not shown, competing verbal accounts of it can be set in competition and reality may be presented as inaccessible other than through the representations of characters whose motives must be sought and whose honesty must be questioned from moment to moment.

In adapting Shakespeare to the screen total freedom of visual representation ought to force attention onto the original choices made by Shakespeare and others working in the medium of early modern theatre. Much twentieth-century theatre history can be fairly characterized as reaction to the Victorian taste for lavish theatrical spectacle which was predicated on a conviction that, had he the means at his disposal, Shakespeare would have shown his audience Hamlet's fight with the pirates and the heaped corpses at Agincourt. A guiding principle of twentieth-century theatrical asceticism-- encoded most succinctly in the idea of a Tudor `bare stage'--has been that Shakespeare made virtues of dramatic necessities and when choosing whether to show or narrate an event he applied subtle artistic criteria. Quite possibly the iconization of this principle in the notion of a Tudor `bare stage' is misguided since their stages were not naked: they were keen on colourful decoration and might well have used more furniture than mid-twentieth-century theatrical ascetics believed (Egan 1999). But despite this overstatement of the bareness of the Tudor stage, we should continue to inquire carefully whether Shakespeare chose narration over ostention, telling over showing, for reasons other than practical necessity. Here I will be exploring a range of moments when Shakespeare's decisions to tell rather than show--to offer mediated accounts of reality--give an artistic effect which film directors easily lose in the transition to screen. Film offers ample compensations for these losses, but it is worth distinguishing those dramatic effects which must be foregone from those which might be retained.

In even the simplest cases where Shakespeare decided to tell rather than show the audience an event there is often a witty self-consciousness to the dramaturgy. The final chorus of Shakespeare's Henry V (V.Chorus.1-46) continues the theme of apology for dramatic incapacity which runs through the preceding choruses: "admit th' excuse / Of time, of numbers, and due course of things, / Which cannot in their huge and proper life / Be here presented".

But what follows tests the audience's indulgence by requesting a series of imaginative leaps. First "bear the King / Toward Calais. Grant him there; there seen", then "Behold, the English beach . . . So let him land", then "solemnly see him set on to London" to "imagine him upon Blackheath", whence "in London place him" for the celebration of his military victory. Such imaginative effort is justifiable for scene setting, but the chorus repeatedly offers what might be the location for the next scene only to move us on again. Finally the audience are enjoined to "brook abridgement, and your eyes advance, / After your thoughts, straight back again to France", where we left Henry at the end of the fourth act. So the repeated appeal to the visual imagination ("seen . . . behold . . . see him . . . imagine . . . your eyes advance") turns out to be gratuitous: we are back where we started and the events might easily have been narrated. This pattern of raising and deflating expectation is a general principle throughout the play's choruses, as Antony Hammond demonstrated (Hammond 1987), but it is worth noting that the apparently earnest requests for imaginative indulgence have, by the end, turned capricious. Shakespeare's choruses bear out the aphorism, often attributed to Hollywood studio boss Jack Warner, that the key to success is faking sincerity. Shakespeare's framing of the story with these devices should sensitize an audience to the rhetorical power of claims of inadequacy within the play, especially in Henry's final act `wooing' of Catherine.

The imaginative relocation of the stage enjoined by the chorus in Henry V is necessary because even the Globe's apparently wide stage could not contain the events of the drama on a 1:1 scale. Indeed even within a particular `location' the events depicted often occupy a larger area than that available in a playhouse. Spatial compression and spatial discontinuity were common on the early modern stage and were frequently discussed by its theoreticians. Philip Sidney's attack on the `simultaneous staging' (E. K. Chambers's phrase) of plays which "haue Asia of the one side, and Affricke of the other" (Chambers 1923, 40) came early in the period and Chambers thought such techniques a sign of dramatic art's immaturity. Shakespeare usually employed discontinuity rather than compression but his simultaneous representation of the camps of Richard and Richmond in Richard III V.iii shows how juxtaposition could be symbolically significant, especially as it allowed the two leaders to share a single dream or ghost visitation, their different reactions to which are indices of their relative virtues. Shakespeare made use of a third spatial technique besides compression and discontinuity: locating exciting events off stage and having them commented upon by characters on stage. Tim Fitzpatrick argued that the Shakespearian stage usually represents an intermediate space between two other locations reached via each of the two stage doors. One door, he argued, usually leads `further in' to a more private chamber and the other leads `further out' to a wider world (Fitzpatrick 1995). In Shakespeare's Macbeth the murder of Duncan takes place in a room imagined to be behind one of the stage doors, further `in' to the Macbeths' castle, and the porter admits potential interferers from `outside' through the other door. Communication between the world imagined to be just off stage and those on the stage can occur through sound effects. In the second scene of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar Brutus fears that the "Flourish and shout within" (I.ii.80) he hears is celebration at the election

of Caesar as king, and his giving voice to this fear allows Cassius to broach directly the subject of rebellion.

As well as sounds coming from offstage, news of exciting events just out of sight can come by messenger's report. Shakespeare used this device for the combat of Arcite and Palamon in The Two Noble Kinsmen, reports of which reach Emilia from a messenger who rushes back and forth with news. Oddly, the messenger does not have direct visual evidence, only hearsay, to report: "The cry's `A Palamon'" (V.v.67), "Still `Palamon'" (V.v.71), "They said that Palamon had Arcite's body . . . " (V.v.79), and "Nay, now the sound is `Arcite'" (V.v.90). Since the cries of "Palamon" and "Arcite" are clearly marked as offstage sounds in the 1634 quarto text which is the only authority for this play (Fletcher & Shakespeare 1634, M1v-M2r) we might wonder why Emilia needs these reports which put her at a double remove from the action. As we shall see with Much Ado About Nothing, the difference between first-, second-, and third-hand evidence is a recurrent theme when Shakespeare chooses not to show crucial events to the audience. Most editors add directions for Emilia to be holding and comparing pictures of her suitors throughout the fight, and it appears that here too Shakespeare self-consciously draws attention to the medium rather than the message of his story. We might suppose that something not shown to the audience retains a mystery which ostention would dispel, but Shakespeare (the scene is his) seems interested in ekphrasis, which the Oxford Classical Dictionary calls "an extended and detailed literary description of any object, real or imaginary" (Hornblower & Spawforth 1996) but which is commonly used in the more precise sense summarized by Grant F. Scott as "a verbal representation of a visual representation" (Scott 1991, 301). Emilia first brings on her pictures of Palamon and Arcite in IV.ii and describes the one of Arcite in terms which, as we shall see, recall Hamlet's description of his father:

EMILIA What an eye,
Of what a fiery sparkle and quick sweetness
Has this young prince! Here love himself sits smiling!
(IV.ii.12-4)

Eleven more lines of similar praise follow. As before, the inferior man is, amongst other things, darker than his rival: "Palamon / Is but his foil; to him a mere dull shadow; / He's swart and meagre" (IV.ii.25-7). But Emilia changes her mind as she considers the pictures and decides "Palamon, thou art alone / And only beautiful . . . What a bold gravity, and yet inviting, / Has this brown manly face?" (IV.ii.37-42) Changing her mind again Emilia finally decides that she cannot decide because they are "two fair gauds of equal sweetness" (IV.ii.53). One of the most fascinating aspects of drama is the degree to which spectators are prepared to accept a character's interpretation of reality so long as it is not flatly contradicted by the evidence of their own eyes, and in these examples from Hamlet and The Two Noble Kinsmen (IV.ii is John Fletcher's work) the dramatists appear to be exploring the power of ekphrastic rhetoric. In such a case the film director who decides to show what is being described risks filling in the significant absences which give the scenes their power.

Palamon's dark complexion is one of the characteristics Emilia weighs up and cannot decide upon. Shakespeare's Othello is the period's quintessential dark man loved by a white woman, but the important ekphrastic rhetoric is his not hers. To the senate Othello describes his courting of Desdemona with stories of "battles, sieges, fortunes", "disastrous chances", "moving accidents" and "hair-breadth scapes" (I.iii.129-35) and like all good rhetoricians he begins with a claim of rhetorical inadequacy: "Rude am I in my speech" (I.iii.81). Oliver Parker's film of Othello (Parker 1995) provided a flashback to Othello's wooing of Desdemona with stories, but the unpublished shooting script reveals that Parker also shot flashback-within-flashback scenes showing Othello's boyhood and adolescent military training. These would have given the audience the visual images supposedly conjured in Desdemona's mind by Othello's stories and one particularly significant moment is Othello "fighting side by side with IAGO. OTHELLO saves IAGO from a fatal blow. IAGO escapes through smoke. OTHELLO fights on. IAGO returns on horseback, picks up OTHELLO and they ride off though flames" (Shakespeare 1995, 12a). Such bonding gives Iago's pique a tangible cause. This scene was apparently a late insertion into the script (it is a blue page, indicating second rewrite) and it was removed in editing, thus restoring Iago's usual, and probably authorially intended, level of inscrutability.

The scene of Emilia's comparison of the two pictures in The Two Noble Kinsmen has a prototype in Shakespeare's Hamlet. In III.iv Gertrude is berated by her son for failing to see the essential difference between her first husband and her second, pictures of whom Hamlet shows her. First Hamlet Senior:

HAMLET See what a grace was seated on this brow--
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten or command,
(III.iv.54-6)

He continues in this vein for several more lines. By comparison, Claudius's picture moves Hamlet to fury: "a mildewed ear / Blasting his wholesome brother" and "Have you eyes? / Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, / And batten on this moor?" (III.iv.63-6). At one level the imagery here is agricultural: Claudius's mildew blights (blasts) Hamlet Senior's fair pastures and leads Gertrude to feed (batten) instead on Claudius's marshy ground (moor), as G. R. Hibbard explained (Shakespeare 1987, 280-81). However, the outburst can also be read as impugning the faculties provided by Gertrude's facial orifices: hearing, speaking (blasting), seeing, and eating. Hearing and speaking are inverted (an ear "blasts") and fair Hamlet Senior is opposed to dark (moorish) Claudius. I assume that the pictures are held by Hamlet and are not large portraits visible to the audience. Hamlet's descriptions are ekphrastic and provide powerful emotional incentives to concur in his tirade, but the audience are not in possession of all the evidence. Portable pictures would be too small for the playhouse audience to judge them so the audience must judge by the appearance of the actors. Hamlet Senior has appeared only as a ghost, so presumably the visual advantage is with his living rival. Perhaps indeed this is the point, that

Hamlet's impassioned description counteracts the visual impressions made by the two actors. A cinema director has the opportunity to tip the balance in favour of either man by offering close-up views of the pictures. In the title role of his film Hamlet Kenneth Branagh gave himself two monochrome photographs in folding cases and the audience are allowed clear views of the pictures of Brian Blessed (Hamlet Senior) and Derek Jacobi (Claudius), to the disadvantage of the latter. Laurence Olivier, on the other hand, kept the audience's point-of-view behind the hand-held pictures and retained what was presumably Shakespeare's intended ambiguity, and Franco Zeffirelli achieved the same effect by keeping the camera too far from the pictures for the audience to make out their details.

Branagh's provision of visual representations to supplement verbal representations in Hamlet is a unique case because of his decision to use every line of an editorial invention: a conflation of the quartos and the Folio texts which brings together lines which were not spoken together in Shakespeare's life[4]. The precursor to Hamlet's berating of Gertrude in her closet is illuminating in this regard. It appears that Hamlet's tirade to his mother is his reworking and extension of the ghost's tirade on the same theme:

GHOST O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!--
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand-in-hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine.
(I.v.47-52)

As the ghost makes a comparison of his former self and Claudius the audience see a flashback of them, together with Gertrude and Hamlet, playing an indoor variant of the game of curling on the polished floor of the palace[5]. Here too Branagh evens up the odds concerning the audience's perception of the relative merits of Hamlet Senior and Claudius by giving views of the former's vigour which cannot be offered to the play's audience. These images, however, are not simply reality, rather they are Hamlet's recollections of his father ("remember me" I.v.91) and hence mediated through his necessarily partial mind. Because all the lines of Shakespeare's play, and more, are present, images cannot be used to replace dialogue, only to supplement it, and we should carefully consider the status of each of Branagh's invented images; they are not necessarily representations of reality. In every case the flashback--or rather `flash-elsewhere' since what they have in common is representation of a time and place distanced from the utterance of the accompanying dialogue--might plausibly be explained as representation of what is in the mind's eye(s) of one or more characters on the stage. They are recollections or imaginings rather than unmediated truths, which is appropriate since Hamlet is the only Shakespeare play containing the phrase "mind's eye", occurring twice in the second quarto ("Hora. A moth it is to trouble the mindes eye" and "Ham. In my mindes eye Horatio" (Shakespeare

1604, B2v, C2r)) and once in the Folio text ("<u>Ham</u>. In my minds eye (<u>Horatio</u>)" (Shakespeare 1968, <u>Hamlet</u> TLN 374)).

A particularly significant image is that of Hamlet and Ophelia having sex which, argued Carol Chillington Rutter, not only problematizes Ophelia's status--if she is sexually experienced she ought to spot her father's hypocritical `drabbing'--but also "den[ies] her subjectivity in the process of objectifying her" (Rutter 1998, 316). However, that the audience see Ophelia having sex does not make it real. The sexual images are first shown while Polonius questions his daughter about Hamlet's attentions to her (I.iii.98-136) for which Branagh has the father and daughter sharing the same side of a confessional booth. This booth is reused for the scene of Claudius at prayer (III.iii.36-98) during which Hamlet comes close to enacting his revenge, slowly inching his knife through the grille separating the two sides of the booth and reaching to Claudius's ear. The audience are shown the knife entering Claudius's ear and drawing blood, which is clearly a representation of Hamlet's fantasy rather than reality since Claudius is unscathed a moment later. Planning to postpone his attack until a moment when Claudius is "drunk asleep", "in his rage", "in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed", "gaming", or "swearing" (III.iii.89-91), Hamlet fantasizes each situation in turn and the audience are allowed to share his visual imagining. The images of Hamlet and Ophelia having sex may also be imaginings, the first of them occurring in the same confessional booth location and being arguably the fantasy of either Polonius or Ophelia. Similar images recur at II.ii.109-119, the reading of Hamlet's love-letter, which Branagh reassigns from Polonius to Ophelia. Part-way through the recitation Ophelia breaks off, overcome with emotion, and as Polonius completes it we see Hamlet, half-dressed, kissing Ophelia as the words of the letter become their post-coital dialogue. It is hardly likely that Hamlet's letter is a transcript he made of this conversation, so presumably the accompanying sexual images are representations of the fantasies of Polonius, Gertrude, and Claudius, are the events which they infer from the existence of the letter.

Rutter claimed that "Almost every soliloquy or moderately lengthy speech is `imaged'" in Branagh's film, and I count twelve such `imaged' speeches. For Rutter these images are evidence that Branagh "perversely mistrusts both the word and the audience: he uses them to rush us over the language and supplies pictures to gloss the hard words" (Rutter 1998, 316n32). Taking them in turn, however, it is clear that what the audience see may easily be a character's mental image, not reality. As the First Player recites the Priam/Hecuba speech (II.ii.470-521) the audience are shown images of the classical story which clearly are not reality but rather represent the effect of the speech upon the minds of its hearers. Likewise during the performance of <u>The Mousetrap</u> the flashback to the murdering of Hamlet Senior is Claudius's recollection prompted by the story's parallels with his own case (III.ii.242-52). The final image of Hamlet and Ophelia having sex occurs while Ophelia sings her bawdy song at IV.v.62-5, and again to read this as unproblematic reality rather than a view of Ophelia's, or Gertrude's, or Claudius's mind's eye is to reduce the film's representational ambiguity. In Branagh's film, as in the play, recollections or imaginings have objective causes. The skull of Yorick brings

the living man to mind, and all the more forcefully because the skull retains the famous protruding teeth of the comedian, Ken Dodd, who plays Yorick in a flashback showing Hamlet's recollection of his childhood playmate.

Three `imaged' speeches concern Fortinbras's project. The first occurs as Horatio describes Fortinbras's raising of an army to take back the lands his father lost (I.i.94-103) and the audience sees him with his generals poring over maps and looking fierce. The second occurs as Claudius cheers his court by announcing that he has sent Norway news of Fortinbras's intentions with a request to restrain his nephew (I.ii.27-33) and the audience sees Norway receiving the news with displeasure. Since Claudius still holds the letter and cannot know of its effect, the image is clearly a fantasy of the policy's success. The third image concerning Fortinbras accompanies Valtemand's report of Norway's recall and chastisement of his nephew and it enacts the description (II.ii.61-75). The final example of `imaged' speech, the twelfth in all, is a representation of Ophelia under water as Gertrude stares into space having described the drowning at IV.vii.138-55. Branagh's decision to use a full text made these images inevitably supplementary and there was no possibility of showing an event rather than narrating it. There was, then, no opportunity to make dramatically true what Shakespeare had written as merely one character's account of reality and hence no way to represent definite falsehood either. Under these conditions, the truth of these images must be questionable just as the truth of what a character reports is questionable. Several of my example images might be taken for simple reality by the cinema audience, but others--most obviously Hamlet's fantasy of killing Claudius--cannot be, and this throws doubt on them all. For his part, Branagh decided from the outset that Hamlet and Ophelia had been enjoying a sexual relationship (Branagh 1996b, 181, 195, 203). From the directorial point of view, then, my reading of the images of lovemaking is simply a misreading, yet the fortuitous reuse of the confessional booth location (originally Polonius's interrogation of Ophelia was to take place in the boathouse by the lake) and, more importantly, the visual economy entailed by the use of a full text, place the sexual images beyond narrative certainty. As we shall see, Branagh's visual technique in this film differs considerably from his technique in his earlier film of Much Ado About Nothing. This was more conventional in its use of standard 35mm film stock and in its running time, in the version shown in the United Kingdom, of 111 minutes which required heavy cutting of the text and hence encouraged the provision of images to replace, rather than supplement, dialogue (Branagh 1993).

Zeffirelli's film of Hamlet runs for 129 minutes which was achieved by cutting the text heavily, as is usual for film adaptations, and by showing events which are only described by characters in the playtext. A typical example is the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern which occupies only a few seconds of screen time as Hamlet tells Horatio the pith of his faked letter to the English king (V.ii.45-7). Probably saving no time at all, Zeffirelli gave full cinematic realization to Hamlet's disorderly intrusion into Ophelia's chamber, instead of her account of it (II.i.78-101). Rutter complained that Branagh's failure to show this moment was "a cheat" because ". . . Branagh, who explains everything else, withholds explanation here" (Rutter 1998, 317).

But the incident is mysterious precisely because we have only Ophelia's account of it and her relationship to Hamlet is a deliberate ambiguity of the play. Zeffirelli often invents time-saving and explicatory images with considerable style, but the opening moment of his film signally failed to "suit the action to the word". The film begins with an invented scene of grieving as Hamlet slowly drops soil over the body of his recently deceased father. The first words spoken are Claudius's "[Hamlet] think of us / As of a father" (I.ii.107-8), and we may suppose that the soil-dropping image was prompted by the unspoken line which immediately precedes this: "We pray you throw to earth / This unprevailing woe" (I.ii.106-7). This is an economic substitution of image for speech, but it is quite inappropriate since the point of Gertrude and Claudius's importuning Hamlet to stop grieving in I.ii is that he has persisted well beyond the required period. Asking Hamlet to give up grieving before his father is even in the ground is absurdly tasteless.

Where an important event is referred to in a Shakespeare play but is not shown we may suspect that it has merely been lost from the dramatic text. The first three quartos of Shakespeare's Richard II do not show the deposition that is central to the action, perhaps because it would have been dangerous to present such a scene on the stage. Alternatively, it might have been acceptable to show the scene but not to print it, and so the scene was cut only from the printed text. But it can also be argued that the play is stronger with this conspicuous absence at its core; not showing what all the fuss is about might have been Shakespeare's original intention. The Bishop of Westminster sees what he calls a "A woeful pageant" (IV.i.311), which sounds impressive, but even without the abdication scene the line still makes sense as a comment, David Bergeron argued, on "the arrest of Carlisle, the announcement of Richard's abdication, Bolingbroke's ascent to the throne, and his plans for coronation" (Bergeron 1974, 37). Bergeron thought that the play works well without the abdication being shown, and the success of Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs proves that, for all the claims that visual culture is supervening our verbal/written culture, modern audiences still find aesthetic pleasure in the causes and consequences of a central event conveyed to them only by participants' reports.

A similar absence is at the centre of the action in Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing. The moment when Claudio and Don Pedro witness a sign of Hero's infidelity is only anticipated and recalled in the play, not shown. First Don John promises "Go but with me tonight, you shall see her chamber window entered" (III.ii.102-3) and in the next scene Borachio brags how he brought Margaret into the deception: "She leans me out at her mistress' chamber window, bids me a thousand times good night" (III.iii.140-2). Between III.ii and III.iii the deception takes place without being shown to the audience. It certainly would have been possible for Shakespeare's stage to represent Borachio entering or leaving the bedchamber, so we should consider why Shakespeare chose instead to use dialogue referring to these actions. The point seems to be that these are actions which would precede and follow the event--the putative sex between Hero and Borachio--and which are taken for the event itself. Whether entering or leaving Hero's bedchamber, Claudio and Don Pedro are sure to infer from Borachio's presence that Hero

is sexually active. The audience are distanced from the sexual act by a double frame: first the corollaries which precede and follow the implied act and second the ekphrastic narrative promise and recollection of those corollaries. Branagh chose to show the audience the deception scene in his film of Much Ado About Nothing and he broke III.ii after Don John says "I know not that [Claudio means to marry] when he knows what I know" to cut to an interior shot of excited kissing between Borachio and Margaret, although from behind Imelda Staunton playing Margaret might easily be mistaken for Kate Beckinsale playing Hero. The next shot shows Don John, Claudio, and Don Pedro entering the garden and is followed by one showing Borachio and Margaret having sex on the balcony of Hero's bedchamber. Putting perhaps too fine a point on it--and surely risking alienation of his unwitting assistant in this deception--Borachio moans "Hero, Hero" in his sexual ecstasy. Returning to the dialogue of III.ii more or less where we left it, Don John states what appears obvious: "The lady is disloyal".

Branagh's realization of the absent deception scene replaced Shakespeare's double framing device with the putative act itself since Don John brings Claudio and Don Pedro into the orchard at precisely the moment when no inference is needed to condemn Hero. As with Othello's misreading of the evidence against Desdemona, the inability of Don Pedro and Claudio to distinguish circumstantial evidence from matters bearing on the fact is an index of their gullibility. Branagh's interpolated scene diminishes this gullibility and increases Don John's skill at presenting a convincing deception. Horace Howard Furness pointed out that in Shakespeare's narrative Don Pedro later says that Borachio has "Confessed the vile encounters they have had / A thousand times in secret" (IV.i.94-5), and that this lie should "mitigat[e] our condemnation of Claudio's conduct" (Shakespeare 1899, III.iii.142n). In the theatre the proposed deception sounds implausible and Shakespeare's doubled `befores' and `afters', which pointedly draw attention to the absent `during', highlight the essential difference between circumstantial evidence and proof. Furness, like Branagh, excused Claudio and Don Pedro a little too readily. Perhaps to counterbalance this simplification of the play, Branagh introduced ambiguity by showing only the back of Borachio's sexual partner, allowing the audience to wonder, at least momentarily, whether Hero is guilty of the accusation.

Shakespeare clearly did not intend to deceive the audience about Hero's fidelity in Much Ado About Nothing, but there are other moments in Shakespeare's work when we are justified in thinking that deception is intended. Usually the audience enjoy a privileged position from which the misunderstandings of the characters can be measured against a notional narrative truth, but in The Comedy of Errors the audience learn the identity of the Abbess only when it is revealed to the onstage characters at V.i.346. At the other end of Shakespeare's career, Paulina's revelation that Hermione is alive at the end of The Winter's Tale is a similar surprise for the audience. Shakespeare rarely misled his audience but Philip C. McGuire made a powerful case for thinking that the supposed ascent of the Dover cliff by Gloucester and Edgar in King Lear is another example (McGuire 1994, 87-90). On the flat Elizabethan stage descriptions of the ground being walked

upon are all an audience has to go on, as with Northumberland's "These high wild hills and rough uneven ways / Draws out our miles and makes them wearisome" (Shakespeare Richard II II.iii.4-5). An audience trained to accept such descriptions at face value are likely to wonder who to believe when faced with this exchange:

> GLOUCESTER When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?
> EDGAR You do climb up it now. Look how we labour.
> GLOUCESTER Methinks the ground is even. EDGAR Horrible steep.
> (The Tragedy of King Lear IV.v.1-3)

McGuire described the likely reaction of the first audience to this as "a combination of uncertainty and suspense" (McGuire 1994, 89) for not only is Edgar's intention unclear--will he help his father to die?--but also the audience cannot tell where the action is set. Strong encouragement to believe that father and son are to be imagined standing at the top of a cliff comes in Edgar's remarkable ekphrastic speech describing the perspective foreshortening of the birds, people, and boats he claims to see below (IV.v.11-24), which, McGuire argued, shows the impact upon Shakespeare's thinking of the newly-introduced perspective scenery of the court masque (McGuire 1994, 91-92).

A film director sensitive to Shakespeare's use of balanced ambiguity might well want to achieve the same effect. In his film of King Lear, Peter Brook (Brook 1971) used a shot of Gloucester's and Edgar's legs and feet apparently labouring as Gloucester asked "When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?" and Edgar replied "You do climb up it now. Look how we labour". A shot from behind pulls out to reveal that they are in fact walking on the level beach, as Gloucester becomes suspicious: "Methinks the ground is even. EDGAR Horrible steep". The possibility of Gloucester seeing through the deception is forestalled by Edgar choosing to carry his father on his back, and Brook used only low-angle torso-and-head shots from this moment until Gloucester's `fall'. Edgar's decision to carry Gloucester, to remove his direct sensory access, coincides with the director's removal of the audience's access to reference data in the framing, and presumably Brook thought that the establishing `flat-beach' shot would have faded in the memory so that Edgar's `trick' might work on the film audience. Even those who see through the trick may sense how it feels to be Gloucester, for Brook's sudden transition from low-angle upper-body shots before Gloucester's `fall' to extreme high-angle long distance after the `fall' gives an impression of watching Gloucester fall from a great height even as it reveals that he did not.

Earlier in his film of King Lear Brook interpolated a scene concerning the nature of damning evidence which, like Branagh's balcony-sex scene in Much Ado About Nothing, raises the possibility that the cinema audience may experience a deception for themselves while watching others being taken in by it. Edmond's plan to alienate Gloucester from Edgar begins with a promise, rather like Don John's, that incontrovertible evidence can be presented:

EDMOND If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening. (The Tragedy of King Lear I.ii.91-4)

It is easy to hear in "auricular assurance" an echo of Othello's "Give me the ocular proof" (III.iii.365) with which it shares this theme of damning evidence. With Gloucester hooked, Edmond makes effectively the same promise to Edgar: "I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak" (I.ii.157-8). Neither of these eavesdroppings takes place in the play, but Brook interpolated an opportunity for Gloucester to overhear Edgar damning himself by reading the letter written by Edmond. The letter ends "If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever and live the beloved of your brother, Edgar" (I.ii.53-6), and Brook might be criticized for improbably making Edmond take an unnecessary risk concerning Edgar's enunciation. For if Edgar paraphrased the signing off as "live the beloved of your brother, signed Edgar" the entire scheme would unravel. However, we should note that Iago took a risk as great as this concerning Cassio's explanation of the handkerchief, and Brook's invented scene is true to the spirit of Edmond's daring wickedness.

I noted that Shakespeare's deceptions of his audience are rare and that Edgar's `Dover cliff' trick is merely an arguable example. The entire first scene of The Tempest, however, is clearly a deception since the audience have no reason to suppose that the storm is an illusion created by Ariel. As Peter Holland pointed out, theatre and film directors who show Prospero and/or Ariel in a manipulative capacity in the first scene are spoiling Shakespeare's intentional misleading of his audience (Holland 1995, 224). The first comment on the apparent storm comes from Miranda, who suspects her father of creating it: "If by your art, my dearest father, you have / Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them" (I.ii.1-2). It transpires that Ariel, on Prospero's instructions, created not a storm, but the likeness of one:

ARIEL I boarded the King's ship. Now on the beak,
Now in the waste, the deck, in every cabin,
I flamed amazement. Sometime I'd divide,
And burn in many places; on the top-mast,
The yards, and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly;
Then meet and join. Jove's lightning, the precursors
O' th' dreadful thunderclaps, more momentary
And sight-outrunning were not. The fire and cracks
Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
Seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble,
Yea, his dread trident shake.
(The Tempest I.ii.197-207)

Ariel compares each aspect of his simulated storm with the real thing: his fake lightning was as brief as real lightning, his sounds and sights appeared to besiege the sea-god himself, and by these tricks he "flamed amazement" in the boat's occupants. The point of the storm was to induce "a fever of the

mad" (I.ii.210) in Prospero's enemies, not to actually harm them. Ariel's description is ekphrastic but Shakespeare used it not to enhance his deception of the audience, as was the case with Edgar's description of the view from the cliff, but to expose the deception. In Derek Jarman's film of The Tempest Prospero is seen sleeping and fitfully dreaming while the storm takes place and there is a strong sense that the storm is a manifestation of the power of his imagination, or a force released from his id (Jarman 1979). This reading of the scene manages both to spoil the deception and to turn the arch manipulator of others' perceptions into a passive receiver of images, for when dreaming we are subjected to those personal mental processes which are least under our control. In Peter Greenaway's adaptation, Prospero's Books (Greenaway 1991), the protracted storm lasts into I.ii and troubles Miranda's sleep, and in Forbidden Planet the dark side of Morbius's (Prospero's) creative power is manifested in a Caliban-like figure who ("this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine") is repeatedly referred to as a monster from his creator's id (Wilcox 1956). The storm scene is unnecessary in Forbidden Planet since the astronauts are under orders to visit the isolated home of Morbius and his daughter, but it survives in an oddly attenuated form: an awkward moment of muted collective panic when the navigator mismanages the deceleration from lightspeed. Intellectual hubris forms the major theme of the film and, in an allusion to the mythical Greek Icarus, the navigator's error brings the spaceship too close to the sun. In Forbidden Planet, as in Jarman's film, the arch-creator is subject to forces of which he is unaware. At the other end of the poststructuralist spectrum Greenaway's treatment of the storm, indeed of the entire text, invests Prospero with complete authorial-narratorial control as he visibly directs the action and ventriloquizes all the parts. Greenaway's extensive imagery of books and papers, and his presentation of The Tempest as a story being narrated in its moment of composition, emphasize a primordial textuality which scholars and practitioners of theatre and film are apt to forget: plays and films first take shape as scripts and storyboards.

After a series of mind-games including the vanishing banquet and Ariel's impersonation of a harpy, Prospero's victory is complete when "The King, / His brother, and yours, abide all three distracted" (V.i.11-2) in the lime grove, and there are good reasons to see parallels between Prospero and Shakespeare as manipulators of the imagination. But Prospero needs strong prompting to appreciate a verbal description of a powerfully moving visual effect:

ARIEL Him that you termed, sir, the good old lord Gonzalo:
His tears run down his beard like winter's drops
From eaves of reeds. Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now beheld them your affections
Would become tender. PROSPERO Dost thou think so, spirit?
ARIEL Mine would, sir, were I human. PROSPERO And mine shall.
(The Tempest V.i.15-20)

Stung by the implied rebuke from Ariel, Prospero decides to free his prisoners, since a human should "be kindlier moved than thou art" (V.i.24).

But the rebuke stands, since Prospero the bookish creator of visual effects is a dull consumer of them.

Shakespeare used powerful descriptions of visual effects which he might easily have presented on the stage and he exploited opportunities for `painting with words'. More than once the point of using ekphrastic narration is to draw attention to the complex balance of manipulative powers in drama. Just as the choruses in Henry V should alert us to the power of disclaiming power, moments when Shakespeare demands that the audience imagine a scene rather than see it remind us that mental images are as constructed and manipulable as stage pictures. Repeatedly Shakespeare used the stage's non-commitment to a single visual representation to put competing verbal representations into conflict. Cinema too can present absence and can problematize the conventions by which its operates, but it is striking how seldom this is attempted outside of film comedy and it is arguable that early modern theatre's visual ambiguity cannot properly be transferred to other media. Branagh's ambiguous visual images in his film of Hamlet are dependent on his use of a full text of the play which makes them necessarily supplements rather than substitutes for speech and in this important respect his film is not a cinematic adaptation at all but rather a filmed stageplay. Brook's use of camera angle to deny the audience access to background reference data in his filming of the `Dover cliff' scene of King Lear introduced an element of the original staging, but it was preceded by a wide-angle shot establishing the narrative reality of Edgar's deception which Brook presumably thought necessary to prevent spectator confusion. This is a not entirely successful attempt to transfer to cinema a device which fully works only on a bare stage. On the other hand Branagh's provision of visual information not provided by the play (the close-ups of the pictures of Claudius and Hamlet Senior, and the sight of Borachio having sex) diminishes the functional ambiguity provided by Shakespeare's verbal representations of visual representations. The margin of directorial freedom between these two faults is small, but staying within these limits might provide a useful artistic constraint when Shakespeare is being adapted to a medium which now has seemingly unlimited technical resources.

Notes

[1]References to Shakespeare will be from Shakespeare 1986.

[2]In Laurence Olivier's film version a flashback to the pirate attack was shown while Horatio read Hamlet's letter describing it, but all reference to Hamlet's fatal substitution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's letter to the English king was cut (Olivier 1948). Grigori Kosintsev and Franco Zeffirelli made Hamlet's departure and the switching of the letter a seamlessly realistic continuum with no flashback or narration, but removed the pirates entirely and offered no explanation for Hamlet's return to Denmark (Kosintsev 1964; Zeffirelli 1990). Kenneth Branagh used the play's narration technique for the letter switching and the pirate attack, but as we shall see he depicted other events which are only referred to in dialogue (Branagh 1996a).

[3]Although it need not constrain modern producers Caliban and and Ariel-- once the latter became like a "nymph o' th' sea" (I.iii.303)--were originally played in aquatic costumes. See Saenger 1995 and Egan 1997.

[4]Authorial revision commonly entails the cutting of some things and the addition of others, and important differences between early editions of Hamlet most likely reflect such planned changes. In this situation conflation effaces authorially-sanctioned cuts and brings together material which the dramatist would have thought mutually exclusive or pleonastic. For the evidence concerning Hamlet see Wells et al. 1987, 396-402.

[5]This image is preceded by one of Hamlet Senior asleep in his orchard surrounded by midwinter snow. His behaviour might be thought eccentric and Deborah Cartmell observed that ". . . it's hard not to imagine why he didn't die of hypothermia" (Cartmell 1999, 36). However, Branagh apparently wanted the juxtaposition of these images of inversion: that which should be within (Hamlet Senior) is without and that which should be without (curling is normally played on snow) is within.

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